President's Corner

Thanks to varied contributions—passionate, compassionate, witty—from teachers of anthropology undergraduates, the recent FOSAP panel on re-inventing the intro course struck a chord with many of us who privately have had second thoughts about our impact in the classroom. We all, panelists and audience alike, shared the suspicion that the magic of anthropology doesn’t work on our students the way it had worked on us, and it was a relief to bring some of this “hidden transcript” into the public domain.

Cathartic, to be sure, but also a session, for me, packed with insights into our relationship with multiculturalism, postmodern perspectives and our undergraduates. Some of the panel papers are reprinted here for closer reading, in those moments when your desk is cleared and the din outside your office door has subsided to a whisper (Do ya’ think she’s in there? Shall I knock?)

Prospects for the New Year, biblical flooding in Pennsylvania notwithstanding, look good. Frank Young is organizing a FOSAP round table for AAA ’96 on strategies for strengthening small anthropology programs. In not in China, I’ll be there, an advocate for dogged persistence, importuning colleagues to split positions and other tactics for integrating anthropology into the curriculum. Linda Easley, along with Frank another lifer in the ranks of FOSAP, has planned a panel for ’96 aimed at exploring interactive learning strategies for teaching anthropology. And Dan Moerman has launched us into the New Year, perhaps into the next millennium, with a FOSAP home page on the World Wide Web. So we are wired, netted and webbed, eager to continue our conversation on large issues for small departments. Let us hear from you via the Newsletter (send all correspondence or items of mutual interest to Angelo Orona at his address in this issue) or to me (hillan@Dickinson.edu) or Dan (dmoerman@umich.edu). Cheers,

Ann Maxwell Hill

FOSAP Business Meeting

November 18, 1995
Hotel Sofitel, Washington D.C.

In attendance: Betsy Bairy (C.U. of New Hampshire), Cate Cameron (Cedar Crest College), Linda Easley (Siena Heights College), John Gatewood (Lehigh University), Paul Grebinger (Rochester Institute of Technology), Ann Hill (Dickinson College), Lucy Laufe (Montgomery College), Chad Litton (University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee), Bonnie Lloyd (Monroe Community College), Dan Moerman (University of Michigan-Dearborn) Richard O’Connor (University of the South), Angelo Orona (University of San Diego), Lynne Penczer (Fairfield University), Patricia Rice (West Virginia University), Esther Skirball (Slippery Rock University), Frank Young (University of San Diego).

1. The meeting was called to order by President Dan Moerman at 7:05 p.m.
2. A motion was made by Frank Young with a second from Ann Hill to approve the Minutes of the December 3, 1994 meeting in Atlanta. The motion passed unanimously.
3. The meeting began with discussion of the just-finished and very successful FOSAP sponsored symposium, Re-inventing the Intro Course, organized by Ann Hill and Paul Grebinger. In spite of the late scheduling, attendance was estimated to be in excess of 250 people with standing room only. Paul Grebinger suggested that, given the popularity of this year’s session, FOSAP argue for a better time slot for next year’s symposium.
4. Dan Moerman agreed to co-chair FOSAP through 1996 with Ann Hill. Cate Cameron indicated she would be willing to continue as secretary although she would probably not be attending the 1996 meetings. Paul Grebinger offered to take minutes at that meeting. Although the program chair slot was not filled, Linda Easley accepted the role of organizing a symposium for the San Francisco meetings. Angelo Orona agreed to continue as editor of the newsletter. The slate of officers was approved by those present.
5. There was much discussion of possible topics for next year’s meetings. Frank Young suggested a round table discussion for some of the problematic issues that trouble small programs and a symposium focusing on a pedagogical theme. Members converged on the topic of “marshaling resources to strengthen small programs” for the round table and devising active learning strategies for the symposium. Dan Moerman dubbed the latter “They Just Won't Listen to Lectures Anymore!” and issued a call for papers. Linda Easley at Siena Heights College (517-263-0731 X222) agreed to organize the session.
6. Angelo Orona suggested, and the organizers of the 1995 symposium agreed, that the papers from Re-inventing the Intro Course be published in the next FOSAP Newsletter (see this issue). It was suggested that an “issues forum” appear as a regular feature in upcoming Newsletters.
7. The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cate Cameron, Secretary
Ellen Ingmanson announces...

Non-Human Primates: A Multimedia Guide

As anthropologists, we would all like to take each one of our students into the field to experience the richness of actual research. Failing this, we fall back on the traditional resources of books and films. Technology, though, is expanding our options, and may change the look of libraries forever. New on the market is CD-ROM courseware, a multimedia format that combines video and audio into an interactive learning experience. More than two years in development by Frances Barton in the anthropology department at the University of Toronto, The Multimedia Guide to Non-Human Primates, was on exhibit for the first time at the recent AAA meetings in Washington, D.C., and generated considerable excitement among primatologists who also teach.

This CD-ROM courseware will be a tremendous addition to any class that includes a section on non-human primates, from introductory courses to advanced topical seminars. It includes both still and video color pictures of more than 200 different primate species, with quality ranging from good to excellent. Carefully researched basic information concerning taxonomy, habitat, behavior, and conservation is provided, along with maps and audio pronunciation guides. The mouse-run software permits searches based on specific topics, and a notebook feature allows the instructor to add new information, or for the student to keep individual notes. A quiz feature is also included. With the addition of glossary and bibliographic information, this product can be used by either primate beginners or advanced students.

The Multimedia Guide to the Non-Human Primates costs $45, includes a user guide, and comes in both Macintosh and Windows versions. A print version is also available, and includes the complete text of the CD-ROM, maps, photos, and bibliography. It can be purchased either with or without the CD-ROM, and costs $25. To order or receive more information, you can call 1-800-526-0485, or contact Chaunfayta Hightower at 201/236-7601; fax 201/236-7499; email: chaun_hightower@aol.com.

Linda Elaine Easley, Program Chair, announces papers for FOSAP session at San Francisco...

"THEY JUST DON'T LISTEN TO LECTURES ANYMORE"

Nacirema Writing: In-Class Essays for Introductory Courses
John Coggeshall

Anthropology and The Future: Simulating Possibilities
Doug Raybeck

The Ethnodrama: A Role-Playing Simulation for Anthropology Courses
Elwyn Lapoint

Trobriand Fields Forever
Allan Darrah

Doing Ethnographic Field Research on Mexican Peasant Communities in a Multimedia Computer Laboratory Environment
Manuel L. Carlos, Juan Jose Gutierrez, & Philip McCarty

Discussant — Christopher Waldo

THEY JUST DON'T LISTEN TO LECTURES ANYMORE. Many university and college courses are experiencing changes. This includes experimenting with teaching methods that are designed to more actively engage students in learning and teaching. Such techniques may be used to complement and/or replace traditional lecture and exam formats. The papers in this session continue to build on presentations that have been given at recent AAA meetings which focused on innovative and active teaching methods. A wide range of participatory learning techniques are discussed: in-class writing assignments; simulation games; ethnodramas; multi-campus collaboration efforts; computer simulation and ethnographic research combinations; and digital texts based on ethnographic literature. Detailed descriptions of each method will be presented along with historical overviews of their utilization in anthropology. The papers offer suggestions on how learning with these techniques can be assessed and evaluated. They also consider explanations as to why these innovations are effective in helping students develop their "anthropological imaginations." Several controversial issues raised be their use will also be explored (e.g. new professor and student roles; the place of human agency in distance learning). Audience participation will be encouraged.

To Interested FOSAP Members:

George Westermarck (University of Santa Clara) and Paola Sensi-Isolani (Saint Mary’s College) are planning a session for the San Francisco AAA conference on advising students about careers in anthropology: materials developed, department workshops, the role of internships in, etc. Depending on the format this could either be a formal session—FOSAP?—, a roundtable or a workshop. If anyone is interested in participating, please contact Paola at email pisolani@stmarys-ca.edu, fax 510/631-0938 or phone 510/631-4476, or George at email gwestermarck@scuacc.scsu.edu, fax 408/554-4189 or phone 408/554-2794.
The following papers were presented at the Invited Session

Reinventing the Intro. Course: Cultural Anthropology for the Postmodern Generation

94th Annual Meeting
American Anthropological Association
Washington, D.C.
November 15–19, 1995

Organizers
Ann Maxwell Hill & Paul Grebinger

Anthropology Through the Looking Glass: The Anthropological Self in a Multicultural Classroom
Daniel E. Moerman & Tina Pativos
(University of Michigan-Dearborn)

Anthropologists study the "other," however, implies the existence or construction of an implicit self. Who is the implicit self in anthropology? We contend that this implicit self, as it is constructed for beginning students in textbooks, readers, films and so on, is white, middle-class and male. Teaching anthropology in a classroom composed of this audience may not pose any particular problems. The students will most likely grasp the anthropological perspective. However, in more diverse classrooms the situation becomes problematic because, as we argue, in order to "get" anthropology, one must understand the culture of the anthropologist; indeed, one must share it. We will demonstrate this assertion with the results of our study using Horace Miner’s Body Ritual of the Nacirema; an article that clearly reveals the implicit audience of anthropology.

Horace Miner’s article is a holy text in anthropology (not unlike the "holy mouth men"). It is probably the one article read by every American anthropologist since World War II; it is also read by nearly every student of anthropology, as it is reprinted everywhere. The article consistently appeared in every collection we checked: Annual Editions, Hunter and Whitten’s Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives, etc. all reprint it. An Internet query some months ago elicited a barrage of accounts of how important the article had been to people. This ubiquity denotes a very clear message about the implicit audience for anthropological writing and teaching.

The point of Miner’s article is essentially to show that objective language can mystify the self. Similarly, the article shows the difference between an emic and an etic perspective, by totally eliminating the emic from the description of the familiar. This piece can be used to convey the concept of ethnocentrism when presented to its intended audience—white, middle-class males. If, however, a substantial portion of the class does not share WASP culture to begin with, this is problematic at best.

Some years ago, I began to notice that, when I had a group of students read Miner’s paper, there was a number of students who just didn’t get it. They didn’t see who was really being described, and even denied the situation when it was revealed to them. "Hog bristle? No way!" was one student’s reaction. Our resulting hypothesis was that students who didn’t understand it would more likely not be white, middle-class males. We examined this hypothesis using a simple test the week of October 16, 1995. Students were given copies of Miner’s article on October 3. They were told that they should read it before October 17 when there would be a quiz in class about the article. The quiz asked three questions about the text.

1. Who are the Nacirema? Which of their customs did you find the most interesting or unusual? Why?
2. Briefly describe the Nacirema shrine. Why do they have these shrines? Why do they do their ritual ablutions in private?
3. What is a latipo? Miner notes, “The fact that these temple ceremonies may not cure, and may even kill the neophyte, in no way decreases the people’s faith in the medicine men.” Why is this?

Subsequently, students were arranged into small groups to discuss their answers. At that point, many discovered who the Nacirema were from their peers. After a few moments, I interrupted, and read to them the bathroom scene from Salingar’s Zooey—an emic version of Miner’s etic description of the household shrine. By then, everyone realized what the Nacirema article was about. The students were then instructed to write on their papers at what point they understood it and to add some personal data—gender, age, religion, where they grew up, racial or ethnic identification, class level, crib language, and father’s and mother’s crib languages.

The results of this test provide a general support for our hypothesis. We sorted student responses into 5 groups. The first group of 16 figured out the subject of the article in the second paragraph which describes the tribes location and culture hero. The second group of 3 realized it out a bit further on, usually with the latipo, then went back to the beginning and read it again. The third group of 13 never really got it, but were suspicious of one element or another. They noted things like this: "I
finally realized [what was happening] when I was reading about the holy mouth man, and I began relating their ritual to our dentists, but I didn't make the full connection (I didn't see all the relations)." The fourth group of 23 stated that they never figured it out until it was explained to them, or until they heard Salinger's tale. Two students had read the article in high school and are omitted from the rest of the discussion. Of the entire class, a total of 19 students got it; 36 didn't. How do the groups compare?

Ten males (51%) and nine females (49%) got it; 15 males (40%) and 21 females (60%) didn't. More males got it than females. This difference is not statistically significant. Seventeen (90%) who self-identified White or Caucasian and two (10%) otherwise identified students got it; 26 whites (70%) and 10 (30%) others didn't get it. More whites than non-whites got it. This difference is not statistically significant. A smaller portion of upperclassmen (22%) didn't get it than underclassmen (70%—freshmen and sophomores combined). Those who got it were on average 2 years older than those who didn't. The differences in religion are not statistically significant. However, none of the students who listed a religion other than Catholic, Protestant (or a Protestant denomination) or None got it. The religions listed by those 6 students listed were Muslim, Moslem, Mormon, LDS, Islamic and Orthodox. The pattern with student's language is similar. The original language of all students (100%) who got it was English. All students with a first language other than English didn't get it. This difference is not statistically significant. However, when we look at student language and parents' language, the situation is more substantial. We combined the student's language with each of the parent's language (e.g. student/English + mother/Arabic + father/Arabic = 3) for a total of 165 languages. Two of 57 languages of those who got it (and their parents) were other than English. In other words, 95% of the students who understood it were raised speaking English as their first language by parents with the same crib language. This difference is statistically significant with p > .05. Although few of these results achieve statistical significance, there is a composite picture which emerges. Those who get it tend to be male, not female, older rather than younger, upperclassmen rather than lower, white rather than non-white, Christian rather than non-Christian, and English speaking rather than non-English speaking, with English speaking parents. In a phrase, they are white, middle-class males, the implicit audience for anthropology.

There is another dimension to this situation. The quiz asked students what they thought was the most interesting or unusual custom of the Nacirema. By far, the most common response was the holy mouth-man rituals. In particular, students noted how odd it was to use hog-bristles as they did; in addition, many stated something like this: "the most interesting custom was the one with the mouth where they go thru pain and still come back to it even though they know it didn't work," said one student who didn't get it. One who did understand it said "I found the custom of visiting the mouth man very unusual because it is very true that even though our teeth continue to decay we still insist on visiting the dentist." Many also commented on the practice of head baking. One student said: "As part of their ceremony, women bake their heads in small ovens for about an hour. That is insane." Generally, those who found an interest in the same items as most interesting as those who didn't, but, the former treated the matter with more reflexivity: "It is humorous to think of what we put ourselves through in the name of vanity. The most interesting custom is [head baking]...I can not under-

stand why [they do this] even though I must admit I have taken part in this custom [myself]."

So now what to do? Perhaps it is better for students not to read Miner at all. Removing the article from the syllabus may eliminate one source of ethnocentrism and androcentrism in anthropological writing; but, it does not resolve the problem. There is, however, a way to gain pedagogic advantage from the situation. During class I have drawn on the point that some students didn't get it to discuss these issues which are typically only addressed to textbook authors. I told the class they didn't get it because they most likely weren't members of the essay's implicit audience. Discussing this subject with the class draws the student's attention to the assumed "we" or "us" that is used when writing about an "other." This is especially valuable for the students reading anthropology who don't see themselves in the implicit "we." We have been continuously drawing on this lesson throughout the class with other texts, ethnographies, films, etc. to improve the level of inclusivity in a diversified classroom. This does not solve the problem of ethnocentrism in anthropological writing; however, it does provide students with the tools to think critically about what they are reading.

Miner's article also continues to be a valuable exercise for teaching the concept of ethnocentrism in general. Those who didn't get it will readily admit to feeling foolish, stupid, or embarrassed. "So, I'm a naive fool," wrote one student. They also admit that a prime reason they didn't get it was because the Nacirema were so extreme, so "gross," as they put it. I tell them to grab onto their embarrassment, to feel it, to remember it, to capture it and put it in their pocket and keep it handy. Then the next time they read about some strange culture which seems gross, they should remember the Nacirema, and take their bundle of embarrassment out of their pocket, and read the article again, remembering the difference between Miner's and Salinger's descriptions of the medicine cabinet.

The Anthropologist as Missionary Preaching on Easter Sunday to the Unchurched

Bonnie Lloyd (Monroe Community College)

The following presents a synthesis of ideas regarding the introductory course in cultural anthropology—ideas hatched and honed throughout nearly ten years of teaching experience. Many of these years have been spent at the community college level; therefore I will begin my remarks with some descriptive data of the institution in which I teach to provide a context for the points I will make.

Monroe Community College, located in upstate New York, is (like many such institutions) undergoing changes reflecting the overall economic and social changes in our culture. As a result, we educate a student body that is growing both in numbers and in cultural diversity. The total enrollment of matriculated students for the academic year 1994/95 was 13,730, more than half of whom were part-time. One-thousand nine-hundred and seventy-eight degrees were awarded in 1995. Presently our student body is comprised of:
"Cream of the crop" honor students taking advantage of the economic benefits of receiving their first two years of college at substantial savings while living at home.

Educationally disadvantaged students who enter college through a host of prematriculation "developmental studies" course-work.

Economically disadvantaged students who are able to attend college through various federal and state aid programs.

Returning students of all ages, many of whom are supporting families while in school. (The average age of our students is twenty-six.)

Working students (who include the above as well as students just out of high-school), many of whom hold full-time jobs while taking full-time course loads.

Minority students of many racial and ethnic backgrounds including Native Americans. (Our minority enrollment was 375 in 1985; in 1994 it was 1178.)

Deaf students who attend classes with sign language interpreters.

Disabled students who attend classes with a variety of need specific assistance, academic and/or physical.

International students and recent immigrant students, many of whom are speakers of English as a second language.

Senior citizen students who audit courses under a county program that provides free access to our campus and course offerings for all county residents of retirement age.

The ideas I will present reflect, among other things, the fact that I am expected to teach all of these students together in the same class. I doubt that my experience is unique.

Teaching the introductory course in cultural anthropology is a little like delivering a sermon on Easter Sunday; we know at the outset that most of the "congregation" won't be coming back next time. Only some of our students will return for a second course, and even fewer a third. Most will enter professions other than anthropology, and most will take the course to fulfill a requirement. Yet the introductory course is our best chance to reach students with the useful ideas and skills which anthropology has to offer. For this reason, we should focus strongly on the practical value of anthropological knowledge, and we should see ourselves primarily as teachers of applied anthropology—that is, anthropology that can be used in everyday situations. I suggest the following: First, the introductory course should be seen primarily as the presentation of a conceptual tool kit—a tool kit without which no one should enter the twenty-first century. Second, a course format that emphasizes the concepts of anthropology as practical thinking tools is not compatible with the one suggested by the usual fifteen chapters in most introductory texts. Third, the introductory course should take care to stress cultural examples that are accessible to students, and it should present members of other cultures in a manner that does not exoticize them.

The Conceptual Tool Kit

The content of the introductory course in cultural anthropology should heavily stress the core concepts of the discipline. Foremost among these are culture, ethnocentrism, cultural relativism, and holism. It is these concepts which will be the most useful to people whose lives will be lived out in a complex world where "tribal" societies are increasingly modern and "modern" societies are increasingly tribal. Unfortunately, these core concepts are not easy to teach. They can be easily memo-

ized and regurgitated on a test, but true understanding of them requires something that most students are not prepared to handle. It requires a conceptual shift—a shift out of the western mode of thinking, characterized by dualism and scientific reductionism, and into a holistic mode of thinking, characterized by complexity and openness. A shift of this nature is difficult because it requires intellectual courage as well as "smarts."

Culture

I have found that the concept of culture is one of the most difficult for students to grasp. I don't think this has anything to do with the many definitions of culture. I think the problem has more to do with the real life implications of understanding the concept in depth. To understand Culture (with a capital C) is to understand that separate realities exist within our real and personal worlds. For most of us, separate realities are relegated to the stuff of science fiction. Understanding that there are multiple existences and that this fact has real-world consequences requires a great deal of work on the part of students. Concrete examples and learning tasks that actively involve them are necessary to support this work. For example, I often ask my students to describe the logical consequences (conceptual, emotional, and "in the world" objective) of having two sexual partners who are aware of each other in a monogamous and in a polygamous society. We go through this in detail, and I write what is said on the board. Emotional consequences mentioned, for instance, might range from intense and even murderous jealousy to comfortable and uneventful acceptance. Mental exercises of this nature can make the fact that culture is a determinant of one's repertoire of possible actions in the world, with all that this implies, plausible in the student's real and everyday life.

Ethnocentrism and Cultural Relativism

The concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism are also difficult. They require two tasks, one intellectual and one emotional, for true understanding. The first task is to simply entertain the idea discussed above—that there can be multiple realities. This is basic to an understanding of ethnocentrism. Obviously we can't see the flawed nature of the belief that our own culture is central to all of reality if we can't understand and accept the existence of other realities. The second task is to entertain the feelings that will naturally come with this understanding. The ability to live comfortably with these feelings is necessary to the practice of cultural relativism. The biblical injunction from the New Testament, "Judge not," is at its core, and we would do well to remember this. We are enjoining our students to succeed at something that the preacher has spent centuries attempting to get humans to do. The fact that we have layered a basically moral concept with what might be considered a rather slick intellectual justification does not make it any the less a difficult moral construct. A healthy chunk of time needs to be spent on each of these concepts to make them come alive; they need to be repeated again and again in various ways that are emotionally as well as intellectually reinforcing.

Holism

Holism is possibly the most difficult of the above concepts for students to grasp. Most of them have spent their entire academic careers learning to think reductionistically—"subjects" bound neatly in little boxes with labels such as "math," "science," "music," and "art." And we don't help the matter by adding new "subjects" such as "kinship," "language," and
"religion." Holism is not a difficult concept for students to define and memorize, but in my experience, it is an extremely difficult concept for students to apply. For example, I often give my classes a take home final with only one question. Students are required to select a culture, choose a system within that culture on which to focus, and describe the effect of that system on the other systems within the culture. Now I believe I teach the concept of holism very thoroughly. Often I begin an introductory class by tying the entire group together with fish-line, assigning roles to individuals such as "religion" or "big business," and having each student in turn attempt to move around the room in response to some "occurrence" within a particular system. (You can imagine what this looks like to passers-by if the door is ajar.) I complete the exercise by assigning a remaining student the role of a "newly encountered culture" and having him or her attempt to walk right through the middle of the group. Yet at the end of the term, despite such pedagogical efforts, most of my students complete the take home final by simply describing three or four of the major systems within the culture they have chosen without any reference to all the effects each might have on the others. This experience suggests to me that it is the epistemological nature of the concept of holism which makes it difficult to grasp. The complexity of today's world is truly overwhelming, and I suspect that learning to think about it holistically makes it even more overwhelming. The mind shift required to truly grasp what it means to think about a complex world in a holistic manner is at once radical and for many almost prohibitively painful. Yet holism is a deeply needed conceptual tool in the post-modern world; we must appreciate all of this when we teach it.

Teaching Methods: The Course Format

Unfortunately a course format that teaches the above concepts as part of an "intellectual tool kit" is not compatible with the format suggested by the fifteen chapters in most introductory texts. Topic areas such as politics, economics, linguistics, and kinship, are rightfully entire subject matters in themselves; there simply isn't time to teach all of them well. The cursory once-over we are able to give them in the week's time usually allotted often amounts to a blitzkrieg of information. I don't suggest that we abandon teaching these topics, they are very important; I do suggest that they take a back seat to the core concepts discussed above. In my classes I attempt to present specific topics in a manner which illustrates and reinforces the core concepts. I keep my syllabus flexible so that I can focus on class interests and discussions as they develop, and I eliminate planned lectures if necessary. In fact, I have come to feel that the traditional fifteen week topic oriented curriculum might be more appropriate for the second course in cultural anthropology. Full attention in the introductory course could then be given to the manner in which particular students and classes orient themselves toward the core concepts. Using class interests as a guide, limited topics could be investigated in depth in the light of these concepts, and students could be given an opportunity to actually think with them as opposed to think about them.

Teaching Methods: The Use of Illustrations and Examples

Anthropology is a discipline that thrives on examples. In the introductory course, it is especially important that we choose cultural examples carefully. We must present examples that are accessible to contemporary student minds, and we must take care not to exoticize the people represented. It is not necessary to present far away cultures with far away customs to wide-eyed students who are new to anthropology. Many of our students now live around and among those people once considered "exotic," and increasingly, these "exotic others" are our students. Cultural anthropology needs to begin turning its eye to its own back yard in order to illustrate its principles. More importantly, "exoticization" needs to become a familiar word in our language. Our students need not learn to pronounce it, but it is imperative that they understand what it means. Important anthropological topics such as the commodification of culture in art, advertising, and tourism are topics with which many of our students will deal in their professional lives; understanding what it is to exoticize another human being will be a required skill for them if they are to avoid repeating the mistakes of previous generations. Also, we need to be especially wary of our own tendency to exoticize people in our capacity as teachers of anthropology. How many of us have never played a game with our students that I call "Shooky" when we show the film Yanomamo: A Multi-disciplinary Study and wait expectantly for the infamous "Eating the Grub Filled Taco Sandwich" scene? Could we not update our representation of Amerindians by showing something more contemporary, such as Kayapo: Out of the Forest, from the series, Disappearing World, a film which chronicles the successful political foray of the Brazilian Kayapo into the modern world of development, high finance, and international media? Well chosen cultural examples should enable students to see themselves as just as exotic as "the other" and "the other" as just as ordinary as themselves.

To Summarize

Teaching introductory anthropology as the presentation of a conceptual tool kit for the twenty-first century will necessitate changes of both emphasis and inclusion in the traditional curriculum. The emphasis of core concepts and the use of close and familiar examples that do not exoticize people will enable students to try out anthropology's practical thinking tools on real events in their own real lives. By providing students with a useful intellectual tool kit we are also teaching them applied anthropology; we are giving our students tools that will enable them to more fully understand their experiences and make intelligent decisions about their lives in the real world.

Beyond the Exotic “Other”: Interactive Techniques for Teaching Gender Role Enculturation in Introductory Cultural Anthropology

Paul Grebinger (Rochester Institute of Technology)

Like many young initiates into the priesthood of professional anthropology, in my early years of teaching I followed closely the sacred texts, and the litany of great learning as I had received them in preparation for the Ph.D. My mission was to convert heathen minds to the truths of anthropology. To transmit this wisdom in pristine form was at first something on the order of a sacred act. I assumed the power of these truths was self-evident, that administered to supplicants they would cleanse and
purify. During the first three years of teaching I persisted in this misperception. My student acolytes, themselves potential candidates for passage into the profession, were unlikely to disabuse me. In subsequent years, employment in non-traditional settings has precipitated a falling away from this faith. Although not an apostate, I have taken a more eclectic approach to transmitting some of the insights of anthropology. What follows is a personal account of the most recent transformation as it relates to teaching gender issues in my introductory cultural anthropology course. My hope is that others will find the techniques described both interesting and useful, and that this discussion will stimulate dialog with others who have undergone similar transformations.

The changes in pedagogical approach that I describe here developed through the interplay of experience teaching in an interdisciplinary curriculum and cultural anthropology courses within my own department of sociology and anthropology. At Rochester Institute of Technology before they graduate, all seniors are required to take what is known as Senior Seminar, which is organized on a topic selected by the Liberal Arts College faculty. Beginning in the fall term of 1991 the topic was "Difference and Community" focusing on issues of race, social class and gender in American society. The seminar discussions benefit from the Gannett Lecture Series which runs concurrently on the same topic. As often happens where the anthropology program is small, available anthropologists are in demand as consultants on a variety of issues that are subsidiary to their own interests. As fate would have it, when the Liberal Arts College faculty selected the theme "Difference and Community," there were few among the tenured senior faculty who were considered qualified to direct the seminar and lecture series. My colleagues selected me! They seemed to think that my training and experience as an anthropologist would be valuable, that I am an expert in diversity on a global scale. Also, I think that female colleagues regarded me as a committed feminist, a consequence of long-term involvement in efforts to establish the first Women's Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls, New York. So for two years I served as Gannett Lecturer/Director, with responsibility for creating the lecture series, delivering some of the lectures, and coordinating an interdisciplinary faculty.

I suppose that my anthropological expertise was of some value. In designing the 1991-1992 Gannett Lecture Series I interviewed members of the teaching faculty, a skill developed primarily through research experience. This data gathering strategy gave faculty a sense of participation, that their expertise was of value, and was being incorporated in the design of the larger enterprise. In lectures such as "Boys Will Be Boys: An Anthropological Perspective on Gender Bias in American Culture," I was able to employ insights about culture as learned behavior and illustrate with examples from the cross-cultural literature. In retrospect, however, of greater importance than the anthropological insight I may have imparted has been the impact of this experience on my approach to my own courses, including introductory cultural anthropology.

In the context of the interviews with faculty in preparation for the new curriculum, several advised me that the Gannett Lecture Series, on the basis of the experience of previous years, was in jeopardy for reason of declining student attendance. The presentations of invited scholars of great erudition were often well-received by faculty, but not by students. RIT is a comprehensive university. Students are enrolled in a wide range of career focused curricula, from engineering and business to imaging science and food, hotel and travel management. We are also home of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. Despite recent efforts to recruit both minorities and women, 67% of the undergraduate student population is male, and 33% female. In the College of Engineering males are 58% and females 12% of enrolled students. Minorities constitute 11% of the student body at the Institute. Our students take a very pragmatic approach to learning. Because they have experience of active learning through frequent studio and laboratory courses and co-op placements, they are less tolerant of lectures laden with theory and the usual jargon of one's discipline. Consequently, I attempted to design a lecture series in which students might begin to see themselves as "other." The challenge was to draw white male students into an active engagement with the "other" at the margins of American society. In the Gannett Lecture Series, as just one example, we invited a local jazz poet whose writing is an evocation of the Rochester African American neighborhood in which he grew up.

In my own senior seminar sections I elected to make gender the focus of discussion. I have incorporated three techniques tested in that context in my introductory cultural anthropology course. They are being used together for the first time in the fall term 1995. Each is designed to "decenter" the student, but especially to assist male students to see themselves in the role of a female other.

The first two are employed early in the course under the syllabus heading "The Study of Culture." Readings include Kottak (1994, sixth edition) chapters on culture, linguistics and appendix (an analysis of popular American culture), and Deborah Tannen "How To Give Orders Like a Man" in the Dushkin Anthropology 95/96 reader (Angeloni 1995). In general I find that male students do not perceive themselves as much different than their female counterparts. It may be that young women, who have succeeded in gaining entrance into one or another of the many engineering programs at RIT, have worked hard at presenting themselves as their male counterparts imagine them to be, i.e., "just one of the guys." So the challenge for me is to get them to actually confront the differences. Two exercises designed to achieve this goal evolved out of my reading of Deborah Tannen's You Just Don't Understand (1990). I assigned the book as Senior Seminar reading because it employs examples from everyday experience, and is written in language that engaged even my male students.

Tannen proposes that female and male communication styles are as different as dialectic differences in language, which she refers to as genderlects. As an example of the differences, she notes that females are more comfortable doing "private speaking" which she terms "rapport talk," while males are more comfortable doing "public speaking," termed "report talk." "For most women," Tannen (1990:77) says, "the language of conversation is primarily a... way of establishing connections and negotiating relationships... of displaying similarities and matching experiences." By contrast, "for most men talk is primarily a means to preserve independence and negotiate and maintain status in a hierarchical social order [accomplished] by exhibiting knowledge and skill, and by holding center stage through verbal performance such as storytelling, joking, or imparting information." It occurred to me that this difference could be elicited even in the artificial environment of the classroom. I divided students into subgroups of all males and all females, and
asked them to sit and chat with one another for 15–20 minutes. I also asked for volunteers, females to observe males, males to observe females, who would sit, listen, record the content and interpersonal dynamic of the conversation, and then report observations to the class. In my cultural anthropology course I remind these observers that their role is similar to that of the ethnographer. In the fall term 1995 class I gave the "ethnographers" five minutes of instruction before they joined their groups. This included a photocopy of Tannen's definitions of rapport and report talk. Although skills of individual "ethnographers" vary, and not all gender groups conform to type, there is usually enough similarity so that students can see themselves in the types defined by Tannen.

It is helpful to reinforce an interactive exercise such as described above with an example of how the insight may be applied more broadly. I use it as a basis for analysis of popular American culture, specifically the film When Harry Met Sally (1989) written by Nora Ephron, directed by Rob Reiner, and starring Meg Ryan as Sally and Billy Crystal as Harry. A romantic comedy, the plot develops in three acts progressing from a clash of antithetical personalities through friendship to romantic involvement. Sally and Harry meet as students sharing a ride from the University of Chicago to New York City. In the opening and subsequent scenes of the first act, Harry is presented as the quintessential report talking male, "exhibiting knowledge" and "holding center stage through verbal performance." He is sexist, and I think it is fair to say, a schmuck! He does not know how to listen. Both Sally and Harry spend the next ten years of their lives involved with other partners, Sally with a live-in blond hunk, while Harry marries a lawyer. Neither of these relationships endures. When Sally and Harry meet by accident ten years later, she is solo, and he is suffering the trauma of divorce. In this second act it is clear that Harry has matured, that he is now able to engage in conversation designed to establish connections, and to negotiate relationships through displaying similarities and matching experiences. Harry has become an empathetic listener as revealed in the scene in which Sally explains her break-up with Joe, the blond hunk. There follows a friendship that does not involve sex, just mutual support and sororal affection. The third act is precipitated when Sally discovers that Joe has decided to get married (a commitment to another woman). She calls Harry over to her apartment for commiseration, and before they realize what is happening, they make love. Harry who has always had problems knowing how to respond to women when the relationship becomes intimate, does not handle well this new dimension of his friendship with Sally. The denouement of the film is the resolution of this personal insecurity in favor of commitment and the revelation that empathic listening involves acceptance of the other on her terms as well.

The film can be used in classroom contexts by cueing relevant scenes in order to give students a feel for the characters and the plot. In the presentation of this illustrative material, it is important that the general plot and the context of specific scenes be clearly delineated. Before viewing relevant scenes it is essential to review Tannen's concepts of rapport and report talk. Female students find it easier to grasp Harry's limitations than male students. But the value of the film, and the analysis I offer, is that Harry, the male, is the character who undergoes the greatest transformation. Gender identification and associated cultural behaviors can be modified. What is learned and becomes em-bedded in the unconscious is susceptible to "unlearning" or modification through experience. Class discussions following this exercise often focus on gender role enculturation. Students point out the importance of games, toys, advertisements and the media, among other influences on their own experience of growing up female or male.

Gender as a topic for cross-cultural analysis is introduced later, under the heading of "Male and Female." Students read the Kottak (1994) chapter on "Gender" and readings in Anthropology 25/96 (1995) with special emphasis on Friedel's "Society and Sex Roles." I introduce this section with another in class exercise, based on administration of the Bem Sex Role Inventory, a measure of psychological androgyny (Bem 1974; 1979; 1981b; 1981d; personal communication). I do not explain the nature of the device, but ask students to go along with the activity for the purpose of generating class discussion. The short form of the inventory contains only thirty items on which students evaluate themselves on a scale of 1–7, "Never or Almost Never True" or "Always or Almost Always True" of you. The self assessment usually takes no more than 15 minutes. Each student is then asked to score their own inventory using simple arithmetic calculations which can be accomplished easily without a calculator. Scores fall within three broad categories, Feminine, Masculine, and Androgynous. It is important for each student to discover where they fit on this scale. It is equally important for individuals to compare their score with the scores of the class as a whole. For this purpose I collect sheets, tabulate results, and report them at the beginning of the next class session.

What we generally discover is that the scores of college age students today are significantly more androgynous than they were in the early 1970s when Sandra Bem first developed this measure. Bem found that one-third of her college age respondents scored in the androgynous range. By contrast, often more than 50% of the students in my classes at RIT score in the androgynous range. The comparison of recent past and present within the same cultural system, their own, then becomes the subject for discussion. Through this device it is possible to discuss the Second Feminist Revolution in terms of its impact on gender role enculturation.

The discussion begins with the words and phrases employed in the BSRI as typical of female and male to which students responded with a numerical rating. "Affectionate," "Sympathetic," and "Sensitive to the needs of others," are three of ten that describe female. "Defends own beliefs," "independent," and "Assertive" are three of ten that describe male. These were empirically elicited by Bem from the lexicon of college age students in California in the early 1970s. Female and male students in 1995 evaluate themselves differently in these terms than the previous generation. Some students always challenge the validity of the categories. The more astute engineering students usually ask questions about how the inventory was designed in order to get at its flaws and fix them. Eventually discussion turns to economic, social and cultural factors that operate in American Society to produce change such as increasing numbers of women in the work force, the changing American family, and cultural values all of which impact gender role enculturation. These discussions usually give me the opportunity to talk about both the First and Second Feminist Revolutions in historical perspective, and to introduce some elements of a cultural materialist analysis as outlined by Kottak.
in his chapter on "Gender."

The most recent transformation of my introductory cultural anthropology course described above was inspired by the experience of teaching in an interdisciplinary curriculum in which issues of race, gender, and social class in America were the focus. As a consequence, in my teaching, the exotic other has become less important as a source of insight into the mysteries of cultural behavior. Although cross-cultural comparison and tribal peoples are still an essential source of anthropological insight in the course, my experience tells me that resort to the exotic, especially early in the term, is sometimes counterproductive. Students are often more responsive to learning about culture when they can see themselves in the process.

Notes

1. These figures were supplied courtesy of the RIT office of Institutional Research and Policy Studies. I wish to express thanks in particular to Alice White for her assistance.
2. *When Harry Met Sally* is distributed through Orion Home Video, 410 Park Avenue, N.Y., N.Y. 10022.

References


The New Dog and Pony Show: Techniques for Revitalizing the Introductory Course

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"Let the dog and pony show begin." This was the beginning lecture in an introductory anthropology class that one of the authors attended as an undergraduate. The point that the professor was making was that in an introductory course, an instructor has to entertain the students. Instructors perform for the students in a multitude of ways. An instructor is a performer who dances one's way through the course material, juggling, tumbling, and many times, bumbling to keep interest and critical thinking among students high. Pragmatically, we—as instructors—must continue to strive for higher enrollments to perpetuate the discipline and to remain intellectually viable, visible, and credible. Most importantly, students must be taught to think critically and openly about the world both close and distant. This essay describes interactive teaching techniques as a way of reaching students. The organization of the essay is as follows: first, we address the revitalization of the anthropological introductory course by examining the philosophical basis for an interactive-participative teaching model. Then we discuss the urgency of using new and different teaching methods. Interactivity and several examples are presented next. Finally, concluding comments present the need to construct a classroom to engage the students in the world beyond the classroom.

The Problem

Howard Becker once stated that methodology was too important to be left to methodologists (1970:1). Methodologists spend the majority of their time and energy elaborating on the supposed "right way" to do research or teaching. For Becker, this attitude is more appropriate to a "proselytizing specialty" than it is to social science. We argue that this same concern with a narrow perspective translates directly to the current practice and evaluation of teaching. For a rigid perspective, on one hand, the apparent inflexible application of some procedural rules take precedence over any substantive questions of practice (1970:3-8). This inflexibility becomes a form of fetishism. On the other hand, teaching must be more than "it looks that way to me." Teaching is an attempt to try and make the bases of ideas, judgments, arguments, and assertions as explicit and understandable as possible. This means approaching teaching in an open and reflexive way. Following an established procedure, like the lecture format, does give many benefits: it allows others to critique the approach to arrive at their own conclusions and it presents others with the opportunity to duplicate the pedagogical method. However, the procedure or rule must not overcome the dynamism of teaching. Unlike this common fetishistic tendency, Becker's concern is not routine memorization of a practice, it is a process of reflexive, integrative, and participative thought and practice. And we believe that teaching must reflect this openness.

Examining the origins, influences, and directions of social issues is the hallmark of an anthropological analysis and practice. A truly integrative and exciting teaching method must critically analyze a system of interactions and institutions in which problems or issues arise. Bias, as it is treated by standard methodologists, is a problem of technique. Bias, instead of being treated as a problem of the social organization of researchers and those whom they study, becomes a mechanistic "artifact of the data." Those overly fixated upon the consistent application of a single teaching methodology assume, from the beginning, that they have made all the right choices and assumptions, and they have the right methods and tools to distribute information. Rarely does a reified approach consider that the form of the practice is the problem. The problem with most standard or traditional teaching models reflect the same assumptions of truth and bias—teachers have all the answers and students and all other non-teachers only have partial questions or the derided notion called "common sense." The problems of bias are, in reality, problems of (and with) points of view. In Becker's discussion, the problem of bias is actually a result of a hierarchy of
credibility (1970:14). Teaching practice problems are directly related to the legitimacy granted them by a discipline perpetuating an established hierarchy of perceived truth. Those, on the other hand, teaching methods that are low on the hierarchy are considered illegitimate, problematic, worthless, and non-scientific. In other words, not the road to tenure.

Although the reification of appropriate teaching methods changes slowly, recently anthropologists have moved towards more introspection and critical reflection in their teaching. Anthropology teachers must employ the classic introspective tools of anthropological research on their teaching. We must question the organization, style, and interaction patterns that we establish with our students in the classroom. Teachers have begun using a variety of tools to open dialogue about the delivery and discussion of ideas in their courses (e.g. discussion-based instruction, portfolios, peer and student review). This tendency lends itself away from the staid and rigid teaching styles toward more integrative-participative models.

In order to balance the knowledge of the teacher with the interest of the student, a teaching methodology must be constructed that illustrates several differing forms of knowledge and, the component that is most left out of pedagogical discussions, experience. Because an integrative-participative teaching model is unapologetically qualitative and student empowering it is likely to be criticized as non-scientific and too difficult to establish. Integrative-participative teaching as used here is actually a combination of qualitative, post-structural, and comparative orientations. The trend within the various social science disciplines of the past several decades has been to devalue qualitative, postmodern, post-processual, feminist and participative approaches and to consider them problematic in education (Hall 1981; Harding 1986; Polkinghorne 1983; Reynolds 1980; Roberts 1981). This trend, in recent years however, has reversed to some degree (Miles and Huberman 1984) with the growing acceptance of these approaches the rigid categorization of teaching practice and research must be overcome to energize and enliven all aspects of the teaching experience.

The Urgency of Rethinking Teaching Methods

The AAA task force on the Teaching of Anthropology has suggested that the number of undergraduates who took at least one course in anthropology declined by half from 105,200 to 53,000 students. The impact is clear. Several anthropology departments around the country have had their departments slashed, absorbed by other departments, and in the worst case scenarios, shut down. In an age of discussions about multicultural perspectives it is disheartening to see the message of anthropology lost in a race to create culture studies programs that lack the core of theory, methodology, and substance of anthropology. This ‘crisis’ in anthropology is further heightened by a Republican congress which is actively cutting funding to social science research.

Interactivity

Interactive techniques are designed to create dialogue with the intent to make students talk to one another and think about the course material. By interactivity, we mean more students using the Internet, although that is also a tool available to some instructors, we mean a classroom environment in which the students and instructors create dialogue and discussion. It gets students moving both physically and intellectually. Interactive techniques make the course less static by helping the students to recall what they are supposed to be learning. Older examples of this pedagogical style include, “Alphans and Betans,” “Boffa Boffa,” and “Cultural Imperialism.” These interactive ‘games’ allow students to ‘play’ with the ideas imparted in an anthropology course while it helps students to become acquainted with one another. In addition, these interactive exercises assist students in understanding the process and dynamism that comes from the interaction between cultures. When combined with an interactive teaching which moves the instructor out from behind the lectern and into the classroom, the students become intertwined with the material and have to react to it. With a student population that is increasingly composed of the MTV generation, an instructor must be able to compete with a dizzying array of sensory delights. Class exercises must reflect this change of student perspective. It is necessary for us as instructors to do more than bemoan the lack of attention span of the students, it is essential for us to actively convey the excitement and purpose that we draw from anthropology.

The critical issue involved with the attempt to generate student interest is how to create and maintain that interest in the course. The question is how to produce interactivity in the classroom that achieves these ends. Anthropology courses, unlike statistics, possess a wide variety of tools and possibilities for creating an interactive classroom. Historically, anthropology has had a strong visual component, realized in the formalization of visual anthropology over the last decade. What we suggest is to do more than capitalize on the plethora of films, videos, and pictures that are available to the anthropology course, rather try and communicate the ‘feeling’ of anthropology to students by active learning components in which students are interactive with the materials and each other.

One Example: Linkage Learning

New instructors and graduate student teachers often face structural difficulties—large class sizes, shrinking resource bases, and ever growing amounts of information to accumulate—which create road blocks to effective teaching. In particular, the incredible explosion of various information outlets (electronic and scholarly) present the new teacher with built-in limitations and almost immediate out-of-date information. What we present here is one method that has allowed us to get around some of these limitation problems. This approach allows one to connect with colleagues both inside and outside of a department which makes the classroom and the colleges or universities where we teach more inclusive.

The method that we suggest goes beyond a sociology course or an anthropology course and is in actuality nothing new. What we are proposing is, in fact, a standard interdisciplinary practice. Many of us as new teachers are probably already using this practice; what we want to suggest is expanding the use of this method. What we are suggesting is the increased use of guest speakers as a pedagogical tool, not just a way to cover a day when the instructor is out of town for a conference. Teachers who need assistance often seek out departmental colleagues, friends, and colleagues in other disciplines to guest lecture in courses. Given budget constraints, we simply approach these other instructors with the idea of discussing their research and discipline in a course and if they are willing we would do the same in one of their courses. This quid pro quo arrangement works well for many of us. We have had people from various fields and institutions come into courses. They discuss their own research agendas and relate these discussions to relevant topics.
in our courses. For example, in a sociological theory course that one of the authors taught, an anthropologist who had an interest in chaos theory spoke to the class. The students were impressed. After his discussion, the class related chaos theory to unintended consequences, culture, and social action. The students witnessed a practical application of the idea that social theory is not limited to one field and can be applied.

The benefits and advantages of this method are numerous: 1) a wider knowledge base for yourself and the students. When people discuss their research in class, instructors learn as much as the students do; 2) your students will be presented with the ideas of numerous intellectual and practical fields. In a criminology course one of the authors has had people from Criminal Justice, Business, Law, English, and Cultural Anthropology speak to a class; and 3) hopefully you will return the favor in others’ courses creating linkages in a variety of disciplines and departments. We believe that any loss of days in coverage of materials is more than offset by the advantages of a truly interdisciplinary dialogue between students and colleagues.

Another Example: Small Group Exercises

Besides opening the classroom to others with different experiences, the instructor must find a way to connect with students on an individual level. Clearly the instructor must be willing and able to use small group exercises. One game that we have used is a game that we call ‘Aliens.’ It is a role-playing game in which the class is reorganized into several small groups with each student participating as a member of an American president’s cabinet. This exercise is not unlike the social psychology exercise in which students determine who survives an apocalyptic or disastrous situation. The Scenario is:

The date is November 15, 2005. Aliens have contacted the residents of the United States through the nation’s political leadership three months ago. People expect their arrival today. Currently the United States is in decline. Many cities have been declared uninhabitable and their residents forced to relocate. Crime, pollution, economic hardship, and a decline in standard of living are all increasing. Americans feel that the “American dream has become a nightmare.” Recent court cases have led to greater social disparity, social upheaval, and racial-based tension and conflict.

The aliens appear in great ships that seem to appear out of nowhere at a location that the alien message specified. The aliens appear before a large crowd that includes Vice-President Smith and Secretary of State Buck. The aliens use holoscopic technology to offer the following:

1. Nearly unlimited amounts of gold and precious metals;
2. Machines that can purify the rivers and the air;
3. Cold fusion technology that would give the United States an inexhaustible, cheap energy source.

In return the aliens ask for delivery, to their ships, of humans in five days, who have 2,500 milligrams of melanin in their skin per square centimeter. The offer is non-negotiable and the decision-making will not be influenced in any way by the aliens. The United States is the only country that has been contacted in this way. Note that the exercise is even more interesting when the aliens ask for humans who have less than 2,000 milligrams of melanin.

The Assignment

There are eight individuals hidden in a secret bunker watching the alien offer on television. You must role-play the scenario provided and advise the president of the United States on what decision should be made. You will be assigned an individual to role-play. Discuss the scenario and make a decision.

You are all people of some prominence in the United States who are assembled at this bunker. The president has asked all the people at this meeting to be there to advise him on the alien contact. You all see the contact for the first time at the same time.

This exercise provides students with a context in which they must consider the issues of racism, cultural imperialism, xenophobia, stratification, and a host of other issues. Breaking the class into small sections, for the aliens exercise we would recommend groups of six to eight, allows students to role-play positions which create a great deal of interaction and discussion. The role-play method, although it is often unpredictable, empowers students and presents another opportunity for them to reflect on course ideas.

Another example of a small group exercise that is dramatic, intellectually stimulating, and fun is an exercise we call ‘Kazooa.’ This exercise, which has been circulating among teachers for years, demonstrates the importance of communication. The exercise starts by splitting the class into groups of four to five people. Hand each person in each group a kazoo. Have each group, without discussion among the members, play any song for about thirty seconds to a minute. Each group will be off-key and sound, most likely horrible. After each group has played, give them a few minutes to come up with a song to play within the group. This time is important because someone will probably take the role as a leader and generate communication among the members to find a song that is agreeable to all of the members. After the groups have had a few minutes to coordinate, have them perform their songs. One will see and hear a remarkable difference. For example, groups will play songs like ‘twinkle, twinkle little star.’ This exercise will develop great rapport among the students and show them how working together as a small group is more effective when communication is present. It will also demonstrate who took on the role as leader in the small group and other issues of cognition, leadership, and group behavior.

Integrative-Participative Teaching: Last Word

In The Sociological Imagination, C. W. Mills (1959) challenged social researchers to develop a point of view and a practice that would allow them to examine how the private troubles of individuals, which occur with the immediate world of experience (not the laboratory), are connected to public issues and to public responses to these troubles. Mills’ sociological imagination was biographical, historical, comparative, interpretive, and institutional; that is, inherently reflective and integrative. By following the fetishism of narrow teaching models, teachers have moved away from the attempt to make the world of problematic lived experience of ordinary people and institutions directly understood. The focus of anthropology, has in essence, been the same attempt to collect information on cultures and societies in an attempt to make human experience understood. What we suggest is an anthropological imagination akin to Mills’ sociological one.

The teaching model articulated here is part of a process of integrative practice. This means taking students as seriously as we take the people who work in a particular area or subject mat-
ter. This does not mean that we turn control of our classrooms over to the students, but that we use their concerns and interactions to motivate and energize them. Individuals are always enmeshed in social, personal, cultural, and institutional relationships that are more important and significant to them than others’ ideas.

“The events they (individuals) participate in matter to them. The opinions and actions of the people they interact with must be taken into account, because they affect those events. All the constraints that affect them in their ordinary lives continue to operate while the observer observes.” (Becker 1970:46)

Organization Issues

The organization of an integrative-participative teaching style requires that the learning experience be approached from a multitude of perspectives rather than a single dominating view. Of course, there are several difficulties in this type of activity. First, the instructor must be willing to accept more administrative work. Class exercises must be planned out and integrated into the course. In terms of the participative component, agencies, colleagues, organizations, and social movements must be contacted and potential arrangements established. We have found that for several of our courses this preparatory work has been minimal. Students gain possible internships, careers, and most certainly knowledge that is tempered with experience. Students who are looking for a facile course will be quite surprised by these added course components which is a related problem. However, if the instructor is flexible students can find activities in class exciting. Some students will feel that these types of learning activity are “too much work.” But we have found that the students who stay are interested in the course and contribute overall. In terms of actual course requirements a minimum amount of required participation, several written exercises, and class discussion would suffice to add an integrative-participative teaching component to a class.

Conclusion: Okay, so this is the last word

The benefits of an integrative-participative teaching pedagogy are clear: deep, critical knowledge that is gained by the students, who participate more in classes, a more enjoyable class experience for all, and broader appreciation of the educational experience. What can we say but the obvious: Do what works which creates an interactive classroom on all levels. Do not limit yourself on the basis of what a discipline is “supposed to be.” Approach the classroom in a creative and open way. It is our belief that instructors, as we stated at the beginning of this work, are part entertainers. Students learn more and perform better in a class that is run for the benefit rather than a class operating as something done to them. It is our contention that an interactive form of teaching is part of a critical pedagogy which involves a participatory teaching approach that allows students to experience in some partial way the materials that they are engaged in learning.

Notes

1. AAA Task Force Report 1992
2. This exercise is based on an episode of a recent HBO program: Comic Stop™

References


The Six Dichotomies of Intro: Teaching Anthropology as a Western Cultural Experience

Michael S. Bitting (Franklin and Marshall College)

In teaching introductory cultural anthropology to American undergraduates there is a temptation to present our discipline as the non-Eurocentric antidote to the Western orientation that our students are receiving in their other courses. To a great extent, it is useful—even necessary—for us to succumb to this temptation. Since sensitizing our students to cultural differences, ethnocentrism, and the sociocultural construction of reality and knowledge are all important functions of the Intro course, it is essential that we help guide students toward an appreciation of how much our understanding of our lives and those of others is rooted within one particular cultural heritage whose assumptions and norms must not be taken as universal or given.

But just as useful analytic notions such as cultural relativism can be taken to easily parodied extremes, so too can the notion that anthropology is uniquely capable of transcending the bonds of the particular culture that spawned it and continues to nurture it: that is, Western culture. I have found in my ten years of teaching Intro that, ironically, the more I incorporate material about the intellectual context within which our discipline arose, the easier it becomes to bring students to a reflexive understanding of their own perspective about human differences. And, the easier it becomes to help students think about the taken-for-granted assumptions and classifications that underlie the way they think and act. Situating anthropology within Western intellectual history also gives me the satisfaction of providing my students with a more honest account of why and how a
discipline that takes cultural diversity seriously developed at a particular time and place. Leaving this context out of the Intro course runs the risk of portraying anthropologists as heroic outsiders who manage to overcome the cultural embeddedness that is the inevitable fate of the rest of humanity.

There are two additional advantages of contextualizing anthropology this way: One is that it enables students far better to understand some of the theoretical disputes that have taken place in the discipline. Although I wouldn't go so far as to say there is nothing new under the sun in anthropological theory, a rough familiarity with the history of political thought, metaphysics, and moral philosophy can serve as a strong grounding for situating various theoretical currents within a broader intellectual context. The second advantage is that many students who take Intro do not seem to know the first thing about the Enlightenment, the Romantic movement, epistemology, state of nature theory, or much else concerning the history of Western ideas. In other words, teaching anthropology this way helps students understand their own intellectual heritage better, all the while making them more sensitive to the fact that the development of that heritage was neither ineluctable nor "natural." And that could be the very definition of "Liberal Education."

During three one-hour classes early in the semester I present a series of six admittedly exaggerated dichotomies representing important philosophical issues relevant to the study of society and culture. I explain that the extreme poles of these dichotomies are rarely seen in pure form nowadays, and that there are common (though not necessary) affinities among the different dichotomies. Although I give some historical detail about the actual positions taken by various important philosophers and social theorists, for the most part the early discussion is rather stylized and abstract. I do not actually expect the students to internalize the import of these issues at this early stage. During the course of the semester, as different anthropological perspectives, ethnographic styles, and theoretical conceptions are encountered, the students will be expected to relate them to the dichotomies in class discussions and short essays. Only through this practical engagement do I expect the abstract ideas met earlier to come alive and become relevant to contemporary anthropology.

The first dichotomy is Idealism and Materialism. Here it is important to discuss both the ontological differences between the idealist and materialist conceptions and the implications of those differences for views of historical causality. Every time I teach Intro, one or two students have heard of Plato's Allegory of the Cave and can roughly recount it for the class. But I have yet to meet a student who actually understands the ontological significance of the allegory. Despite the deep roots of idealism in Western thought, true philosophical idealism seems quite foreign to modern American undergraduates in whom scientific reasoning, reductionism, and material causality are so deeply ingrained. No matter how sympathetically I try to present them, Plato's forms, Hegel's World Spirit, and even Linnaeus's typological method might as well have been devised by space aliens. Darwin's population thinking, Marx's historical materialism, and even "vulgar" materialist approaches to history and society, on the other hand, all seem to elicit knowing and sympathetic responses. Even in our discipline, though most of us occupy middle, situation-specific ground along this continuum, many more of us would willingly and proudly proclaim themselves materialists than would proclaim themselves idealists. In fact, the term "idealist" has become a sort of epithet in some quarters. One simplistic, student-friendly example that I often use to illustrate the causal implications of this dichotomy concerns the proximate causes of the American Revolution. Contrasting a view that gives priority to liberal Enlightenment conceptions of the rights of individuals to a view that stresses the economic contradictions of colonialism usually brings a strong response of recognition from students.

The second dichotomy, methodological individualism versus holism (or collectivism), is important because it concerns the ontological status of society and culture. Is society no more than the sum total of its individual constituents? Are there emergent properties at this hierarchical level that operate by separate principles and require different modes of understanding? By contrasting the views of Adam Smith with those of Durkheim, I am able to present concepts such as "reductionism," "essentialism," and "reification" that will come up in various contexts throughout the semester. I mention Weber's method of Ideal Types as a way to allow a certain amount of necessary essentializing without reifying the analytic categories that one creates. As illustrations of contemporary variants from the social sciences I describe the essential tenets of rational choice theory and Structural Marxism.

At this point I bring up a more modern third dichotomy that is really a subsidiary of the previous one: Structure and Agency. After mentioning the older debate between free will and determinism, I discuss more current oversocialized and undersocialized conceptions of human action. The term "structure" is so deeply ingrained in our own sensibilities that we often forget how idiosyncratic and counter-intuitive our conception of it is. I find that this dichotomy often elicits a good deal of student interest and debate. A brief discussion of Marx's dialectic helps convince them that compromise between these extremes is possible, as does a cursory description of contemporary "praxis" theories.

The fourth dichotomy is the classical epistemological cleavage between Rationalism and Empiricism. Again, many students have heard of Descartes's famous dictum, "I think, therefore I am," but almost none of them have the foggiest idea what it means. It is easier for students to understand these contrasting ways of knowing if one places them within the context of the Enlightenment, and spends a little time discussing some epistemological fundamentals. After covering the basics of Cartesian rationalism and its delibration of mathematics, Humean radical skepticism and its delibration of sensory data, and Kant's attempt at reconciling the two, one can easily cite examples from the modern social sciences of formal, quantitative approaches (largely from economics) as well as atheoretical empirical studies (largely from "empirical" sociology). Since reading Stephen Toulmin's _Cosmopolis_, I have changed my approach to this dichotomy a bit and added a discussion of the Renaissance humanists (such as Montaigne and Erasmus) and their epistemological concern with the particular, the local, the timely, and the rhetorical. Again, examples of this "practical modesty" from the modern social sciences—especially anthropology—are not hard to find.

The fifth dichotomy is a little harder to name. It concerns Enlightenment and Romantic conceptions of the so-called "State of Nature" and the "Social Contract." For lack of a better name, I call it "nasty, brutish, and short" versus "the noble savage." Although a few students who have taken political theory have heard of Hobbes, and one or two may have even read excerpts
from *Leviathan*, I have yet to encounter an Intro student who knows the first thing about Rousseau. I guess we are a long way from the 1960s! Although modern anthropology has taught us that the ahistorical condition premises of state of nature reasoning bear no relation to reality, I ask my students to be alert to the possibility of Rousseauian bias in the ethnographic monographs they read and the films they see. This is a question that will become the source of considerable debate much later in the semester, after we read and discuss anthropological research in Western, industrial societies. It is often interesting to link this dichotomy to the previous one in reference to the Romantic movement in art, poetry, music, landscape design, and philosophy. I ask my students to consider the relationship between the Romantic rejection of Enlightenment ways of knowing and its glorification of nature, rural life, and "the primitive."

The final dichotomy is between Positivism and Interpretivism. Although this is clearly related to some of the other dichotomies, it is sufficiently important on its own account to merit separate consideration. Here the legacy of Comte and Durkheim can be juxtaposed to that of Dilthey and Weber in a discussion of to what extent the social sciences can and should seek to emulate the methods and conceptual foundations of the natural sciences. Questions about the position of the outside observer relative to "the Other" inevitably come up, as do questions about the extent to which we should be guided by epistemological rather than pragmatic considerations. Students taking their first social science Intro course often find this dichotomy perplexing and esoteric. Convincing them of its serious import requires resort to several concrete examples of how the two approaches actually differ.

Of course, during the course of the semester several other potentially dichotomous issues arise: functional versus historical explanation; value-free versus ethically engaged approaches; relativism versus foundationalism. These and many more could conceivably be added to any list of the fundamental issues of anthropological thought. But for my taste most of these can be profitably considered as variations on the more universal themes covered early in the semester. It still never ceases to amaze me—and my students—just how many of our theoretical debates represent creative combinations of the most basic and ancient philosophical questions. Every generation of anthropologists seeks to invent its own terms, to find new dragons to slay, and to imagine itself-speaking and writing ideas that have never been spoken or written before. Certainly, the likes of Geertz, Bourdieu, Harris, Clifford, Habermas, and Lévi-Strauss are fresh, original, and worthy of our utmost attention. But today's theoreticians have not arrived into our world *de novo*; their ideas build upon intellectual foundations that we might as well make explicit for our students, even if the theorists themselves do not make them explicit for us. Whether we like to admit it or not, the cultural heritage of the West is the context within which we operate, and the anthropological work we produce today can contribute to the future development of that heritage.

The comparative perspective that we bring to bear on human culture and society is itself an artifact of that Western heritage. Students at the introductory level that are taught about anthropological ideas without being led to consider the cultural roots of the anthropological endeavor are being given the wrong message. For as much as we ask our students to contemplate and (we hope) appreciate the cultural embeddedness of human social life, the best example we can provide them is ourselves. In our zeal to present anthropology as the best suited discipline to carry the multicultural banner into the next millennium—a zeal that in my opinion is well-founded—it is a mistake to portray ourselves as being non-cultural, unsituated, and context-free. Today's students have well-honed hypocrisy detectors, and deep mistrust of self-righteousness. Owning up to our Western roots affords them the opportunity to gain a valuable perspective on those roots, and gives them the best possible lesson we could give about the multicultural ethic of anthropology. One final meta-question with which I leave my students well-illustrates the reflexiveness I try to stimulate in them: To what extent is my predilection for reducing complex and subtle issues to simplistic dichotomies itself an artifact of Western ways of conceiving the world? ♦

**My (New) Hidden Agenda in Teaching Introductory Anthropology**

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I'll begin by explaining the title of my paper. My agenda in the intro course is to provide an implicit critique of multicultural course content and method. Is this agenda really new or hidden? Yes, new to the extent that my goals for the intro course, long buried after years of unreflective teaching, have come back into sharp relief as a result of my forays into multicultural teaching. And, yes, somewhat hidden in the sense I don't engage in a direct critique of colleagues who take different approaches in teaching cross-cultural studies.

With respect to the multicultural curriculum at Cedar Crest College, where I teach, presently there is no requirement dealing with cultural diversity. However, there is a freshman course that gives prominence to the issues of race, class, and gender and a number of electives on diversity in several departments including my own. Most of these have been incorporated into a new co-major called International Studies. The co-major begins with two introductory courses: the first a survey of the political economies of nation states, the second, in its initial form, coverage of inter-cultural interaction and communication.

Since the rise of multicultural awareness on my campus, I've had to struggle, as the lone representative of my discipline, to keep anthropology visible in new programs such as International Studies. I reported on my hard fought and ongoing battles two years ago at these meetings (Cameron 1993). Having asserted the importance of the field in our multicultural program has led to collaboration with others and the opportunity of co-teaching two new courses, one with a literature person, the other with a social psychologist. These courses have turned out to be interesting hybrids reflecting our respective disciplinary perspectives. In the first one, we used quite a bit of fiction by non-Western writers to illustrate the course content; in the second, we drew on some of the core concepts from cross-cultural psychology. While I incorporated much anthropological material in each case, I did not try to use ethnographies.

The intellectual objectives of both courses stressed understanding the reasons for cultural differences and the psychological states that may emerge in cross-cultural encounters. If any theme was especially prominent in these courses, it was cross-
cultural, or as my co-teachers preferred to call it, inter-cultural communication, in particular determining the social, cultural and psychological factors that influence effective communication among strangers.

One of the techniques we used in class to understand the nature of cross-cultural misunderstandings and miscommunication involved reading and interpreting a series of vignettes, called "incidents." Generally, these two to three paragraph vignettes described failed encounters among strangers. The students had to select the best reason for the problem among the five offered that explained what went wrong. These incidents seemed rather obvious, but the students found them instructive.

Generally, I think these courses "worked". However, they only measured up to some of our stated objectives. The main benefit, in my view, seems to have been in creating a state of psychological mindfulness among students about what to expect when living or working in other cultures: for example, recognizing the emergence of feelings such as prejudice and fear and understanding psychological states of disassociation and culture shock.

The experience of co-teaching such inter-cultural communication (hereafter ICC) courses has prompted me to consider whether the intro course might actually do more effectively what a typical multicultural course is designed to do. My conclusion is that, if one is serious about understanding the basis of cultural practices and seeing cultures as working systems, then the intro course cannot be replaced. Let me enumerate some of the weaknesses I see in the ICC course as gauged against the strengths of the intro course.

1. Cultural Relativism

In my experience, the ICC course gives extreme emphasis to cultural relativism, often breeding an "I'm OK; you're OK; we're all OK" outlook about diverse beliefs and practices. The reason for this may lie in the general failure to appreciate the basis for those beliefs and practices. This happens, I think, because ethnographic cases are usually not consulted, as they are in most intro courses. Thus, the tendency in the ICC course is to suspend judgment in the absence of detailed knowledge about particular groups.

2. Negotiating Cultural Differences

The ICC course puts much stock in the idea that people must learn how to negotiate cultural differences. Although negotiate connotes that art of the deal, the more general interpretation involves learning to appreciate differences in communication styles, value systems, degrees of formality and hierarchy in cultures, and the like. Thus, one learns that there are high context and low context cultures or that in collectivist cultures, the goals and needs of the in-group take precedence over the individual. Once these ideas are understood, the next step is some form of practical application. Typically, source books will offer tips and strategies that can be applied to real life situations; for example, when doing business in Latin America, it is as essential to spend time on personal pleasantries as it is on commerce. Or, one might learn certain avoidance practices as not touching a Japanese on the head or not showing the soles of one's shoes to an Arab.

The illusion conveyed is that there are formulae for successful interaction among strangers and that, once mastered, travelers will avoid the mistakes that most people typically make. The truth is, on the contrary, that these tips have limited application and that visitors to other cultures commit plenty of gaffes. By contrast, the message that emerges from the intro course is rather different; students read about the travails of field workers in the early stages of research. Most ethnographies report the mistakes and bungled interactions that often occur and demonstrate that it takes time to gain cultural competence and to build a valid model of others.

3. The Fallacy of the Inter-cultural Person

Inter-cultural courses such as the last one I co-taught offer at the end the tantalizing possibility of becoming "an inter-cultural person." What might that be? Gudykunst and Kim (1992:254) citing P.S. Adler describes such a person as being able to negotiate "ever new formations of reality," and someone who is "neither totally a part of or totally apart from his [or her] own culture." Waxing profoundly, they suggest, "In becoming inter-cultural, we rise above the hidden grips of culture and discover there are many ways to be good, true, and beautiful... The process of becoming intercultural is like climbing a high mountain. As we rich the mountaintop, we see that all paths below ultimately lead to the same summit..." (Gudykunst and Kim 1992:255). This suggests to me that in studying others and learning to respect and appreciate diversity, we might eventually "morph" into a transcendent being, perhaps a mythic Buddha smiling benignly on the panoply of strange beliefs and practices that confront us.

The lesson of anthropology, once again as revealed in ethnographies, journals, and memoirs, suggest that the inter-cultural person is a fallacy, possibly born of the "everybody's OK" syndrome mentioned before. While fieldwork may be transforming and field studies (our own and others) allow us to appreciate what Benedict termed the great arc of cultural possibilities, I doubt that we ever truly escape the bonds of our own cultural background.

I think we should be clear about what our goals are in the contemplation of the Other. As students of culture, our job is to understand and interpret patterns of thought and action and ground these interpretations within culture theory. Although our understandings may generate enlightenment, tolerance, and acceptance of the bizarre, we do not lose and should not lose a critical perspective on cultures. Our inquiries often reveal cultures-against-man and cultures-against-women. The intro course, to me, becomes the perfect place to explore our objectives both as researchers and as humans.

4. Culture as that Complex Whole

In its stress of communication and relative de-emphasis of the notion of culture, the ICC course fails to present societies as coherent unities, in some sense. Notwithstanding that cultures are not necessarily bounded, functionally integrated and logically consistent, ethnographic cases offer an important intellectual exercise to students. This involves seeing cultures as systems rather than a grab bag of disparate traits. An ethnography is a heuristic device to be sure, but one that allows us to explore the inter-relationships of environment and technology, technology and economy, economy and social organization, social organization and social values, and so on. In the intro course, I stress Goodenough's cognitive approach to culture that suggests that although individuals who belong to the same group are not isomorphic, they do need to have sufficient resemblances to one another in order to behave in acceptable ways. Psychologists call the normative monitoring we do of one another "pedagogy"
(Carrithers citing Premack 1992:63). Further, although we have imperfect knowledge of our social, natural, and technological environment, we require the ability to access the specialized knowledge possessed by others in a linguistically approximate way. Gatewood (1983, 1984) calls our accessing ability “loose talk.”

5. The Value of Doing Ethnography
I generally encourage students to learn a variety of research methods both quantitative and qualitative on the grounds that different research problems often require different methodologies and that it is useful to be equipped with multiple skills and strategies for collecting information while in college and after, as well. It sometimes happens, however, that those survey and experimental skills acquired in school may never be put to use in the workplace. Not so for ethnographic skills. I think everybody whether they know it or not does ethnography in their life—when they move to a new place, take a new job, or travel. I recall that when our college’s president was newly arrived she did what I would call ethnography: she carefully covered all the grounds and buildings; she studied the college’s written material; she attended student council meetings and held meetings in the dorms; she interviewed people in each department and took notes; she visited classrooms and offices.

Once again, the intro course is beneficial in this regard. One can hardly avoid the discussion of doing ethnography, from the opening chapters of case studies to the instructor’s own accounts of the fieldwork experience. The intro course may also offer students the opportunity to try their hands at participant observation and ethnographic interviews.

This far in the presentation, I have framed the value of the intro course in relation to the corresponding weaknesses of the ICC course. The main problem with the ICC course, as I see it, is the neglect of the concept of culture. This is clearly not so for the intro course which gives it much more emphasis. The key to anthropology’s success in conveying an understanding of culture and cultures is, very simply, the use of ethnographies. How rich an ethnography can be and how useful for discussions of cultural similarities and differences.

Having said that, however, I must confess that using ethnographies effectively is challenging. We need to do more than review a list of ethnographic facts; we want to use cases to make significant conceptual points. The question is how to use them to their best advantage?

The problem of using ethnographies effectively is compounded by some recent trends in publication. With distress, I have noticed several: One is the trend towards greater brevity or what I call the Holt, Rinehart, Winstonification of the ethnography. The slim cases are helpful for quick coverage of an area and allow for the use of several in one semester. However, scantily clad cases do not provide sufficient depth and, in the end, are quickly forgotten. The second is the increasing trend towards the omission of or brief attention given to the topic of fieldwork: the misery of it, the mistakes, the developing insights. This coverage is essential for gaining an understanding of such issues as cultural relativism and ethical obligations of the field worker, not to mention insight into field methods. The third trend is, for want of a better term, the hybridization of the ethnography. Some of the new cases I have seen on Africa and Latin America can’t seem to decide whether they are representations of cultures past or cultures present. The new ethnographies while trying to retain a sense of holism also include chapters that deal with the external forces and influences on cultures. This results in cases that are choppy, disjointed, and often “thin” in an ethnographic sense. Students neither get the holistic account they need nor sufficient understanding of those larger external forces and events that impinge on small societies. Obviously, there are no groups that are untouched by national and international policies, development programs, and ethnic strife. Thus, the old approach will not suffice. However, we need to redesign these accounts of cultures in transition to be more coherent and meaningful.

These trends, if indeed I have diagnosed them correctly, compound the problem of how to use ethnographies effectively and creatively. Since I’ve only been thinking about these issues for a few years, I’ve just begun to experiment with new approaches. I will conclude with a brief description of what I’ve tried and what I’m contemplating. I should caution, though, that these ideas work best in small classes of perhaps up to 40.

I had some success last year with a technique I’ll call rewriting the ethnography. In one case we read, women’s activities and thoughts were noticeably absent in the study. Very likely, this was because the group was a strongly sex segregated and chronicled by a male ethnographer who surely would have had trouble spending time with the women. Nonetheless, the class felt this omission was glaring so I had them interpret women’s lives from what little information was available. I asked half the class to take on the identity of a female informant of any status and invent a life and asked the other half to assume the identity of a field worker and interview an informant. Students prepared their information and questions ahead of time and the dyadic interviews happened during class time. The exercise helped bring the case to life and gave the students a sense of the research enterprise.

This technique might be useful any time a point of view is absent or weakly put. Alternatively, to address some issues or questions the ethnography has raised, but not answered, students might be asked to write letters (or e-mail) to the authors of ethnographic studies. On one occasion, I had students compose (unsent) inquiries to writers to try to get them more actively involved in the enterprise of writing up a case.

As for the problem of the “thin” or hybrid ethnography, I’ve been considering going back to the old classics, the ones my generation cut their teeth on as undergraduates. However, remembering one failed and one semi-failed attempt some years ago with “thick” ethnographies, I approach this assignment with caution. It comes as a bit of surprise to reread the classics. They are verbose and take a long while to make a point. They are structured differently than many of the recent studies and not always organized along familiar topical lines such as marriage and kinship, economic activities, law-ways, and the like. I remember finding them fascinating years ago and was not daunted by the page length. But, then I did not grow up in the postmodern era. Would they be of interest to post-post baby boomers? And if so, how might we resurrect them?

I’ve considered (but not yet tried) two possible tactics. The first involves approaching the old material as a form of field notes and devising assignments based on this. Small groups might be asked to be responsible for sections of the ethnography. The classroom exercise might involve role playing with a few resident anthropologists conducting interviews with expert informants from those groups. As in the experiment I describe above, this assignment promotes active involvement with the
material, but (for better or for worse) doesn't require students to read what now seem overly-long accounts of cultures. Another approach, which could also be used in conjunction with the first, would be for students to regard and read sections of the ethnography as raw data, then analyze and interpret the information in light of any theoretical problems raised by the instructor. I think Malinowski's work would be ideal for these assignments.

My general point in all this discussion is clearly the importance of ethnography in teaching about culture, diversity, and cross-cultural encounters. Teaching the ICC courses has made me realize how essential case studies are. Yet, they are not likely to be used in multicultural courses which are usually taught by non-anthropologists. Thus, this becomes an argument for the importance of the intro course in the multicultural or international requirements of any college. The intro course is not substitutable. This, then, is what we must bear in mind when programs on diversity are being designed on our campuses.

References


Light From the Past or at the End of the Tunnel? Changing the Intro Course to Meet the Nineties

— Ann Maxwell Hill (Dickinson College)

The title of my paper is only slightly ironic, since we are in the middle of the nineties and at this point ought to be looking ahead to the 21st century. But the time-lag implicit in the title is indicative of my own reluctance as a teacher of anthropology to alter my intro course to take account of a dramatic change in my academic environment that I can no longer ignore. The development has to do with my students, especially first-year students in the intro. They are not exactly the X-generation—they're a bit beyond that era and frankly are neither apathetic nor cynical. But, like other eighteen-year-olds before them, they bring with them into the academy attitudes and expectations that mirror those of the larger society, and in the case of my own students, that reflect their white, middle class backgrounds. What I hear from them, loud and clear and unabashedly—another indication they are not the X generation—is a hostility toward people of color and immigrants and generally a suspicion of difference. This should be no surprise, even to those of us on small campuses in the middle of rural Pennsylvania. Questions of difference, and what to make of it, are in our faces: the dramatic rise in hate crimes on our campuses and "out there," the dismantling of affirmative action at Berkeley, yet another reprise among academicians of the race-determines-IQ argument, the mixed reception of multiculturalism—the list of contemporary issues hinges on perceived human difference on college campuses and in American society is endless.

My sense of urgency about these matters, I should make clear, is not an accommodation to the dictates of my college's administration to teach multiculturalism to students. My institution has no such commitment and remains profoundly ambivalent on the questions of diversity and difference. Nor do I see myself motivated in the classroom by nostalgia for sixties activism, in the manner of Newt Gingrich's "aging hippies in the academy" scenario. Nothing could alienate my students more quickly. What's compelling to me about these issues is my role as a teacher of anthropology, a discipline that historically has made its business making sense of difference.

When I was a student, teaching about difference, a kind of cool-headed, "objective" approach to understanding difference, was the explicit province of anthropology. In my first intro course in anthropology in 1969 at Columbia University, I learned to analyze difference in a broad comparative frame that we might now call political economy, implicitly evolutionist, focused on differences in ranking, stratification and subsistence patterns. The Yanomamo were with us even then, as striking representations of the exotic "other." Our text was a collection of articles about other cultures, by default meaning cultures outside the U.S., although around me in this huge night class in Columbia's General Studies division was the whole spectrum of American urban diversity.

Lest I seem to be taking potshots at former teachers, I hasten to include in my historical overview of teaching the intro course my own first syllabus written more than a decade after the course I describe above. Although laced with large excerpts from Valentine's Culture and Poverty (1968), my course at Oberlin College was still a course by-and-large about foreigners. That I was predisposed to lecture about others "over there" was a given, since I was immersed in a dissertation on Chinese in Thailand and disconnected intellectually and socially from my immediate surroundings. What a jolt it was to have Black students in my intro class object to my view of ethnic identity as a cultural construct. There's nothing "cultural" about my skin color, they said, and not much "cultural" about their racial experience of slavery. Prophetic voices, the flip side of remarks from my white students in the nineties.

Sailing through the placid eighties in my second, and current, job at a virtually all-white college, I got by with an intro syllabus that managed to avoid American ethnic groups and "race," with the predictable exception of Native Americans. The latter group, once relegated to their traditional state, were sufficiently exotic and small-scale to illustrate the ecological approach in anthropology or millenarian movements in the context of the anthropology of religion and social change. "Race" was a subject I left to my biological anthropology colleague in her intro course, or to the sociologist down the hall. Cultural diversity remained the sort that students were comfortable with: far away.

Several years ago, I began using in my intro course a film on Laotian refugees in Rockford, Illinois (Blue Collar and Bud-
The film features several vivid scenes from a local bar, where patrons, many of whom are unemployed, talk about the Laotians in strong, derogatory language. My intention was to use the film as a way of stimulating discussion about ethnocentrism and some of the factors which figure into it. The film is overtly sympathetic to the Laotians and, to my mind, made a good case for why we should accept immigrants in our midst. To my surprise, one student early on in the discussion asked: "Why do I have to know anything about Laotians when they're going to have to change to accommodate us?" I finally got the message. Anthropology was useful, he was saying, but not here, not for us, only if you travel to foreign countries.

I should note that one of the constituencies my intro course serves are students going abroad their junior year. While the intro course is not required for these students, it is recommended as a course which helps students shed some of their ethnocentrism and prepares them to immerse themselves in other cultures. Dickinson, much to its credit, has an internationalized curriculum. We offer strong, and popular, interdisciplinary programs in Latin American Studies, East Asian Studies, Russian Area Studies and Italian Studies, as well as an International Studies major and a comparative civilizations requirement for graduation. The college runs its own programs in over ten countries. But I asked myself, what my course, in its earlier incarnations, prepared these students for? Fieldwork? Highland New Guinea? For in truth, our students abroad, whether in Europe or Japan, have their closest contacts with others like themselves: the middle-class, relatively protected by wealth and cultural predilections from minorities and other "others" in their own countries.

So I teach in an environment where it is easier to start up a new program on the other side of the planet than it is to launch a discussion of American "race," ethnicity and other sources of difference in a campus classroom. Now obviously there are a number of reasons for embracing diversity of a safely remote sort as against that close to home. We all exploit in the classroom our students', and our own, romance with the exotic. I call this the "nostalgia factor," heir to the noble savage, prevalent among Americans who apparently feel that things were better in some remote past, or failing that, some other place where the security of culture and community are represented as unchanging and "traditional," for lack of a better word (DiLeonardo 1984:178-188 and Stewart 1992). In other words, we prefer to have our differences with people far away, rather than with those around us, unless the Americans in question are long dead. For white, suburban students, Trobrianders are much less threatening to emotions than the comfortable folk platitudes, liberal or conservative, about "race" with which they have been raised (Frankenburg 1993: 137–190). This is one way in which confronting American diversity is inherently political and therefore precipitates so much resistance from our students: it requires them to unpack their homely conventions, deeply felt, about primordial "race" and the social hierarchy it legitimizes.

There is a second sense in which American diversity, if properly taught, is political. As many writers on multiculturalism have noted, there is a tendency in teaching American diversity to reduce difference to quaint traditions, or to sanitize difference by celebrating only what is positive, the latter tendency perhaps more typical of extra-curricular efforts such as ethnic food fairs, Black History Month, multicultural residence units and so on. To the extent that these efforts bear resemblance to anthropology, it is cultural relativism of the "I'm OK, you're OK" sort, as one colleague has put it (Cameron 1994). While well-intentioned, teaching that presents difference as a series of positive images of America's ethnic variety de-contextualizes cultural difference, skirting the difficult questions (and negative stereotypes) and in the end failing to explain to students how these differences are politically, economically and historically constructed in the first place. Just as in our other anthropology courses we no longer dare to present peoples as if they were living on isolated desert islands, how can we talk about Asian Americans or African Americans as comprising cultures existing independently of state, class and history? In other words, ethnic cultures are not autonomous, but situated within real constraints imposed by particular political economies and ideologies. Cultural differences are maintained, changed and re-constructed within this larger framework affecting the access of each individual, identified with a particular culture, to power and resources.

So what have I done in the classroom to deal with resistance to American cultural and ethnic diversity among my white students? And in doing so, have I rejected my earlier training and experience in anthropology—as an undergraduate, as a grad student, as a novice teacher? Let me take the first question first. When I finally began attending to American diversity in my intro, I thought that I could rely to some extent on my experience teaching gender, another kind of diversity, in the intro. I was wrong. Bringing gender and the insights from feminist anthropology into the intro was relatively a piece of cake. For one thing, many of my white students, although raised in the era of backlash against feminism so well documented by Susan Faludi, nonetheless come from families where mothers are employed. Furthermore, my female students to a one subscribe to the notion that they have a right to equal opportunities in education and the workplace alongside their male peers, however much they may have difficulty making connections between gender equality, the subtle influence of socialization and the media and the not-so-subtle implications of employment in a capitalist economy. In other words, as far as gender is concerned, the students are on my side. My job in the classroom is simply to make them aware, in the tradition of holistic anthropology, of how gender constructs and status are affected by material conditions, larger social structures and cultural ideologies. Students catch on pretty quickly and in this case, ethnography from afar usually does the trick.

I teach almost everything in the intro through ethnography. This means more than just drawing examples from ethnographic empirical evidence. For teaching gender, for example, it means selecting ethnographic texts that carry on a conversation about gender as the description proceeds, as in Lepowsky's Fruit of the Motherland (1993). It means juxtaposing different ethnographies or parts of ethnographic articles and films to allow students, through comparison, to come to their own conclusions in a writing assignment. And I have found that the best ethnography, the most convincing to my students, is holistic in approach, no matter what particular problem it focuses on. Fortunately—and this probably has to do with the impact of the Women's Movement on white, middle-class professional women who in a relatively short period of time produced ethnographies focused on gender—there has been no dearth of good ethnography on gender appropriate for beginning students.

Breaking through students' mental barriers, which caution them not to discuss "race" and protect cherished shibboleths about "racial" others, is a much tougher task than compelling them to re-think gender. I now assault the barricades right at the beginning of the course by contrasting "race" with culture. Students read a relatively simple article that questions the utility of
race as a scientific concept for categorizing human variation (Rensberger 1981). We discuss the article in class, as well as the distinction between folk perspectives and analysts' perspectives. The latter distinction continues to be important throughout the course, as students begin to read anthropologists' interpretations of other cultures, on reflexive fieldwork and so forth. The distinction between folk and analyst more importantly compels students to view themselves as "natives" and their own culture as amenable to anthropological analysis. On the best days, after the best discussions, students have begun to question the authority of their own knowledge of the world and to grasp the significance of standpoint and how it's factored into anthropological analyses. From here, we move into a consideration of ethnic identity as a cultural construct, then see a film on Hmong immigrants (Becoming American). At this point, students are primed to identify markers of ethnic identity, how the assimilation process requires a change in these markers and identity, and how some ethnic groups, or "races" come to be perceived as low status. I bring in the concept of class, here, and how one's position in a capitalist economy, especially ours with its strong cultural narrative of individual success, affects American perceptions. Students see clearly that the Hmong, for example, have few skills that equip them to succeed in our system and hear white people, as a consequence, stereotype the Hmong as lazy, dirty and welfare-dependent.

It is at this point where I long for a good, holistic ethnography on African Americans, one that treats social history, political economy and class, as well as showing everyday lives finely textured and close-up. Here my work in the intro is constrained by materials that are either too far afield for my purposes (e.g. Takaki 1993 or Steinberg 1989) or so lacking in a larger sociopolitical context that the American predisposition to see everything as a matter of the individual and his or her efforts is reinforced. For example, there are many personal narratives and sympathetic journalistic accounts of African Americans in U.S. cities. I find that these kinds of ethnography in the intro course simply feed white stereotypes of African Americans. The same is true of articles in my favorite intro reader, Conformity and Conflict (1971, 1990). Articles on "street corner men" and black gangs engender little understanding of Black culture or social life, and I notice that in the newest editions of C and C (1994) that these readings are gone. Good riddance, but what to use in their stead?

Throughout the course, I continue to remind students of questions of race and identity as we encounter other cultures outside the U.S. We return to the U.S. to consider funeral rituals, raising the possibility of something called American culture. Toward the end of the course, we do many readings on sociocultural change, millenarian movements, economic development and so forth. Students readily engage questions of traditional identities and their reconstruction or destruction in response to the globalization of the economy and other pressures. Our final readings juxtapose two articles by Schlesinger (1994) and Takaki (1994), ostensibly about American history. These two essays, though, return students to some of the same issues of identity construction in the U.S., whether or not there is an American culture, and who writes with what authority about the "other" which were raised at different points throughout the course. Predictably, we come to no firm conclusions, but students do leave with a stronger sense of the issues of American diversity and some productive, anthropological ways to think about them.

Now for the second question: how far have I come from my earlier education in the intro and my own first attempts at teaching the course? I respond that in principle my earlier education has stood me in good stead. My approach to American diversity, although still emerging, is quintessentially anthropological. I take questions of difference, as did my teachers, to be at the heart of understanding humanity. If, in the political climate of the nineties, diversity at home has become more problematic than our differences with strangers, then our commitment to our discipline and our students compels our attention to our own neighborhoods and communities. If we owe to the last two decades, and to all those perspectives lumped together as post-modernism, our enhanced reflexivity about what we do, then we must also acknowledge the most basic assumption of our predecessors: that difference is not the result of the bizarre or the irrational and is ultimately to some degree accessible and sensible to outsiders. As cultural anthropologists, we also inherited from our forebears a profound antipathy to the seductive simplicities of biological determinism, which I see as a source of strength when our students come to us steeped in folk theories about biological drives, human nature and inherited tendencies toward stupidity, criminality and "abnormal" sexuality. The final debt owed my earlier education is anthropology's holistic approach. I understand that holism has led some anthropologists to wrap cultures in neat, self-contained packages, but the best ethnographies, and the best ethnographers beginning with Malinowski, have resisted simplicity and boundaries, in favor of broader, more complex frames that reveal contradictions, variety, and connections with others beyond cultural boundaries. So as I begin to teach about American diversity, I, too, see complexity and take pains to contextualize cultural difference within larger holistic frames—historical, economic and political—which have produced it.

References

Lepowsky, Maria. 1993. Fruit of the Motherland: Gender in an Egalitarian Society. NY: Columbia UP.
I. Constant promotion of the Honors Program.

One of the first things I realized as Undergraduate Advisor was that I had been a Graduate student in the Department for two years and never realized that we had an Anthropology Honors Program. Surprised! The undergraduates by and large didn't know about it either. Attendance in 1991 was limited to those 3 students who had read every line in the catalog for amusement. Several students that first year told me they would have participated had they been aware of the program.

The first step in improving this situation was to make a detailed handout about the program readily available in the office and pass it out on every reasonable occasion. It is currently given out at freshman and transfer orientations, and to every student who changes their major to Anthropology. In addition, every student who comes in for academic advising and shows promise is reminded that the Honors Program would be a great experience for them. No matter that they might get the information a year early—a program which encompasses one and a half years requires some advance notice.

The faculty had to be won over as well. A personal visit was made to each faculty member to go over the program and assess what sort of topics the faculty member would feel comfortable dealing with in the Undergraduate Honors context. This proved a useful groundbreaker for students who would later approach the faculty members asking them to serve on their Honors Committee (students are required to have a 3-member faculty committee). The support of our Chair and reminders about the program at Faculty meetings help continue to legitimize it as a Departmental priority in the eyes of our faculty, not all of whom were initially used to the idea of undergraduates doing independent research.

II. Adjustment of the program structure to accommodate rising student numbers.

The original format with the three independent studies did not prove compatible to the larger groups that the Honors Program began to attract. It was next to impossible to monitor the quantity and quality of faculty attention that each student was getting, resulting in serious disparities. In Winter 1994 a new format was tried, with four seminars. The initial winter seminar trained students to write 10–15 page proposals, the spring seminar taught various field methodologies, in summer students carried out their research, in fall they had a data analysis seminar, and the following winter they participated in a thesis-writing seminar. This system has proved much more effective for a group of 15–20 students for several reasons.

First, students are now together for four seminars rather than one, thus enabling formation of a strong cohort group. Students are given a telephone list of their cohort group each quarter and encouraged to seek each other's advice and help with research questions. Personal relations between students make the details of someone else's research interesting, even if the research area is quite far from another student's area of interest. Information, always a premium on a large, impersonal campus such as UCLA, is shared between students. For example, a sociocultural student who happens upon an announcement of a grant that could help an archaeology student will frequently bring the announcement to the class so that someone else may benefit.

Secondly, with a four-course sequence, we as administrators of the program can be certain that each Honors student has access to a certain basic amount of information and training on research procedures. Beyond that, each student will go to his or
her faculty advisor and two additional committee members for advice on which research methodology to adopt, what readings might be useful, and general support and guidance. Since different faculty advisors will be helpful to different levels, the four-course sequence allows a more egalitarian experience for students. In addition, each student will have the opportunity to meet the various faculty members who teach the seminars, a very important resource. This allows the student to get to know a wide range of faculty who will be very helpful in, among other things, writing letters of recommendation and suggesting career options.

Thirdly, logistically speaking, it is very convenient for the Honors Advisor to have all the students gathered in one place each week. Typically, I will give 5–10 minutes of announcements before each 3-hour seminar. They will include notices about grant opportunities and what our past experience in obtaining the grants has been, information about honors societies on campus, general honors program information, and, for the students nearing graduation, information about career and internship opportunities. This is also a time to pass out copies of successful grant applications which former students have submitted, as well as updated phone lists. The dissemination of these sorts of information is vital to the success of our program.

III. Professionalization of the program.
In recent years an ongoing effort has been made to treat the Honors students as professionals. The quarter following the four-course sequence, a three-day symposium is held on campus which allows each student to present his or her research to the department as a whole. A formal program and booklet of abstracts are distributed, presentations last fifteen minutes, and presenters are strongly encouraged to use overheads, slides, or video to strengthen their presentations. These presentations are broadly advertised throughout the Division of Social Sciences and the higher administration. This is our chance as program administrators to garner the support which will help the Honors Program survive the cuts to which so many other programs have fallen prey.

When the final draft of the Honors Thesis is in, the student is asked to submit a bound laser-quality copy for inclusion in the Departmental Reading Room, next to our Masters theses. This allows potential Honors students and others in the department the opportunity to review the work at a future date.

In addition, students are encouraged to present somewhere else besides our Departmental symposium in order to garner additional experience. Last year, students presented at the Undergraduate Anthropology/Sociology conference at the University of Santa Clara, and at the Undergraduate Anthropology conference at California State Fullerton, as well as at Anthropology, Archaeology, Folklore, and Primate conferences aimed at graduate students and faculty researchers throughout the country.

Finally, successes of individuals and of the Honors students as a group are announced at faculty meetings, posted in the department and relayed to the higher administration. Among students, this leads to a feeling that these awards are not unreachable, and that it is worth their while to apply. Among faculty, this sustains the idea that our students are top quality, and that it is worth their time to write letters of recommendation for grants. Among officials in higher administration, this implants the idea that our program produces high achievers, and makes their future support more likely.

Hopefully, this presentation of the UCLA Departmental Honors program will serve as a model for those who might wish to initiate a similar program in their own departments. Our experiment has proved a rousing success; our students continue to win a share of intramural and extramural awards far beyond what their small numbers would suggest. Participation in the program boosts self-esteem and is an enormous help to students applying for graduate school or seeking to impress a potential employer. The presence of the program draws potential majors to our department (we are up from 250 students in 1991 to 410 in 1995), and raises the esteem of Anthropology undergraduates in general in the eyes of the university.

I will be very happy to provide additional materials and information to anyone seriously considering the possibility of establishing a similar program at their own institution. Please do not hesitate to contact me at the UCLA Department of Anthropology if you have any questions or would like additional materials. [Rosemarie Ashamalla 213/850-6891 e-mail: ashamalla@anthro.sscnet.ucla.edu] ♦

Commentary on the Papers

Lawrence B. Breithorde (Knox College)

As I consider the papers presented in this session, four themes emerge which could be identified with many projects which proceed under the aegis of postmodernism. What is intriguing about these papers, in my view, is the way in which these themes are revealed in aspects of our pedagogy, in our aims and methods in our anthropology classrooms.

Teaching About Difference

All the contributions have, in their way, emphasized the notion that anthropology involves teaching about difference. This is a sense of anthropology that would not always have been accepted by anthropologists as fully representing our field. Understanding 'difference' has often been a stage in a larger agenda which aimed eventually to uncover commonalities in the human experience, or in human nature; but much of this goal seems to be abandoned in more recent anthropology. So, in our classrooms many of us have come to emphasize an anthropology which is defined as the study of difference. We work with our students to help them recognize cultural difference. We explore the reasons why people react differently to cultural differences. We ask students to consider ways through which they can live with difference. And we offer a set of concepts with which our students can attempt to explain those cultural differences.

Ideas and Concepts vs. People

Beyond identifying cultural differences, all the contributions reflect a view of anthropology as a set of ideas which can be used to explain. Cultural relativism and holism have their place in these contributions as key anthropological ideas which help explain descriptive accounts of human behavior and cultural difference. We are reminded that anthropology's ideas have their own heritage, that they are not some magic set of tools but, as Professor Billig shows, embedded in their own
ently, largely western) cultural heritage. But none of the contributors abandons the notion of anthropology as being, first and foremost, about people. It is this balance, between concepts and people, between theory and case studies, that is the strength of our discipline, making anthropology something more than good stories, but something more grounded than a set of abstract ideas.

Professor Cameron’s paper reminds us that there is a difference between explaining why cultures are the way they are and maintaining a critical stance toward the cultures we study. Our discipline’s concepts are reasonably complex. An understanding of cultural relativism solves few problems for our students; in fact, the world becomes a somewhat more difficult place in which to live when the reality, and often incompatibility, of cultural differences, are revealed by a relativist inquiry. Our students may be disturbed to discover this; and we need to be prepared for that reaction.

Multiple Students, Multiple Identities

How our students reconcile the distinction between understanding of, and critical stance toward, cultural differences will be affected by who they are. Several of the papers (Lloyd, Grebinger, and Hill) suggest that “who they are” will help guide us in determining “what they need to know.” Professors Moerman, Palivos, and Hill argue that “who they are” helps us understand why they see the world (and react toward our assigned readings) the way they do. From these derive two very different teaching strategies:

(a) Do we ask our students to suspend who they are and what they know? Do we introduce them to ideas far removed from their experience, and ultimately ask them to “return” to their own experiences informed by these new notions, or

(b) Do we explicitly acknowledge our students’ identities by taking “where they’re at” and using that as a sort of “window” through which we can eventually get them to understand the world in a different way?

The papers here lean toward (b), but none of the contributions deals explicitly with this “design” question.

How Do Students Best Learn?

All the papers emphasize interactive/participatory methods as the ones most likely to bring our students to an understanding of the usefulness of anthropology. We must implicate students with the people about whom they are reading in case studies, with ideas (Billig), with our pedagogy (Jipson and Litton), and with the process of research (Ashmall).

This kind of engagement of students is not without risk, as Moerman’s and Palivos’ notion of “productive embarrassment” suggests. In fact, while postmodern perspectives remind us of our limits, the very project attempting anthropology demonstrates a fair amount of elasticity in the human ability to cross cultural boundaries, to change values, or even to live productively with people who lie on the other side of some cultural divide. Postmodernism does remind us that there is no magic inherent in anthropology’s concepts which assures success in these endeavors; that our attempt rely not only on concepts and ideas, but on understanding how difference among people (teachers, students, communities we study) all figure in how those concepts “mean” and what understanding they facilitate. We are also reminded through teaching anthropology of our commitment to bringing students deliberately to a kind of “productive embarrassment” so they can recognize and learn from their interpretive errors—a commitment through which anthropology can lead to a productive re-affirmation of a basic human ability to imagine culture, not simply live on its terms.

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Reviewing NSF Instrumentation and Laboratory Improvement Proposals

Tom E. Roll (Montana State University)

As an archaeologist who focuses on the prehistory of the Northwestern Plains and Northern Montane regions of North America, the National Science Foundation sporadically asks me to serve as a peer reviewer of research proposals for projects that fall broadly within my geographic and topical areas of interest. Most scientists receive similar requests and most of us view such activity as a necessary, though perhaps onerous, professional responsibility. These reviews are solitary activities since absolute confidence is required, and we usually have between three and six weeks in which to read the proposal and provide a recommendation.

In October, 1995, I received a letter from NSF inviting me to come to Washington D.C., at their expense, to work for several days reviewing proposals for undergraduate Instrumentation and Laboratory Improvement grants. After some hesitation I agreed to participate in what proved to be an incredibly intense and rewarding experience.

The National Science Foundation has long stood as the single major public source of funds for “pure” scientific research. Since its inception, NSF has adhered to the principle of peer review to select funded projects from among the many proposals they receive for each competition. The principle of peer review holds that those involved in an area of research usually have better insights into appropriate directions than do outsiders. Most peer reviews take place on an individual basis with selected scholars from within a discipline serving as peers. Rarely does a reviewer see more than one proposal at a time, so each is judged on its own merits, rather than in comparison with others. NSF staff members then evaluate the proposed project based on the substance of the individual reviews.

For selected competitions, the NSF elects to use review panels formed of individuals from related disciplines. This usually occurs in fields where substantial methodological or theoretical overlap prevails. The NSF Directorate for Education and Human Resources, Division of Undergraduate Education, employs peer panel review for the Instrumentation and Laboratory Improvement competition. On January 31, 1996 about 275 scientists from colleges and universities across the nation began to assemble at a hotel in Arlington, Virginia. NSF attempts to select a cross-section of the United States’ diverse population to participate on the panels. The mix includes women and men of disparate ethnic and cultural backgrounds who teach and perform research in the physical, natural, behavioral, and social sciences; they come from small private colleges and from the largest public universities. Participation in undergraduate higher education provides the unifying thread for this unique conglomeration.

Panelists arrive throughout the day and by early evening most have occupied their assigned rooms. A reception desk provides each member with a packet that contains a list of participants and their home institutions. Everyone receives an assignment as a member of a six-
Proposal budgets ranged from under $10,000 to almost $100,000 ILI-IP. While the proposals we reviewed were mostly well written and adhered largely to NSF guidelines, occasional lapses appeared. To receive a rating of "excellent" from all reviewers a proposal may have few flaws. From our panel, no proposal received a consensus rating of excellent, but during the post-mortem we learned that other panels had agreed on the excellence of one or two proposals. Most of the Instrumentation and Laboratory Improvement proposals in the social sciences stressed the acquisition of computers for undergraduate instruction. Simple requests for computer support dominated the proposals. Unfortunately, the number of schools with deficient computer facilities (particularly in the social sciences) far exceeds the available funds. To be funded, a request must have substantial merit based on something more than need.

What impresses the reviewers? Strict adherence to NSF guidelines. For each goal a proposal identifies, the manner in which that goal will be attained must be clearly expressed. As an example, one proposal stated that equipment provided would encourage participation of under-represented groups in that field. The only statement of how this would come to pass was to identify minority students as the school’s principal clientele. In another instance, the issue of assessment was addressed by stating that assessment would take place, without further discussion. Reviewers are impressed by positive letters from a school’s higher administration. If your dean cannot produce a convincing letter of support for your project, don’t include the dean’s letter.

What can one do to enhance the chance of a proposal’s success? I recommend that any proposal be subjected to critical intramural review. If a psychologist applies for an Instrumentation and Laboratory Improvement Grant, members of other social science disciplines should be asked to provide critical input. What one reviewer sees as a clear defense, others may view as inadequate or even deceptive. In our panel, perception of a project’s value tended to fall along discipline lines. This does not say that members of a field necessarily supported proposals from their own fields, but that particular approaches to teaching, for example, might be perceived as highly innovative in one field yet viewed as old hat in another. The more proposals one reviews, the more clearly emerges an idea of what is good and what is ordinary. Obviously, participation in the review process provides insights into the elements common to the few successful proposals.

Would I do this again? Perhaps. It is difficult to say that I enjoyed myself. It was a remarkable experience and I probably met some people with whom I will maintain long term relationships. I certainly don’t regret devoting 12 to 14 hours a day for nearly three days to the process. I do regret not having the opportunity to see Washington D.C. during the daytime.

To the Editor...Anyone wishing to express an opinion or make an announcement such as reports, dates and places of meetings, calendar of events, letters, suggestions, etc., send your material to the Editor. On anything of length, you may use WordPerfect or MS Word for Windows on a floppy disc. Please submit your material by October 6, 1996 for the Fall edition of the NEWSLETTER. If you have any ideas for future sessions, paper or special events, contact any of the officers.
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Invitation to Contribute to Film and Video Reviews in Urban Anthropology

A new Society for Urban Anthropology publication is planned, *Film and Video Reviews in Urban Anthropology*. This will be a collection of reviews of films and videos for use in urban-focused courses. The reviews will be written by anthropologists and other professors of urban courses. The volume will be edited by Irene Glasser (Eastern Connecticut State University). This collection will be especially helpful for those university instructors searching for provocative and ethnographically reliable material for their classes.

You are invited to submit your review(s) of urban-focused films or videos. In your review, please discuss the major strengths of the film, how it is received by students, and the kind of discussion it tends to generate. Please also recommend any readings that complement the viewing of the film. Are there any precautions that are appropriate (forewarning students, for example, of anything very graphic)? Also, include information on how to obtain the film or video for rental or purchase. You will of course be fully credited with the review.

Each review should be approximately one page (single-spaced). You may want to review several films that focus on a specific topic (e.g., aging in the city), or on a specific geographical area. Send both a hard copy of the review and the computer disk (IBM compatible if possible) on which it was typed. Send your review(s) to Irene Glasser, Professor (Anthropology), Department of Sociology, Eastern Connecticut State University, 79 Windham St., Willimantic, CT 06226. For further information write or call 203/456-5227.

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