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The pedagogy and politics of online education in anthropology

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The Pedagogy and Politics of Online Education in Anthropology

by

Linda J. Hose

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Anthropology
College of Arts and Sciences
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To my daughters: Kelley, Roxxy, and Chenoa.

You fill my life with love and laughter.

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Note to the Reader:

The original of this document contains color that is necessary for understanding the data.

The original dissertation is on file with the USF library in Tampa, Florida

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The Pedagogy and Politics of Online Education in Anthropology

Linda J. Hose

ABSTRACT

This dissertation reports on the key findings of an exploratory study of online education in anthropology. The study was designed to collect information on the extent and types of online offerings at four-year and above degree-granting public institutions in the US. It was also designed to report on the teaching strategies and methods that anthropologists employ online, and to inquire into the conditions and institutional structures that encourage or discourage the development of online education in anthropology.

Recent growth in online education has been explosive in many disciplines, but little is known about anthropology's participation in the trend, or lack thereof. An exploratory research design was used to examine this little-understood topic. Because participation in online education relies upon collaboration within departments, the perspectives of both department chairs and online instructors were collected. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to gather these perspectives. In particular, an online survey of department chairs and semi-structured e-mail interviews with online instructors were conducted.

The research findings indicate that the participation of anthropology departments

in online education is fairly low, and plans for future growth are limited. The findings also show that the primary barrier to online education is a lack of faculty interest or technical expertise, although concerns surrounding the efficacy of online pedagogy and increased workloads appear to limit its growth as well. Significant differences of opinion between online instructors and department chairs regarding the efficacy of online pedagogy were revealed, but there was general agreement that online education is an important educational resource for nontraditional students.

The contrasting, and sometimes conflicting, perspectives that the research revealed point to a need for a conversation about online education in anthropology departments, whether or not they have plans to participate in the larger trend. In the concluding chapter, these divergent views inform a framework for conducting such a conversation. Finally, the research findings are applied in an outline for the development of a department-specific “best practices” guide to online teaching and course design in departments that wish to initiate or increase their participation in online education.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of my doctoral research was to examine online education in anthropology at four-year and above, degree-granting public institutions in the United States. My goals were to survey the extent and conditions of its development, and to review the methods and course designs that anthropologists have devised for teaching online. In particular, I combined qualitative and quantitative methods in an exploratory research design to examine the pedagogy and politics of online education in anthropology from the perspectives of both department chairs and online instructors.

At the onset of my research, it was apparent that the pedagogy of anthropology has received little attention, at least in comparison to the extensive libraries on teaching of many other disciplines. Susan Sutton, past *Anthropology News* contributing editor, points out that “teaching is what most anthropologists do most of the time” and she believes it should “occupy a more central place in our publications and annual meetings” (Anthropology News 2006:12). Sutton’s assertion has been made many times in the past but it has garnered little notice. The few times that the focus of anthropological literature has turned to the teaching of anthropology have been when demographic or economic shifts required new perspectives on teaching in order to respond to the changing needs of

students and the corresponding demands of institutions. This dissertation is a similar response; it was prompted by technological advances that have enabled online education and considers the new perspectives on teaching that are required to address these changes.

Theories in online pedagogy and the pedagogy of anthropology informed the pedagogical portion of this study, but much of the material concerned with the politics of online education represents a political economic perspective that took shape from both literature reviews and the results of my research. In particular, the prospect of the growth of online education raises concerns about the "commodification" of education, a process "whereby social domains and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come nevertheless to be organized and conceptualized in terms of commodity production, distribution, and consumption" (Fairclough 1992:207).

Although I share the concerns about the commodification of education that were raised by the anthropologists who participated in this research, I am also a proponent of online education. I teach online courses in anthropology at the University of South Florida and at Central Florida Community College. My support for online education is also an expression of my long history as a student. I began my post-secondary education in anthropology in 1981, and this dissertation marks the conclusion of my formal training in applied anthropology, 26 years later. My pursuit of anthropology was pushed aside for many years to accommodate full-time employment and the demands of being a single parent. Invariably, these accommodations led to choosing from academic programs that offered the flexibility I required. The choices were extremely thin, however, and

anthropology was never an available option. Thus, I support the development of online education in anthropology to increase educational opportunities for students, as well as to extend the reach of anthropology departments.

The first section of this chapter is a summary of the research problem as both a pedagogical and structural issue. Second, I review the goals and questions that guided the research. In the final section, I describe the organization of this dissertation, and its application to anthropology and other disciplines and professions.

Research Problem

There has been explosive growth in the number of online courses in recent years and the vast majority of students enrolled in them are concentrated in public institutions. For instance, over 80% of public higher-education institutions in the U.S. offer online courses, with over 1.9 million students in 2003 and over 2.6 million in 2004 (Allen and Seaman 2004). However, anthropologists have had little to say about the growth of online education or the practice of teaching online. The extent to which anthropology courses are offered online is unknown, or at least unpublished. Administrators at the majority of public institutions agree that online learning is critical to their long-term strategy in the future (Allen and Seaman 2004) and have plans to initiate or increase online course offerings (Waits and Lewis 2003). Some academic departments in other disciplines have similar plans, but the future plans of anthropology departments remain unclear.

In addition to the stated goals and plans of institutions, the viability of online courses, at least in terms of quality, also depends on the attitudes and dispositions of both

departments and instructors. Do anthropologists view the development of online education as a worthwhile project, an economic imperative, or neither? The development of online teaching strategies and methods in anthropology, in particular, is important. A primary goal of teaching anthropology is to challenge students' beliefs, but text-based communication and virtual environments are predisposed to lowering inhibitions and encouraging emotionally-charged language (Hakken 1999; Lawson 2003; Sveningsson 2003). This combination predicts a fairly high level of tension in online anthropology courses, such as I have observed in the online courses I teach, and suggests a need for teaching methods that are uniquely designed.

Instructors in many disciplines embrace online technology, elect to teach online, and generously share their ideas. However, some educators are reluctant to do the same for several reasons. They argue that teaching online is significantly more time-consuming than teaching in traditional classrooms, and is made even more burdensome as the ever-increasing workloads of faculty are met with diminishing resources from institutions (Levine and Sun 2002). Also, questions about the ownership of online courses can create a lack of interest in pursuing online teaching (Zhang and Carr-Chellman 2001). In addition to these problems, anthropologists who are interested in teaching online are unlikely to find guidance since the topic is scarcely mentioned in anthropological literature, and piecing together strategies in teaching anthropology and online approaches of other disciplines can produce a confusing teaching plan.

Disparate Pedagogies

The emerging trend in online education has not been ignored by scholars; ample literature exists discussing online pedagogy from numerous disciplinary perspectives. However, literature focused on the teaching of anthropology scarcely mentions the practice of online teaching, and the disconnection between the goals of teaching anthropology and the online methods of other disciplines is worrisome.

Literature concerned with online pedagogy emphasizes methods aimed to promote collaborative learning and stresses the provision of non-threatening online environments (Barab, et al. 2004). In contrast, anthropological literature emphasizes teaching methods that promote active and hands-on learning, (Borofsky 1997; Michaels and Fagan 1997; Kottak 2000; Krulfeld 2000; Rice 2000) and encourages strategies that challenge students' beliefs intentionally (Albert 1963; Robbins and De Vita 1985; Ember and Ember 1997).

Primary among the collaborative learning approaches proposed for online teaching is the development of online "learning communities," an idea often referenced by the works of anthropologists, Lave and Wenger (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). In these works, Lave and Wenger propose that knowledge is co-constructed from the ideas and practices of members of a group. Supposedly, this knowledge emerges over time from the tensions that arise within the group. However, Lave and Wenger's ideas are absent from anthropological literature focused on teaching, and the tensions that arise when students' beliefs are challenged in an online context are not addressed.

These pedagogical differences became apparent during the first semester of the online course that I teach, an introductory cultural anthropology course for non-majors.

Many of the core topics in this course elicited defensive responses and contentious interactions among students. Although I had observed similar reactions among students in traditional classrooms, the virtual environment seemed to embolden students and increase misunderstandings. Some of the ethnocentric arguments that students composed and posted on discussion boards were alarming. One solution to this problem, I concluded, was to avoid sensitive material in online discussion forums, but that would have excluded a major goal of teaching anthropology and also leave few anthropological concepts to discuss. In addition to these pedagogical and contextual problems in online education, some educators argue that institutional structures create other problems that discourage faculty from teaching online.

Structural Concerns

An anthropology professor recently lamented to me that the commercialization of post-secondary education wrongly conceptualized faculty as “instructional units.” She feared that the practice of teaching was being rapidly redefined in public institutions to achieve purely economic goals. She argued that teaching was more than “instruction,” she was not a “unit,” and her role as an instructor did not cease when she left the university at the end of the day. The concerns she raised, and their implications in the works and lives of faculty, have been emphasized by advances in interactive technology and the development of online education.

Online instruction, and distance education in general, are often thought of as ways to economize, but experienced distance educators argue that online courses do not save money, time, faculty, or staff (Haythornthwaite and Kazmer 2004; Palloff and Pratt

2001; Shaw and Young 2003). In 1999, the *American Association of University Professors* (AAUP) addressed the issue of the increased demands of online teaching and concluded that online instructors “will usually require significant release time from teaching during an academic term prior to the offering of the new course” (AAUP 1999b). However, there is little evidence that such accommodations have occurred in most institutions.

One complaint about online courses is that they are poorly designed (Bruckman 2004; Haythornthwaite and Kazmer 2004; Thwaites 2002; Trias i. Valls 2002), but some educators argue that they are often poorly designed because both institutions and educators are underprepared (Levine and Sun 2002). Indeed, this was the case in the first anthropology course I taught online. Although I had fairly advanced technical skills and adequate experience in multimedia and instructional design, I did not anticipate many of the other problems I would encounter. For example, I was assured by the system administrator that the course was previously offered online and was available for my use, but he neglected to inform me that the university had since changed course management systems. I discovered that the course I was to use was rendered dysfunctional in the process, and with a class of nearly 200 students scheduled to begin in less than a week, I had to rebuild the course from scratch. It was only after reconstructing the course that I considered the implications of appropriating the course my predecessor had designed, although the system administrator believed that the course could be shared freely.

Typically, the design of a traditional course is assumed to be the property of autonomous university faculty, but the use of course management systems, such as Blackboard and WebCT, has raised questions about the ownership of online courses.

Online courses, in particular, are considered valuable commodities, and institutions are motivated to establish ownership (Bunker 2001). Although the AAUP (1999) argues that a course designer should be given rights in connection with the future use of a course, the *Association of American Universities* (AAU 2001) argues that online courses are collaborative creations that are owned by the institutions. Another concern is that online courses may be used without proper attribution or changed without the creator's approval (Zhang and Carr-Chellman 2001). These concerns have intensified as online courses are increasingly sold by or exchanged among institutions (2004 Carnevale).

These institutional policies and politics have deterred some educators from sharing their online work (Brent 2005). However, the popularity of online courses and the recent growth in their numbers appear to have overcome these concerns. National studies reflect increasing participation in online education in numerous disciplines and the library of literature concerned with online teaching is also increasing. My doctoral research was designed to interject the voices of anthropologists into the conversation.

Research Goals and Questions

One main goal of my research was to provide the views of online instructors and department chairs since national studies usually rely on institutional perspectives of online education to reach their conclusions. Because little is known about the practice of teaching anthropology online, another goal of the research was to situate the strategies and methods of teaching online within the pedagogy of anthropology, and vice versa.

The following research questions were designed to enable these goals.

- **What is the state of online education in anthropology?**

The answer to this question can provide a glimpse into the extent and types of online courses currently being offered in anthropology departments.

- **How do we teach anthropology online?**

This question inquires into the specific strategies, methods, and course designs that anthropology instructors employ online and the problems that such a learning environment poses. It also asks how anthropologists bridge the differences between online pedagogy and the methods and goals of teaching anthropology in traditional classrooms.

- **What factors support or discourage the development of online education in anthropology?**

This question focuses on identifying institutional incentives or barriers to teaching online, and also aims to gain insight into the ways anthropologists incorporate the demands of online teaching into their professional and personal lives.

Dissertation Organization

Chapters two, three, and four are literature reviews that provide the context for a discussion of the research results that follow. Chapter two is a historical review of the practice of teaching anthropology. It provides the context for understanding the major teaching goals, problems, strategies, and methods that anthropologists have identified. Chapter three is an overview of the emergence of online education and is a discussion of the major teaching approaches and methods of contemporary distance education theories. In chapter four, I review the literature concerned with online teaching in anthropology

specifically. Chapter five is a discussion of issues in virtual research that are relevant to this work, and provides a description of the methods I used to conduct the research and analyze the results.

The chapters that follow are examinations of the research results and are organized loosely around the three research questions discussed above. In particular, chapter six is an overview of online education in anthropology departments in terms of course offerings, the incentives and barriers that are in place, and the future plans for online courses. In chapter seven, the instructors who took part in the study are introduced and their motivations for teaching online are revealed. Also, I discuss the work of teaching online according to perceptions of both online instructors and department chairs. Finally, chapter eight is an examination of the pedagogy of teaching anthropology online as it is described by the online instructors who took part in the research, including the teaching problems they have encountered, the strategies and methods they use, and courses they have designed.

In the concluding chapter, the major issues that emerged from the research results are woven into recommendations for anthropology departments. These recommendations take the form of a guide for engaging in a conversation about online education, assessing departmental resources and institutional structures, and developing a “best practices” guide to online teaching and course design. I also provide ideas for future research and share some of the online methods I employ.

This research has value for the discipline as it contributes new perspectives on approaches to teaching anthropology. As an applied project, it also has broader applications. The expertise and tested methods of anthropology instructors who routinely

impart challenging concepts to diverse groups of students in an online context have the potential to inform a broad range of online educators and other professionals. For example, cultural awareness and sensitivity are considered essential job skills in many disciplines that are increasing their presence in online education. This is especially true in the areas of business and education. Attention to cultural diversity has been prompted by globalization and the growth of multicultural communities and workplaces, and electronic communication and online collaboration are commonplace in many professions in which applied anthropologists are engaged. Therefore, anthropologists have the need to understand the implications of online trends in education and in other professional realms.

CHAPTER TWO

TEACHING ANTHROPOLOGY

According to anthropological literature, what we are *doing* when we teach anthropology has changed significantly in recent decades, but the major goals of teaching have remained static for at least 40 years. However, only a few surges of interest in the topic are apparent during that time. These periods of renewed interest were often preceded by demographic and economic changes, and produced literature that considered the teaching of anthropology in terms of the changing needs of students. Some of the problems in teaching anthropology are related to these demographic and economic shifts, and other problems are rooted in the history, goals, and subject matter of anthropology. Historically, a general lack of interest in the practice of teaching within the discipline itself has been a persistent problem and some anthropologists believe that it has been an isolating force. Another problem is that it provides only a sketchy view of the practice of teaching anthropology to newcomers.

In this chapter I reconstruct the history of teaching anthropology. The first section provides a historical context surrounding the pedagogy of anthropology and the conditions involved in the periodic waxing and waning of interest in the subject. The second section is an examination of the most notable teaching problems and issues that have been identified by anthropology instructors. Finally, I connect the long-standing

goals of teaching anthropology to the methods and strategies that contemporary anthropology instructors employ.

History

Anthropologists have been teaching in universities for over a century but interest in the teaching of anthropology has a short history by comparison. During this brief history, interest in teaching appears to have been fairly weak. The scant number of publications concerned with the practice of teaching in anthropology is contrasted with substantial libraries on teaching in many other disciplines. Anthropological literature does not explain the reasons for this difference, but it does reveal some of the pressures within the discipline that may have contributed to the lack of interest during the past 40 years.

The first comprehensive texts that were focused specifically on the teaching of anthropology were companion volumes entitled, *The Teaching of Anthropology* (Mandelbaum et al. 1963) and *Resources for the Teaching of Anthropology* (Mandelbaum et al. 1963b). These publications were heralded as the mark of a “new era” of interest in teaching (Hallowell 1963:144), yet it was another 34 years before the second major text, *The Teaching of Anthropology: Problems, Issues, and Decisions* (Kottak 1997), appeared. Only a few minor publications were added to the library in intervening years. These publications, albeit few, render a revealing view of the development of the pedagogy of anthropology, and set the stage for an examination of the methods and strategies that modern anthropology instructors utilize.

Although the 1963 companion volumes were heralded as the beginning of a “new era” of interest, that era either failed to materialize or was very short-lived. Instead of signaling the beginning of sustained interest in teaching, the publication of the companion volumes were more a response to the pressures related to increasing undergraduate enrollment in anthropology courses that took place during the early 1960s (Mandelbaum 1963). In a review of the 1963 volumes, Hallowell (1963) offers readers a sense of the prevailing view of teaching in the discipline from his perspective as an anthropology teacher for over 40 years.

Since the great leaders of the past were men deeply committed to research and, so far as teaching was concerned, to the training of students who aspired to pursue and develop the discipline itself, many of the problems discussed in these volumes did not arise in any acute form for a long time. The question, for example, of whether teachers of undergraduate anthropology can be fully effective without a background of field experience was hardly pertinent. Furthermore, the profession was, at first, so small in numbers that for many years a room of moderate size could easily accommodate all those who attended the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. It is not strange, then, that the intimacy and ease of social interaction did not lead to formal papers, or to publications dealing with the teaching of anthropology. Everyone knew pretty well what everyone else was doing, and there were more exciting subjects to discuss. [Hallowell 1963:144]

The problems that were discussed in the 1963 volumes, and to which Hallowell referred, were related to teaching undergraduate courses that were filled with increasing numbers of students, a fairly new trend in the 1960s. Anthropology instructors struggled with the problem of how to teach introductory courses to large classrooms of undergraduate students (Hulse 1963; Mandelbaum 1963). Hallowell also noted a corresponding trend in the production of anthropology texts, and he attributed both to the “hordes of students” that populated the classes of the “academic descendants of the

pioneer teachers” (1963:144). Hallowell was referring to the academic descendants of Franz Boas, and specifically Margaret Mead, a star student of Boas and contributor to *The Teaching of Anthropology* volume.

Many of the contributing authors to the text concentrated on combating ethnocentrism by providing students with examples of cultures from around the world. Their ultimate goal was to transmit an anthropological point of view to students (Bruner and Spindler 1963; Du Bois 1963; Albert 1963) by exposing them to diverse cultures, although the authors provided few strategies to accomplish that goal. Their primary teaching strategy was to inform, explain, and impart anthropological concepts through “techniques of good lecturing” (Mandelbaum1963:17).

Student enrollment in anthropology courses and academic interest in teaching, continued to flourish, at least for a few years. In an abridged edition of the text published four years later, Mandelbaum wrote, “as students in rapidly increasing numbers have become interested in the study of anthropology, anthropologists have become increasingly concerned with developing the teaching of anthropology” (Mandelbaum 1967:v). However, the increasing interest in the practice of teaching that Mandelbaum observed was not apparent in anthropological literature in subsequent years.

The next major publication that focused on the teaching of anthropology, *Two-Way Mirror: Anthropologists and Educators Observe Themselves and Others* (Anthropology Curriculum Study Project 1972), reflected the influence of psychological anthropology that had been popularized by Mead. The publication reported on a 10-year study designed to promote the inclusion of anthropology into high school curriculums. Sponsored by the American Anthropological Association (AAA) and funded by the

National Science Foundation (NSF), the study instrumentalized concepts in learning through social interactions. Through psychological testing, researchers sought to determine the best methods to teach high school anthropology by linking patterns of group behavior to student learning outcomes. Although the report was not a very useful instructional tool for post-secondary anthropology teachers, it is important to this discussion because it reflects a shift in teaching methods, from passive lecture to active student participation, since student discussions were an important part of the educational plan that the study eventually produced.

Interest in teaching anthropology was apparent in all four issues of the *Council on Anthropology and Education Quarterly* (CAEQ) journal published in 1976. Another shift in teaching strategies is evident during this time as the editors of the first issue claimed that the “highly conceptual, inquiry-oriented” (Dobbert et al. 1976:3) nature of the articles demonstrated that “anthropology has gotten over a large hump” (Dobbert et al. 1976:3). The “hump” in this case was the traditional content-based focus of earlier anthropology instructors and courses. The authors focused on imparting anthropological *concepts* to students rather than the usual lists of diverse cultures and subjects. The 1976 issues contained ideas for teaching students about anthropological concepts, often using an active and “participatory” (Troup 1976:8) approach to teaching.

In addition to the focus on concepts in these issues, the problem of a lack of interest in teaching was revived again. The editors noted, “as a legitimate, substantive area of professional interest, ‘teaching anthropology’ is both new and marginal....even within the CAE” (Dobbert et al. 1976:1). They also emphasized that the consequence of

academic apathy toward teaching was that it created intellectual distance and isolation among the few instructors who were focused on teaching.

The focus on anthropological concepts rather than content reappeared in a special issue of the journal in 1985 that addressed the teaching of anthropology. Published under the journal's new title: *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* (AEQ), this special issue reflected a move toward a more critical approach to teaching. The contributing authors focused on strategies and methods aimed to promote an "issues and values orientation to anthropological concepts" (Robbins and De Vita 1985:251). Concurrently, studies of cross-cultural cognition were prevalent in educational anthropology. These studies called for "a move beyond concern with cognitive properties as static phenomena that people do or do not have in their heads, to a concern with practice and activity" (Pelissier 1991:80). The influence of these studies in educational anthropology is apparent in the 1985 AEQ special issue since contributing authors stressed teaching methods that were "student-centered" (Robbins and De Vita 1985:252) and focused on learning through simulation (Podolefsky 1985) and improvisation (Rice 1985b).

Once again, commentaries on the lack of interest in teaching and its impact on the discipline were included in the 1985 special issue on teaching, and the level of frustration it produced among some anthropologists appears to have intensified. Both Rice and Higgins, guest editor and contributing author respectively, lamented the quantity and quality of publications that were concerned with the teaching of anthropology. Rice wrote,

Unfortunately, there are few books or courses on the subject of teaching us how to teach our subject. Mandelbaum, Lasker, and Albert's 1963 *The Teaching of Anthropology* is about the nearest thing one can find to a

manual for anthropology teachers. In the succeeding 22 years, there has been a conspicuous dearth of published materials on teaching anthropology. [Rice 1985:250]

Higgins added, “the literature devoted to the teaching of anthropology is relatively sparse and of highly uneven quality” (Higgins 1985:318) and she pointed out that anthropology was one of only a few disciplines that did not have a journal devoted to its teaching.

Neither Rice nor Higgins offered an explanation for this literary vacuum, but there are hints about the cause in Higgins’ critique. She described a regard for teaching within the discipline that was eerily similar to that described by Hallowell in 1963. She noted, “even when writing about teaching, it seems anthropologists have treated the subject as more suitable for a personal philosophy essay, an isolated case study, or a collection of anecdotes – an extension of the oral exchange over coffee – than for a scholarly article” (Higgins 1985:319).

Higgins was also critical of the authorship in the earlier volume of *The Teaching of Anthropology*, noting that only five of the fifty-one contributors gave any indication of previous scholarly work in education, and that few contributing authors even bothered to cite previous literature on the topic of teaching anthropology. Higgins pointed out that the editors of the 1963 volume had argued that the scarcity of previous literature required that “each writer began afresh,” but she asserted that this explanation only dismissed the larger problem of a lack of interest that continued to haunt the discipline. She remarked, “the practice of each writer beginning anew was quickly resumed, and few subsequent articles even cited the Mandelbaum et al. volume” (Higgins 1985:319).

A pervasive lack of interest in the practice of teaching was not the only problem that made teaching anthropology difficult in the 1980s. Another major problem was that

student enrollment in anthropology courses had declined sharply from the 1960s to the 1980s. The needs of students and the expectations of teachers had also changed. The typical anthropology student was “more interested in potential job prospects than in acquiring a liberal education” (Higgins 1985:321). Thus, the discipline of anthropology needed to offer job-oriented skills and credentials in order to attract more students. However, resources for instructors were not increased along with these growing expectations.

Many anthropology departments faced large budget cuts and few instructors were afforded graduate teaching assistants (Higgins 1985; Steadman, et al. 1988). At the same time, anthropology teachers were pressured to invest more time and energy into making their courses enticing to students (Higgins 1985). In response, the 1985 AEQ special issue was characterized as a “how-to-do-it” guide (Rice 1985:250), complete with step-by-step instructions for courses and activities that were potentially interesting to students and could be easily duplicated by other instructors.

The next special issue of the AEQ journal that focused on teaching was published in 1990 and revealed the growing influence of postmodernism in anthropology. This time, many contributing authors focused on certain teaching themes, rather than on specific methods. They called for the development of critical reasoning skills in students and urged instructors to encourage “reflexivity” (deRoche and deRoche 1990; Peterson 1990; Segal 1990) through critical examination of Western culture. Although the idea that “anthropology is us” (Erickson and Rice 1990:105) was not new to anthropologists, it was a fresh approach to teaching at the time. This new teaching technique was intended to raise students’ awareness of their own cultural context and also acknowledge the

increasing diversity in anthropology classrooms, as well as in the communities where students lived.

The themes and issues surrounding diversity among students were also the main points of consideration in the next major publication, *The Teaching of Anthropology: Problems, Issues, and Decisions* (Kottak et al. 1997). Similar to the 1963 volume of *The Teaching of Anthropology* (Mandelbaum et al. 1963), a large portion of the text focused on teaching undergraduate and introductory courses and included pieces from each of the four fields of anthropology. The contributing authors also attempted to account for the recent growth of interest in applied anthropology and devoted an entire chapter to its teaching. Another section of the text was focused on teaching precollegiate courses, although it was noted again that anthropology was not typically taught in high-schools (Cheek 1997).

Interest in the teaching of high-school anthropology appears to have diminished in the next major publication on teaching in 2000, the first edition of *Strategies in Teaching Anthropology* (2000 Rice and McCurdy). This volume was followed by two subsequent editions in 2002 (Rice and McCurdy) and 2004 (Rice and McCurdy). These texts were described as “sequels” (Kottak 2004:xv) to the 1997 *The Teaching of Anthropology* volume and were focused specifically on teaching methods. The editors stressed that they “purposely did not want to focus on pedagogy” (Rice and McCurdy 2004:vii) because the 1997 volume was dedicated to that concern. Indeed, much of the information about the goals, problems, issues discussed in subsequent sections of this chapter are drawn from the 1997 volume, whereas most of the examples of strategies and methods are drawn from the editions of *Strategies in Teaching Anthropology*.

Together, the foregoing publications comprise the major portion of literature focused specifically on the teaching of anthropology. Although a lack of interest in teaching has been a persistent problem, the fact that subsequent editions of *Strategies in Teaching Anthropology* rather quickly followed the first suggests a move toward a more sustained interest in teaching than had been the case in the past. Another promising development is that a section of two recent issues of *Anthropology News* (January 2007; February 2007) and one issue of the *Practicing Anthropology* journal (2007) were also focused on teaching anthropology.

The fact that two of these publications' sections were concerned with online, distance, or "distant" learning suggests that this most recent surge of interest in teaching anthropology may be an expression of another demographic and economic shift. But this time, the changing needs of students are connected to advances in online technology. Huber (2007) points out that "new technologies are making inroads in all realms of life, not least in education itself." and "shifting education goals and priorities, developments in the disciplines and changes in the world for which students are being prepared – calls for a considered pedagogical response" (Huber 2007:23). Both Huber (2007) and Boyd (2007) discuss the importance of learning outside of the classroom, and Boyd (2007) and Lewine (2007) describe the use of collaborative projects in their classes. In these publications, the "marginal position" (Lewine 2007:24) of teaching and learning in anthropology is questioned once again.

Problems and Issues

Some of the challenges of teaching in anthropology are unique but other teaching problems, or at least the elements that contribute to problems, are shared by many disciplines. For instance, the low regard for teaching is posed as a unique concern in anthropology but, according to Fuentes (2001), it is part of a larger structural problem that affects many disciplines. Fuentes argues that the problem exists because institutions of higher education value research more than teaching. He also raises other economic concerns. In one example, he points out that the amount of preparation needed for an introductory course usually exceeds that of other courses but is not adequately accounted for in decisions about tenure and promotions. Fuentes believes that these conditions create problems for instructors, students, and institutions alike. He points out that since most instructors will elect not to teach introductory courses, given the choice, they miss the opportunity to increase the audience interested in their research. Also, he argues, departments fail to connect with students who are potential majors.

Other problems related to teaching anthropology specifically are usually characterized as ‘gaps’ of one sort or another. For instance, the contributing authors of both the 1963 and 1997 volumes of *The Teaching of Anthropology* point to the gap between the educational aims of students and those of instructors. According to French, students understand education as a kind of “economizing process” -- they participate only to the extent that will “minimize effort and maximize rewards, and especially grades” (French 1963:142). Nearly 35 years later, Haviland (1997) notes that the problem is much the same today, and he asserts that anthropology courses are especially prone to the

problem because they frequently fulfill other social science or general education requirements.

Haviland (1997) points out that introductory anthropology courses also appeal to many students that have an elective slot to fill because “having encountered ‘exotic peoples’ through such sources as *National Geographic Magazine* or films and videos such as *Indiana Jones*, they decide to sign up for a course that they think will be all about strange people living in bizarre ways in mysterious places” (Haviland 1997:34). Some anthropologists contend that this image of anthropology is perpetuated in introductory courses and textbooks that survey a wide variety of cultures, and they warn that “this form of ‘ethnic snacking’ is hazardous to the goals of cultural understanding” (Pack 2002:164).

Another problem for anthropology instructors is the “watering down” of intellectual standards and a corresponding “grade inflation” (Borofsky 1997:47). This problem is also characterized as a gap, but one that exists between the academic expectations and educational backgrounds of instructors and students, that renders significantly different ideas about what needs to be learned and why. To illustrate, Borofsky refers to the “gentleman’s C” (1997:47) mentioned by many contributing authors to the 1963 volume. He asserts that the problem has worsened in intervening years. He claims that the C has been elevated to a B and has produced a population of students with good grades but who are unable to analyze ideas critically or read and write effectively. Thus, Borofsky encourages instructors to accept that “teaching, in this context, means beginning where students are” (1997:52-53).

Although the idea of beginning “where students are” can help instructors develop more realistic course goals and objectives, and can contribute to the development of students’ analytical skills, the time demands required for doing so in heavily-populated introductory classes can be prohibitive. Additionally, “where students are” may be unfamiliar terrain for many university professors, considering the “huge gap between the student taking an anthropology class for the first time, and faculty members who are located in their own ‘dense’ subject matter” (Moses 2004:xvi).

Another “gap” in anthropology classrooms manifests as “dissonance, or even silent confusion” (Breitborde 1997:43). In addition to intellectual and educational differences between anthropology instructors and their students, there are increasing cultural differences between them. To address these differences, Breitborde urges anthropology instructors to take their ethnography into their classrooms and “ask how race, ethnicity, gender, age, values, and other qualities shape the way students respond to us and condition our mutual expectations” (1997:43).

The problem of silence in the classroom is mentioned frequently in literature concerned with the teaching of anthropology (see Caulkins and Bentley-Condit 2000; Ellenbaum 2000; Flinn 2002; Rice 2002). Whether this problem is the result of confusion, lack of interest, shyness, cultural, or economic differences, many contemporary anthropologists address silence in the classroom with participatory strategies that are grounded in critical theoretical perspectives. In order to understand how these perspectives have been transformed into teaching methods, the major teaching approaches and goals in anthropology should be identified.

Major Teaching Approaches and Goals

Although the theoretical perspectives of anthropology instructors are diverse (Friedl 1997), literature focused on teaching anthropology suggests that teaching approaches are shared by a majority of anthropology instructors at any given time, or at least this appears to be the case. This can be seen in the teacher-centered, passive learning model favored in the 1963's volume of *The Teaching of Anthropology* and the student-centered, active learning approaches that dominated the 1985 AEQ journal issues. These trends in teaching are not unique to anthropology, however, but rather reflect larger epistemological movements in academia as a whole. The movement from a static, passive view of knowledge toward a more adaptive and active view emerged from constructivist theories of learning in education that have influenced the strategies and methods of teaching in numerous disciplines (Brooks 1999).

Still, a constructivist approach to teaching seems especially compatible with the discipline of anthropology. In addition to being focused on the construction of knowledge through social interactions, a constructivist approach to learning “provides multiple representations of reality” and “represents the natural complexity of the real world” (Jonassen 1994:35). Indeed, anthropological research has been focused on these aims for many years, but the transition to active learning approaches in classrooms reportedly creates a more dynamic and effective learning experience for students.

Contemporary literature about teaching anthropology makes clear, although not explicitly stated, that anthropologists have embraced constructivist approaches to teaching. For instance, Michaels and Fagan assert that “effective learning is dynamic and interactive” (1997:242), Rice argues that “students should be active participants in their

own learning experience" (2000:21), and Graber claims that "students invariably show heightened interest when they're told they will be involved in 'active-learning'" (Graber 2000:38). In addition, Krulfeld promotes teaching that involves "hands-on learning" (2000:141), and Kottak suggests a "learning-by-doing" principal that involves "teamwork" and "joint work" (2000:xiii). Finally, Borofsky asserts that "there is an obviousness to having students actively involved in the learning process...it resonates with our own development as anthropologists – our moving from reading texts as graduate students to conducting independent fieldwork, to teaching the subject matter and writing about it" (1997:47).

The apparent consensus regarding a student-centered, active approach to teaching in anthropology is matched by a general agreement on the major teaching goals. Although some anthropologists offer convincing arguments for prioritizing one particular goal over another, most of their proposals are variations on three general aims that have been reiterated for more than 40 years. These aims are (1) to promote cultural understanding and an appreciation for cultural diversity (Mead 1963; Rice 1985; Nanda 1997), (2) to challenge long-held beliefs (Albert 1963; Robbins and De Vita 1985; Ember and Ember 1997), and (3) to develop personal and intellectual empowerment (Mandelbaum 1963; Robins & DeVita 1985; Borofsky 1997). However, I think the third aim is actually an outcome of the success of the first two.

These major goals of teaching overlap extensively and are also held together by underlying themes in holism, and cultural diversity and change. Another idea that more subtly permeates literature concerned with the teaching of anthropology is *relevance* – not only the relevance of anthropology in a student's daily life but also the relevance of

an anthropological point of view in an increasingly multicultural world. Ultimately, anthropologists believe that the overarching purpose of teaching anthropology is to “empower students with the tools that will allow them to continue empowering themselves intellectually long after the course is over” (Borofsky 1997:53; also see Robbins and DeVita, 1985; Friedl 1997).

Connecting Goals, Strategies, and Methods

Teaching goals, however eloquently stated, are only abstract ideas without the tools to achieve them, and the tools of teaching are the strategies and methods that instructors employ. Even without an abundance of guiding literature, anthropology instructors have devised many ways to achieve the goals of challenging students’ beliefs and enhancing cultural awareness. Much as the major goals of anthropology overlap, the methods and strategies of teaching also interconnect. Thus, the distinction made between the methods and strategies toward one goal or another in the following section is based on my perception of the main focus of each author.

Challenging Beliefs

The goal of challenging students’ beliefs is a common theme in literature concerned with the teaching of anthropology. I think one reason for the prominence of “challenge” in the writings of anthropology teachers is that challenge is often present in anthropology classrooms, even when it is unintended. That is, anthropology instructors are often confronted with the question of what to do when students react to “new unprecedented notions of community that...make the world in a very real sense a more

complicated, difficult, and troubled place to live in than would otherwise be the case” (Breitborde 1997:41).

The distress that students sometimes experience when they are confronted with values dissimilar to their own can be troubling, yet some anthropology instructors believe it is their job to introduce disturbing ideas; they are “in the business of disturbing, of raising consciousness, of making people uneasy –*of doing this deliberately*” (Breitborde 1997:41). In order to do this, Haviland asserts that “a good deal of debunking is required” (1997:36) and Nanda argues that anthropology instructors should engage students in “disquieting activities and ideas” (1997:114). In addition, Ember and Ember (1997:32) claim that “the most important thing that we can transmit to students is the uncertainty of knowledge.” Since both textbooks and instructors often present theories as irrefutable facts, many students leave the classroom convinced that they have been granted a vision of absolute truth.

These theories do not just lie dormant in the minds of students. A handful of theories can cover a lot of ground, and can create reoccurring barriers to learning as students generalize them across disciplines indiscriminately. For instance, in the introductory cultural anthropology course that I teach, students routinely condense ideas about social and cultural change to cases of “survival of the fittest,” and repeatedly assign gendered ideology to the “biology” of women. To address these misplaced perceptions of scientific “truth,” Ember and Ember suggest we should first “teach a little philosophy of science, statistics, and research design, all of which convey the uncertainty in all knowledge and in all testing” (1997:32). Another intriguing method that Ember and Ember propose is to model uncertainty. That is, to reveal the uncertainty of our own

knowledge when we lack answers, and to let students know that they may have answers to questions that have not yet been considered (1997:32-33).

In addition to deconstructing scientific theories, many anthropology instructors focus on issues surrounding gender, race, and class to challenge students' beliefs. For example, Epple's strategy is to disrupt "ideas and practices that students accept as 'natural' or 'given' [that] are instead cultural constructions" (2002:78). To accomplish this, Epple provides students with activities for a "gender non-conformity experience" that involves "ways to behave non-traditionally," (2002:81) such as cross-dressing, or reading gender-specific magazines in a public place (e.g., a male student reading a fashion magazine in a student lounge). Foster (1997) contends that she challenges students' cultural beliefs by simply appearing at the front of the classroom after first sitting among them in the classroom. She asserts that her very presence as an African American professor is often the first thing that challenges students' notions about race and class. Foster further challenges students to uncover signs, reports, and other items in their communities that reflect institutionalized racism and present them to the class.

Enhancing Cultural Awareness and Appreciation

White proposes that "one of the primary functions of an anthropology course is to challenge the limited notions of ethnicity that students....bring with them" (1997:73). Some anthropologists believe that an effective method for helping students to understand themselves as cultural beings is to conduct studies in self-ethnography (White 1997; Caughey 2000; Chambers 2004). Presumably, students will acquire cultural self-awareness that will generalize and eventually expand their view to include other cultures.

Campbell (2002) concurs with White that anthropology should first teach students to understand themselves, noting that the problem with a student's ability to perceive the connections between cultures is that "they don't think of themselves as cultural beings" (Campbell 2002:139). To encourage students to perceive themselves as cultural beings, Moses and Mukhopadhyay take self-ethnography a step further and encourage students to use what they learn about themselves to negotiate cultural boundaries. They start by asking their students to "list eight to ten microcultures to which they belong" (1997:92). Moses and Mukhopadhyay claim that when these social networks are shared and compared among students, they discover commonalities and are able to expand their perception of their own ethnicity. In both cases, the teaching aim is to reveal one's own identity as a cultural construct.

Another way to reveal "identity" as a cultural construct is to expose students to a sort of microscopic view of their own deeply-embedded cultural assumptions. The point is to stimulate students to think more critically about the everyday things that they take for granted, and to analyze the cultural background noise that typically surrounds them. One example of this strategy, provided by Bird (2000), entails viewing TV commercials aimed at children to encourage students to think about cultural messages about gender that are pervasive, but often go unnoticed. After a brief introduction to gender enculturation, students view the commercials and come to conclusions about the cultural messages they contain that teach children either "how to be male" or "how to be female" (2000:145). Bird observes, "by the time the discussion is over, the students are usually marveling at the way they have taken the gender coding in these commercials so much for granted" (2000:145).

Other instructors encourage cultural awareness by generating critical insider/outsider views. For instance, Nanda (1997) renders the familiar as exotic by showing films about American culture made by foreign anthropologists, and Pedelty (2001) reveals the exotic as familiar through performance. Pedelty asks students to perform several scenes from a play about the Spanish conquest of Mexico. He believes that performance helps students to understand the complexities of Mexican culture since “performance requires at least some level of empathy and identification with the character, role and culture” (2001:246). He also believes that performance encourages cultural awareness because “it is more difficult to apply ethnocentric distinctions when adopting an ‘inside’ position.” (2001:246)

The foregoing examples are only a few of the strategies and methods that anthropology instructors apply to address the problems and achieve the goals of teaching anthropology. It is important to note that most of the examples herein are aimed to change students’ perceptions of anthropology as the study of exotic “others” located at faraway places. Many of the strategies are pointed at “us” rather than at “them.” It should also be acknowledged that teaching does not always mirror that which is represented in literature. Although a “content” approach to teaching anthropology and the corresponding method of classroom lecture that were prevalent in the 1960s may be considered outdated by many authors cited in this chapter, Nancy White, archaeologist and faculty member of the Anthropology Department at the University of South Florida, pointed out to me that a walk through the halls of the Social Science building proves that lectures still dominate in many anthropology classrooms.

Methods of assessment are scarcely considered in any detail in literature that discusses the practice of teaching anthropology, but is discussed briefly by Mandelbaum in the 1963 volume of *The Teaching of Anthropology*. Mandelbaum points out that some sort of examination is required “by reason of the structure of academic institutions,” but that “for large parts of anthropology, the so-called ‘objective’ examination cannot accurately reflect the purpose of the teaching” (1963:18). Thus, he concludes: “the obvious solution is to base the final grade more on written work, done in response to essay questions, laboratory work, and field assignments” (Mandelbaum 1963:19).

Conclusion

The absence of a large body of literature concerned with the practice of teaching anthropology seems to imply that knowledge of the subject is the only skill that is required. However, the authors cited in this chapter demonstrate that there is much more involved in the teaching of anthropology than just subject knowledge. There is general agreement among anthropologists with regard to the goals of teaching, and on the importance of using techniques that are active, student-centered and, more recently, collaborative. However, an effective avenue for communicating these techniques to would-be anthropology instructors is lacking. One possible reason for this is that few, if any, incentives or rewards exist for research on teaching in the social sciences.

This chapter has tracked the conditions surrounding the intermittent waves of interest in teaching anthropology during the past 40 years, and the related transformation of focus from content to concepts and from external to internal views. Teaching methods have also changed. For instance, as interest in applied anthropology increased, it was met

with more hands-on and active approaches to learning. It is especially important to notice that the focus on teaching in recent issues of *Anthropology News* and *Practicing Anthropology* suggests that the level of interest in teaching anthropology may be on the rise again.

There is reason to believe that an increased demand for online education is being felt in the discipline of anthropology since the use of technology and online approaches to teaching are emerging themes in these publications. In the following chapter, the focus shifts to online pedagogy specifically, and as it has developed within the larger context of distance education. The problems and issues associated with online teaching and the changing roles of teachers and students are examined. In addition, instructional technology and online course design are introduced as evolving tools of teaching.

CHAPTER THREE

TEACHING ONLINE

Online instruction is a distinct form of distance education in which the main mode of communication between instructors and students is the Internet. Communication in an online course can be divided in to two general types, synchronous and asynchronous (Barron 1998; Holcomb et al. 2004). Synchronous communication takes place in “real-time” such as in chat rooms and teleconferencing. Asynchronous communication, such as e-mail and discussion boards, are delayed forms of communication and do not require that participants be online at the same time (Horton and Horton 2003). These two types of communication also correspond to two types of online courses, described as “facilitated” and “instructor-led” (Horton and Horton 2003:17). A facilitated approach is overwhelmingly favored in literature on online teaching, and all but one of the online instructors who took part in this research also used this approach. Thus, it is the main focus of this chapter.

In the sense that an instructor’s primary aim is to fulfill the goals of a particular discipline, the role of a teacher in an online course is essentially the same as that of a teacher in a traditional classroom. However, the absence of physical cues and the use of mostly text-based communication have major implications for how an online course is

conducted. In a facilitated model, the instructor attempts to account for these differences through structured teacher-student and student-student interactions.

In the first section of this chapter, I track the emergence of online instruction and the development of a facilitated approach to teaching within distance education. The second section is an examination of the theories related to online learning and teaching and how they relate to the roles, relationships, and interactions in virtual classrooms. Third, I discuss instructional design and its relationship to the goals and methods of online teaching. Connections between the teaching of anthropology and the practice of teaching online are scattered throughout this chapter, but the issues surrounding online teaching in anthropology specifically are considered more extensively in the following chapter.

Distance and Online Education: History and Theory

In distance education, students and their instructor are situated in separate locations and communication is enabled through some form of technology (Barron 1998; Moore and Anderson 2003). Other terms, such as distributed education, open education, and flexible learning are sometimes used interchangeably with distance education (Hefzallah 2004). These terms are not synonymous; "*distance education* is the generic term, and the other terms express subordinate concepts" (Moore and Anderson 2003:xiii). However, online learning is relatively new to the distance education lexicon.

Until 1970, distance education institutions were mostly privately-owned and usually referred to as correspondence schools. These institutions, and distance education in general, received little attention until the founding of the Open University in the U.K.

in 1970 (Ricketts et al. 2000). According to Holmberg (1995), a noted distance education theorist, the Open University marked “the beginning of a new era” in which “the image of distance education in many countries changed from one of a possibly estimable but little respected endeavor to one of a publicly acknowledged type of education” (Holmberg 1995:4).

In subsequent years, distance education changed considerably and diverged along two different theoretical lines that Saba refers to as "conceptual synergies" (2003:4). According to Saba, one synergy focuses on structural issues and how they affect the process of teaching and learning, and the second synergy is concerned mainly with the relationship between the instructor and learner. Although these two “synergies” are not mutually exclusive; they are generally associated with two different models of teaching in distance education that are typically described in economic terms such as “large-scale” and “small-scale” (Holmberg 1995) or “industrialized” and “post-industrialized” (Peters and Keegan 1994).

An industrial approach to distance education is typically employed in institutions that are dedicated exclusively to distance education (Keegan 1993). Courses are usually designed for very large groups of students and are developed and delivered by a team of specialists. Distance education theorists, such as Otto Peters, Randy Garrison and John Anderson, developed corresponding models of learning that are concerned primarily with structural issues (e.g., organizational structure and the division of labor) and how they affect learning and teaching (Saba 2003).

A post-industrial model is commonly associated with a facilitated approach to teaching and is usually employed in "dual-mode” (Holmberg 1995) or “mixed”

institutions (Keegan 1993) in which it is important to keep within the framework of traditional education. These types of institutions are the main concern of my research. Distance education theories that favor a small-scale approach have been developed by Börje Holmberg, Charles Wedemeyer, and Michael Moore (Saba 2003) and focus primarily on student-teacher relationships and interactions. Although some courses in dual-mode institutions are also created for large numbers of students and are constructed by teams of specialists, the typical online course is taught by an individual instructor and designed for small to moderately-sized classes.

The critique of an industrialized model of distance education led to the emergence of a post-industrialized model that developed alongside the explosive growth of interactive technology (Saba 2003). As technology enabled widespread use of the Internet, the number of public colleges and universities offering online courses also grew. The perception of “distance” in distance education was transformed in this process and scholars saw the need for a new perspective on the practice of distance teaching.

This new perspective on teaching in an online environment was provided by the theory of distributed cognition which was the source of a “dichotomy of learning” (Saba 2003:7) in distance education. The first view of learning is based on individual cognitive models that emphasize the role of the individual, and the second view is grounded in a distributed social model that focuses on the role of the group (Rogers and Scaife 1997). Both views of learning subscribe to the idea that cultural and environmental features are important to the process of learning. The difference between them the first model regards learning as an individual and internalized process and the second, a distributed model, views learning as a socially co-constructed event.

The theory of distributed cognition, developed by anthropologist Ed Hutchins and his colleagues at the University of California during the mid to late 1980s, was heavily influenced by constructivist epistemology and concepts in cognitive anthropology (Rogers and Scaife 1997). Hutchins (2000 1-2)) proposed that human activity reveals at least three avenues of distribution in cognitive processes: (1) across members of a social group, (2) through psychological processes that involve coordination between internal and external environments, and (3) through time as perceptions of causation. The importance of Hutchins' theory in online education is that interactions with technology and those with other people through the use of technology are seen as significant knowledge-building activities, the same as the construction of knowledge that takes place in "real life".

Increasing reference to distance education as "distributed education" within educational institutions reflects the degree of compatibility between Hutchins's theory and online education. Although the term "distributed education" has other definitions (see Guthrie 2002; Ricketts et al. 2000), references to distributed *learning* are usually couched in Hutchins' version of distributed cognition. One reason for this is because it effectively blends social constructivist theories of learning with the multiple modes of interactivity that are made possible by interactive technology.

A distributed approach to teaching is grounded in concepts in social cognition and collaborative and participatory learning. In this approach, knowledge is thought to be distributed among members of a community and learning is understood as the outcome of their interactions (Lave 1988). This view of learning is prevalent in literature that discusses the practice of online teaching. Also prevalent is the idea of online "learning

communities.” Some educators believe advances in technology have made possible a depth of interaction between students that enables the transformation of a group of students learning independently into an interactive community (Murphy 2003). They propose that the creation of a learning community requires group goals that are focused intentionally on a learning outcome (Riel and Polin 2004).

At least three types of learning communities have been defined. First, “task-based” learning communities are those in which the members know one another but group identity is temporary and connected to a specific task. Second, in “knowledge-based” learning communities, members may or may not know one another and group identity is connected to the collection and dissemination of information. Third, members of “practice-based” learning communities have a particular profession in common and the teaching aim is to expand the members’ professional expertise (Riel and Polin 2004:38-39). The development of practice-based learning communities is often the focus of literature concerned with teaching online in the social sciences.

The theoretical underpinnings of practice-based learning communities are derived from “communities of practice” theory and ideas about situated learning that have been advanced by anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (Cuthbert et al. 2002; Hoadley and Pea 2002). According to Lave and Wenger (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) knowledge is co-constructed from the ideas and practices of members of a group and emerges over time from the tensions that arise within the group.

Some distance educators propose that the use of collaborative learning projects can both create and exploit the tension that Lave and Wenger describe (Murphy 2003). Supposedly, students learn from group experiences in which ill-defined problems

(Jonassen 2000) require shared authority and consensus in order to be resolved (Bruffee 1999). As students establish individual roles in the group and engage in the process of problem-solving, they must navigate tensions and eventually cooperate in order to accomplish the group goal. This recipe for a learning community is often repeated in literature about teaching online (e.g., Zieger and Pulichino 2005; Greene 2005; Murphy 2003). However, Riel and Polin point out “while classrooms can approximate communities of practice, the temporary time period and the students’ lack of choice to participate make it difficult to characterize them as members of a community of practice” (2004:30).

Task-based and knowledge-based learning communities are sometimes assigned various other names such as “scientific inquiry communities” or “peer-review communities” (Cuthbert et al. 2002:232). In these learning communities, instructors encourage knowledge “scaffolding,” a concept drawn from anthropologist Vygotsky’s idea of a “zone of proximal development” (1978) in which higher mental functions are believed to be internalized through social interactions. In these learning communities, learning takes place when the member/s with more expertise (usually the instructor) assists those who are less skilled.

However, little attention is paid to the fact that online learning communities may not be suitable in undergraduate courses that have triple-digit enrollments and are populated by students with little disciplinary experience. In these kinds of courses, ideas in “transactional distance theory” are useful. According to Moore (1989), distance in an online course is a matter of pedagogy rather than geography. Moore theorizes that “transactional distance” is a measure of the levels of structure and dialog in a course that

promotes student learning, and is influenced by the degree of autonomy of the individual student. Courses that are designed to provide in-depth directions and a high degree of guidance and interaction between instructors and students, and among students themselves, have lower levels of “transactional” distance. Conversely, when dialogue is minimal and students are left guessing about what they should be doing, their sense of distance expands.

Problems and Issues

It is unclear how many online undergraduate courses are offered at dual-mode institutions, but it is arguable that they constitute a large portion of online offerings. It is also unclear how many online courses are designed around collaborative approaches to teaching, or how many are “instructor-led” or “facilitated” courses. However, it is possible that many undergraduate courses are of the type that some authors point to as poor examples of online education (for instance, see Bruckman 2004; Haythornthwaite and Kazmer 2004; Thwaites 2002; Trias i. Valls 2002). Levine and Sun (2002) propose that many online courses are poorly designed because both educators and institutions are underprepared. He describes the problem as follows:

The response to the new media mirrors past actions: When movies were invented, producers filmed plays. With the advent of television, radio actors performed on screen. And when distance learning started happening via the Internet, universities asked faculty to duplicate their courses online [Levine and Sun 2002:5].

In addition to inadequate institutional resources and instructor preparation, some barriers to teaching and learning in an online setting are remnants of distance education in

general, but others are a function of the economics and politics of modernity. Although distance education is often thought of as a way to economize, experienced distance educators assert that it does not save money, time, faculty, or staff (Haythornthwaite and Kazmer 2004; Shaw and Young 2003). In addition, budget cuts often hinder the development of new approaches to teaching (Levine and Sun 2002), requiring individual instructors to take-up the slack. Finally, online educational content has increasingly become a contested form of educational capital, and some educators are reluctant to share their work. Intellectual property rights governing the content and design of online courses are in question due to federal copyright law that makes exceptions if the creation is “work made for hire” (Brent 2005:11).

Another problem is that online instruction conflicts in fundamental ways with the traditional academic vision of education as an activity that takes place in a setting where students absorb knowledge directly from a teacher (Levine and Sun 2002). Questions about the quality of distance education courses have prompted many research projects in an attempt to document the difference between the two forms of instruction. Although the bulk of studies report no significant difference between the educational outcomes of distance versus face-to-face instruction (Gubernick and Ebeling 1997; Merisotis and Phipps 1999; Russel 1999; Schulman and Sims 1999), some authors argue that the results are inconclusive (Gold and Maitland 1999). Still, it is difficult for many teachers to dismiss the sense that something important in the learning process is missing in an online environment (Levine and Sun 2002).

Nonetheless, the number of online courses offered at public institutions has grown exponentially in recent years (Allen and Seaman 2004). Technology has stretched

educational boundaries and created a need for a new educational paradigm in which role of the instructor and nature of teacher-student relationships are central elements (Murphy 2003).

Instructors, Students and Online Interactions

An online instructor can be “a traditional teacher, the software designer, the content creator, all of these things, or none of these things” (Levine and Sun 2002:6). Assuming that the majority of online educators at dual-mode institutions in the U.S. are at least two of these things – a traditional teacher and the content creator -- we can examine how an approach to distance teaching connects to the role of the instructor and the design of an online course. Although the role of a instructor in an online setting is essentially the same as that of a instructor in a traditional classroom with regard to disciplinary goals, there are inherent differences in how one can strive to achieve those goals in an online environment.

Ideally, the major goals of teaching anthropology should be the same both online and in traditional classrooms -- to promote cultural understanding, challenge long held beliefs, and develop students’ personal and intellectual empowerment. In addition, some of the strategies and methods that are used in a traditional classroom can also be used online. For example, I have used a self-ethnography project similar to the one outlined by Chambers (2004) in an online course, but communication about the project and peer-review comments were exchanged electronically rather than orally as in Chambers’ plan. This difference, the shift from oral to written communication, is the primary

characteristic of online education that works to define the changing role of the instructor, and often changes the flow of communication as well.

Interactivity in text-based communication, such as in online discussions, is stressed in much of the literature concerned with online pedagogy, although some research suggests that online discussions fail to engage students in learning (Williams and Pury 2002). According to distributed education theory, interactivity between students, the course content, and their computers, are also important, although these aspects of interactivity or distributed modes of learning receive comparatively little attention. Instead, researchers are focused mainly on the level and quality of interactivity through text, and search for ways that it can be increased or enhanced.

Larson (2002) found that student interactivity increased when the instructor was frequently and actively involved in online discussions. Coomey and Stephenson (2001) also concluded that constant student-teacher interaction contributes to effective learning experiences. In addition, Kurtz, Sagee, and Getz-Lengerman (2003) found that frequent feedback and support from the instructor increases students' levels of satisfaction in an online course. Finally, Burge (1994) found that two instructor behaviors that were identified as being crucial to promoting student learning were the ability to provide structure in discussions and provide technical assistance and feedback in a timely manner.

Much of the literature concerned with the quality of online education concentrates on students' levels of satisfaction and attitudes toward learning online (Sunal, et al. 2003; Darbyshire 2004). Some educators are concerned that online interaction and student satisfaction are just part of the problem; they suggest that students regard online courses

as less important than those that take place in traditional classrooms (Davies 2003).

Although online education offers many benefits, Davis points out that it “tends not to produce learning unless the participating students’ main intention is to learn and not just to get the course done” (2003:8). However, this is also true in traditional classrooms.

Other factors can also affect online learning and interactivity. Wong and Trinidad (2003) point out that “cultural distance” is another problem in online classes. They explain that cultural distance is an outcome of cultural ideas about learning and behavior that influence a student’s ability to communicate and perform well in an online environment. For instance, they characterize a generation of learners in Hong Kong as “shy, passive, reactive, inarticulate, non-collaborative, and timid” as a result of enculturation that teaches students to be “tape recorders” (Wong and Trinidad 2003:2). They report that the Hong Kong students found it difficult to be fully interactive, and they worry that these students will be marginalized in an online environment (2003:4). Cultural distance is likely to be problem for some international and minority students in the U.S, but both cultural differences and “the learners own context and reality” are rarely considered in the design of an online course (Gobbo et al. 2004:35).

Instructional Technology and Course Design

In the early 1990s, instructional technology required the skills of an advanced technician, but it has been made easier with the development of course management systems (Hafzallah 2004) such as Blackboard and WebCT. These systems provide a comprehensive package of features that include tools for course authoring and collaboration. Course-authoring tools supply a framework for the organization of course

content and activities in a form that is easy to navigate, and can be used to create pages, add text, graphics, and other media. Course-authoring packages usually include tools to incorporate testing, feedback, and reporting in order to allow instructors to monitor learners' progress (Horton and Horton 2003:170-171). Although the full range of course authoring tools can be useful in the design of an online course, collaborative tools are the main tools that are used in facilitated courses.

Synchronous tools that can be employed collaboratively include chat rooms, audio and video conferencing, and applications that enable instructors to conduct Web tours. Also, application-sharing tools allow the demonstration and interactive use of software programs, and “whiteboards” enable multiple users to create, edit, and view graphics and designs. Slide shows and virtual lectures can also be presented using synchronous tools, but these are not collaborative in nature.

Asynchronous tools allow delayed communication and are of greater interest here because they enable the kind of flexibility that is the foundation of distance education. Although online courses offered at dual-mode institutions are usually contained within a typical semester format, flexibility is still an important feature. The ability to engage in delayed communication is often critical for working adults, and some authors argue that it encourages reflexivity since students have more time to think through problems or analyze issues before responding (Palloff and Pratt 2001; Smith and Winking-Diaz 2004).

Asynchronous tools include e-mail, file-exchange systems and threaded discussion boards. Threaded discussion boards display messages and responses in an organized format that is easy to follow and allows users to organize and separate discussions into various topics or subtopics. After an initial post is submitted, responses

are displayed as an indented list, and subsequent replies to these responses are indented further, and so on. Blogs are similar to discussion boards but are less useful because they do not support threading.

The use of these tools in various combinations offers countless possibilities for online course design. Some theorists consider instructional design to be a form of engineering, but the “cognitive shift” in education of the 1960s, and the shift to constructivism in the 1980s and 1990s have rendered it “more of an art than a science” (Seel and Dijkstra 2004:11). However, the primary difficulty with connecting instructional design to curriculum development is that “how to teach” and “what to teach” are typically separated in the literature (Seel and Dijkstra 2004:11). In addition to this pedagogical separation, information about what works in an online course is lacking, or at least is inconclusive. Researchers have compared online instruction to traditional classroom instruction, cognitive, behavioral, and objective approaches to learning, and course designs that encourage both active and passive learning. The general outcome has been that “50% of the studies provide positive evidence for the assumably more effective design and 50% do not.” (Seel and Dijkstra 2004:19).

In terms of course design, online learning settings consist of a number of “integrated and interdependent components including the problem space, related cases, information resources, and collaborative tools” (Jonassen et al. 2004:75-76). The content of the problem space is defined largely by the particular discipline, and can be presented in narrative text files, data files, visual media, or a mixture of these. Related cases and information resources can be provided through multiple forms of media such as text documents, audio, video, and Web links. Courses that are designed around practice-

based learning communities usually emphasize the use of discussion boards, but those that are designed for task-based learning communities often employ a more diverse set of collaborative tools. However, some educators contend that the first step in course design is to identify the users accurately (Jonassen et al. 2004).

In the case of a dual-mode institution, the student population of an online undergraduate course is likely to be diverse; many online learners are adults with full-time jobs, but less experienced students who live on campus also take advantage of the convenience of online courses. In addition, the increasing diversity of students in higher education classrooms suggests that online courses should be designed with a variety of learning activities that take these differences into account.

One way that I attempt to account for diversity and differences in learning styles in my online course is to provide students with multiple assignment options that they can choose from in order to accomplish some of the course goals. Also, online discussions are tiered so that students can choose to respond to a specific question or problem, or they can introduce related ideas and different viewpoints. Although this approach does not fully exploit the tension that is aimed for in practice-based learning communities, it does engage some of the same elements. Presumably, some sort of knowledge scaffolding occurs as experienced learners exchange ideas and less-experienced learners can either participate or observe. Still, the educational outcomes of online interactions and the quality of an online course in general are difficult to assess.

The major problem with knowing what constitutes a “quality” in an online course is that researchers have not yet discovered a way in which quality can be definitively measured. The quality standard against which online courses are measured is usually

their traditional classroom counterparts. Generally, research results show equal or even higher levels of student satisfaction in an online course (Inman et al. 1999). Although student satisfaction surveys are typically used to point to the quality of a course, Darbyshire (2004:79) points out that “there is often some doubt as to whether such surveys are capable of addressing the issue of quality, but in many cases these are all we have in terms of feedback.” He argues that student satisfaction is especially important in online courses because “any dissatisfaction without an appropriate means for affecting the result through feedback quickly mounts” (2004:79). However, I think the results of satisfaction surveys in an anthropology course may be misleading since a goal of the course should be to challenge students’ cultural beliefs.

Conclusion

Many publications that are concerned with the practice of teaching online are focused on the creation and development of learning communities. However, transactional distance theory suggests that online courses can be focused on interactive communication without being considered an online learning community. According to this theory, and many online educators, the most important aspect of teaching online is to ensure frequent teacher-student interaction through multiple modes of communication (Sunal et al. 2003).

In the following chapter, I discuss some of the online teaching approaches and methods that anthropologists use. First, I review the emergence of technology in teaching anthropology and examine recent publications that are concerned with teaching anthropology online. Although it is too early to know if online education in anthropology

is a significant trend, the appearance of discussions about online teaching in anthropological literature suggests there is a growing demand for online anthropology courses from both students and institutions.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEACHING ANTHROPOLOGY ONLINE

Although few articles about teaching anthropology in an online setting have been published thus far, some interest in the subject is evident in early 2007. A section in the January issue of *Anthropology News* (2007) is focused on the uses of technology in teaching, and a section of the journal, *Practicing Anthropology* (2007) discusses the practice of teaching online. Both of these publications introduce an online master's program in applied anthropology at the University of North Texas (UNT). The UNT online program is the first of its kind in the U.S., although the University of Wales at Lampeter (UWL) began offering both bachelor's and master's anthropology programs online in 2000. In addition, the fall semester of 2006 marked the beginning of an online undergraduate minor program in anthropology at Oregon State University.

The initiation of these programs suggests that the presence of anthropology in online education is building, although its growth appears to be quite slow. Simmons (2007:28) concludes from the results of his informal survey of anthropology department chairs that distance education in anthropology "has not caught on too strongly." The use of computer technology in anthropology also had a sluggish start, although it has been used extensively in anthropological research since the early 1990s. Perhaps the use of technology in teaching anthropology will follow the same trend.

The first section of this chapter reviews the brief history of technology in the teaching of anthropology. It is only a partial view since many anthropologists use computer technology in their teaching but do not publish articles about their experiences. In this sense, interest in the use of technology in teaching can be lumped together with the larger apparent lack of interest in the pedagogy of anthropology in general; we know that the vast majority of anthropologist teach, but it is not reflected in anthropological literature. In the second section of this chapter I discuss problems in online education that anthropologists have observed or expect to develop. The final section is a review of online teaching strategies in anthropology and corresponding course designs.

Technology and Teaching Anthropology

Although anthropologists today use computer technology extensively to analyze research data, its use was met with resistance early on. Podolefsky recalls that when he first drafted a paper about the use of computers for processing qualitative anthropological field data in 1979, one reviewer simply wrote “anthropologists are not interested in computers” (1997:56). Of course, the reviewer was mistaken, but this example demonstrates how certain topics are sometimes excluded from anthropological publications. The first significant report on the uses of computer technology in teaching anthropology was a 1993 special issue of the *NAPA Bulletin* (National Association for the Practice of Anthropology) (Dubinkas and McDonald 1993).

The contributing authors of the NAPA issue discussed interactive and hypertext software and reported on their experiences with bulletin board communication. There were few educational software programs at the time and none of the authors had taught

an anthropology course entirely online. Although most of the technological issues that were raised in the NAPA issue have been overcome since, some of the implications of technology in education that the contributing authors discussed are being addressed by anthropologists today. For example, in the 1993 NAPA issue, Truex argued that the development of technology for educational purposes is a valuable educational project because it could work to “de-center and deconstruct the cultural assumptions of power and control implicit in traditional educational formats” (1993:82). And, in the 2007 Winter issue of *Practicing Anthropology*, Nuñez-Janes and Re Cruz (2007), faculty of the online master’s program at the University of North Texas, point out that they designed their online course with this project in mind. They note that “the view of teachers as bearers of knowledge and students as empty receptacles of knowledge has neither conceptual nor practical room” in an online course (2007:21).

Little more was written on the use of technology in teaching after the NAPA publication until the 1997 volume of *The Teaching of Anthropology* in which Podolefsky (1997) tracked the development of computer use in previous years. His prime example of a pioneer in the effort was J. Jerome Smith, a now-retired professor of applied anthropology at the University of South Florida and the initial developer of an online course that I currently teach. Smith’s creation of computerized questions linked to video clips on a laser disc was an innovative project in the early 1990s. Podolefsky offered few other examples of the uses of technology in teaching anthropology, except for the use of e-mail to communicate with students. He reported that some professors found e-mail useful but it was also a problem because it increased their workloads significantly (Podolefsky 1997:57).

At least one anthropologist, Mark Warschaur (1998), has conducted an ethnographic study of online teaching, although not of an anthropology course. Instead, he studied an “English as a Second Language” (ESL) writing course that was taught by an instructor who relied on a rigidly structured model of teaching. The students in the course completed their coursework online, but did this in a shared classroom. Nonetheless, Warschaur comes to the same conclusion that has been made about face-to-face teaching – the success of an online class, at least in terms of student satisfaction and critical inquiry, depends on the approach of the teacher.

Problems and Issues

Increased instructor workloads and institutional pressures are the main problems in online teaching according to anthropology teachers. Although many people believe online teaching takes less time, Fagan argues “the people who believe this are hopelessly out of touch with both their students and pedagogical reality, and are often those anthropologists who want to spend the absolute minimum time on their teaching” (2000:191).

Thwaites points out that the longer work hours of teaching online is a function of what he refers to as the “online imperative” (2002:480). The “online imperative,” says Thwaites, is the “increasing pressure on ...teachers to adopt these new technologies and methods” (2002:480). The pressure, he asserts, comes from policy decisions that force public universities to think like businesses and to conceive of students as consumers. Thwaites sees it as a faulty economic model in which “information technology is easily seen as a ready way of providing a greatly expanded and largely automated range of

course materials, and even entire courses, without corresponding expense on personnel to teach them” (2002:480).

Although Thwaites sees value in the use of the Web for teaching and admits to using it extensively himself, but mainly to supplement face-to-face interactions. He argues “the value of the teacher – and even a bad teacher serves this function – is minimally that of a focal point which *embodies* the symbolic networks one is attempting to negotiate” (2002:486). He believes that the removal of the teacher figure induces anxiety in students, and compares it to the feeling we experience when netsurfing -- “the feeling that wherever one is, *this is not quite it*: there is always somewhere else to go, another potentially vitally important link to click on to” (2002:486).

In 2000, the “online imperative,” or something like it, was at work in the formation of the first online bachelor’s and master’s degree program in anthropology at the University of Wales at Lampeter (UWL). According to Trias i.Valls (2002), a faculty member, the online degree programs were developed when the Department of Anthropology was faced with a serious drop in enrollment. At the same time, the distance education department at UWL was able to maintain enrollment and even recruit new students (Trias I Valls 2002:43). This observation prompted faculty at UWL to develop online anthropology programs in order to increase student enrollment. And, student enrollment increased, but the online programs resulted in teaching workloads that are “at least three times more than usual even with technical staff maintaining the web delivery” (Trias i.Valls 2002:46). According to Trias i Valls, these increased workloads are mainly the consequence of text-based communication.

Online Teaching Strategies and Course Design

Because educational technologies allow “interpretive flexibility” (Brent 2005:4), what teachers believe that it means to teach dictates whether they put more effort into the development of the online context or into interactive communication. Social constructivist teaching strategies that involve extensive use of asynchronous communication and promote collaborative learning are favored in online education in the U.S, at least in graduate courses. These strategies are also featured in the articles about the online graduate courses at UNT. In comparison, online anthropology instructors at institutions outside of the U.S appear to be equally interested in developing distinctive online spaces and accounting for diverse learning styles.

The articles published in the 2007 *Practicing Anthropology* issue, in particular, engage concepts that are prominent in literature about online learning. For instance, there is an emphasis on building online community (Nuñez-Janes and Alicia Re Cruz 2007:22; Davenport and Henry 2007:14; Wasson 2007:7), instructors are conceived of as “facilitators” Nuñez-Janes and Alicia Re Cruz 2007:21; Davenport and Henry 2007:14), and many of the courses involve collaborative learning projects (Wasson 2007:11; Henry and Jordan 2007:16; Davenport and Henry 2007:14). The importance of the development of reflexivity and “student-centered critical thinking” (Nuñez-Janes and ReCruz), both highly-valued in literature about teaching anthropology, are also emphasized.

Some of the online courses at UNT are also designed to respond to multiple learning styles and involve a mixture of instructional methods, including discussion boards, audio, embedded graphics, animation, and electronic readings (Davenport and Henry 2007; Wasson 2007). Still, most of the online courses discussed in the *Practicing*

Anthropology articles were either in the development phase or the first semester of use, so the extent of their success is inconclusive at the time of this writing.

Trias i.Valls (2002) reports that the online anthropology program at UWL has been very successful, mostly due to the substantial amount of time and attention that is devoted to communication between instructors and students. However, she is equally interested in the use of interactive visual media, and especially the use of icons. She points out that icons stand for the identity of their owners in commercial use (the AOL messenger icon for instance), and have power to allow entrance into other realms. A similar use of icons in an online anthropology course can help students to “identify the different levels of interaction with the material, and can affect how the material is presented, and thus, influence how certain concepts and ideas are understood and learned by students” (2002:47).

However, the time demands of intensive online communication leave little time for instructors to tap the full potential of an online learning environment. Trias i.Valls is aware of this problem but believes it is partly an error of focus, arguing that “the preoccupation with online communication...tends to focus our attention too much on how students communicate rather than how students use the material reflexively” (2002:49).

Ardevol (2002), informed by her three years of experience in teaching anthropology online at the Open University of Catalonia, agrees with Trias i Valls. She believes it is the combination of interactions -- virtual, material, text, and graphic -- that encourage the production of anthropological knowledge. Both Ardevol (2002) and Trias i Valls (2002) suggest that the use of a wider range of media creates an engaging context

that can produce a sense of familiarity with the subject matter of anthropology. From this perspective, then, “facilitation” in an online course involves social, technical, and contextual interactivity.

Conclusion

None of the anthropologists cited herein suggest that the goals of teaching anthropology should be different in an online environment. However, the goals of teaching are not discussed explicitly in articles about teaching anthropology online as much as they are in publications concerned with teaching anthropology in general. But, most of the courses that are discussed in this chapter are designed for graduate students who are familiar with the challenges that anthropological concepts present.

Much of the literature concerned with teaching online emphasizes the development of learning communities and cite the work of anthropologists Lave and Wenger, but references to their work are absent in literature focused on teaching anthropology online. The UNT faculty remind us that many educators have concerns about “hype” associated with the idea of online learning communities (Davenport and Henry 2007:12) and they emphasize “building community” among students instead.

While the development of “online learning communities” and collaborative learning projects are reportedly highly successful in graduate courses, they require closer attention and more instructor participation. Thus, they may not be well-suited to heavily-populated undergraduate courses. For instance, the faculty at UNT employ collaborative learning approaches, but limit graduate courses to small enrollments, and capped their initial cohort of students at 15. In contrast, enrollments in undergraduate courses at UNT

range from 250 to 300 students (Wasson 2007), and it is doubtful that collaborative learning projects are used. In my online undergraduate class of approximately 100 students, I have attempted to employ collaborative learning projects, but have had little success due to the unmanageable number of groups that had to be formed, as well as students' inexperience with this approach.

Some anthropologists discourage the use of learning communities altogether. For instance, in a critical afterward to the text, *Building Virtual Communities: Learning and Change in Cyberspace*, Hakken questions the educational value of online learning communities, pointing out that “success at showing that a system *can* be deployed is often mistaken for evidence that it *should*” (2002:361). Although collaborative approaches to online learning may work to dismantle teacher-student power structures, it is possible that both “cultural distance” (Wong and Trinidad 2003) and the mechanics of group dynamics in virtual forums can work to build new and different power structures. For instance, some educators note that “males, learners with ready access to the Internet, learners who speak the native language, and those with greater subject matter expertise dominate the conversation” (Smith 2005:183).

In the following chapter, I describe the methods that I used to incorporate key ideas from the literature reviews into my research and data analysis. In particular, the ideas that demonstrate an overlap between strategies in teaching anthropology and teaching online are the primary concern. In this regard, the main drawback is that most of the publications herein are focused on graduate courses, whereas my research produced information regarding undergraduate courses almost exclusively.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH METHODS

Since online education in anthropology is a little understood topic, my research plan was framed by an exploratory model. In exploratory research, only some of the variables related to the central topic may be known at the onset of the research (LeCompte and Schensul 1999b); others are expected to be uncovered. I identified the initial variables of my research through extensive literature reviews and my own observations and experiences as an online anthropology instructor. This chapter provides a more detailed accounting of the specific research methods I employed to conduct the research, identify new variables, and analyze the results.

Since the all of the research data were collected electronically, the first section of this chapter is a discussion of an anthropological perspective on virtual research and its influence on the implementation of my research plan. The second section describes the research design, sample selection, and protection of the research participants. Third, I review the methods of data collection that I employed, including the designs and purposes of the data collection tools. Finally, I explain the methods of data analysis that guided my interpretation of the research results.

Anthropology and Concepts in Virtual Methods

The idea of virtual research often invites discussions about “virtual communities” and “virtual identities.” These ideas did not have a strong presence in this research but are indirectly related in some respects. “Virtual identity” as a psychological concept is not a concern of this research. Certainly, online teachers have virtual identities, but the *role* of an online teacher in practical terms has greater relevance in my research.

The idea of “virtual communities” is debated among scholars who argue that they do or do not exist. However, anthropologists point out that this is a polarizing and unproductive argument (Bird and Barber 2002:56-57; Wilson and Peterson 2002:455-456). Instead, online interactions are conceived of as just another mode of interaction between humans who are members of multiple interconnected communities (Wilson and Peterson 2002). Similarly, concepts in “virtual learning communities” are prolific in literature about online pedagogy, and are the subject of similar debates. However, the idea of an “online learning community” is not debated in this research; but instead is viewed as just one of many modes of learning that may be more or less effective.

Some anthropologists believe that research that takes place in virtual environments does not significantly change the focus of the research, or call for a whole new set of tools. Christensen points out:

Cyberspace is neither more complex than physical space nor are the methodological considerations that need to be made perplexing beyond reality. They are at the most slightly different because of the type of space they are applied to, and in the end they are meant to provide understanding for the same world.” [1998:7]

Thus, I adapted traditional research tools to fit the virtual space in which they were applied. An important difference in virtual research is the need for the researcher to be

familiar with the virtual context of the study (Jacobson 1999). This requirement is typically accomplished through participant observation and the acquisition of technical skills that are required to navigate and communicate in a specific virtual space. Since I had been teaching and developing online anthropology courses for nearly five years at the onset of this research, these requirements were fulfilled before the study began.

Research Design

Exploratory research often begins with questions rather than a theory or hypothesis (LeCompte and Schensul 1999b), and the following three questions guided my research: (1) What is the state of online education in anthropology? (2) What factors support or discourage the development of online education in anthropology? (3) How do we teach anthropology online?

The main tools of data collection favored by social scientists in virtual realms are surveys and interviews (Mann and Stewart 2000). Survey research is considered to be the best method available to social scientists interested in collecting data from a population that is too large to observe directly (Babbie 1990). Thus, I designed an online survey to collect information about online anthropology courses and institutional barriers or incentives to online education from a large group of anthropology department chairs (see appendix A).

Semi-structured interviews are also believed to be important tools in exploratory research because they allow the researcher to ask participants to describe items involved in the initial research themes (Weller 1998). This can uncover themes and items that were previously obscured (LeCompte and Schensul 1999b). Therefore, I developed a protocol

for semi-structured e-mail interviews with online anthropology teachers (see appendix B). The interview questions were designed to prompt ideas about online teaching problems, methods, and course designs that can be found in literature, but they were also designed to reveal other ideas that may not have been known beforehand. Since some issues that were addressed by the research were relevant to both chairs and teachers, overlapping questions were included on both research instruments, enabling comparisons of shared or contested ideas.

The first few weeks of research were used to develop and pre-test the interview and survey questions, to design and post the survey on the Internet, and to compile e-mail contacts for anthropology department chairs. The survey of department chairs was posted online and made available for three months. Contact with online anthropology teachers began soon thereafter as referrals were provided by department chairs. A significant amount of time (8 months) was allowed for e-mail interviews since they can be very time-consuming. Analysis of the research proceeded upon the close of the survey of department chairs and continued throughout the interviews with online instructors.

Sample Selection

The list of anthropology department chairs, or chairs of multi-disciplinary departments that include anthropology, at four-year and above degree-granting public institutions in the U.S (N=235) was provided by The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). This list included addresses to department websites from which I obtained e-mail addresses for the department chairs. I entered this information into an Excel spreadsheet that included columns for recording the dates of initial contact and

subsequent reminders. Next, I sent an e-mail invitation to all of the department chairs on the list supplied by NCES to request their participation in the survey (see appendix C).

This e-mail invitation also solicited contact information of online instructors who might be willing to become interview participants. Initially, I planned to select interview participants according to a single-dimension sample design (Arnold 1970) in which participants were to be selected in equal numbers according to a single element.

Reportedly, this approach enables comparisons within a small sample. In my research, a course-level (graduate-undergraduate) element was targeted since literature about online education reflects significant differences in teaching strategies and methods between these two. I believed that this design would best reveal diverse approaches to online teaching and course design. However, only one potential interview participant taught a graduate course. Thus, my research involved an opportunistic sample of interview participants instead, and all instructors who agreed to participate were included in the study.

Protection of Research Subjects

Virtual researchers are not bound to provide informed consent by federal regulations, Institutional Review Board Guidelines, or the AAA Code of Ethics (Jacobson 1999:135-136). However, anthropologists argue that anthropological ethics apply to virtual environments, although to varying degrees. The requirement of informed consent in an online environment depends on the nature of the specific research project and the context in which the research is done (Jacobson 1999b; Forte 2003). Some cases are not ethically problematic, but anthropologists should still be guided by the belief that

“our first responsibility in conducting research is to be fair and honest with the people we study; we must never lie to them, invade their privacy, or invade their trust.” (Bird and Barber 2002:134).

In my research, informant confidentiality was a concern because secure communication in an online environment is very difficult, or even impossible, to guarantee. Since the survey was designed to be accessed anonymously, a special exemption was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at University of South Florida. Although survey participants were not required to sign an informed consent, other methods of protection were employed. The e-mail invitation to department chairs included a link to the survey but domain addresses were blocked when the participant accessed the survey. In addition, their survey responses were sent over a secure, encrypted connection.

The invitations to department chairs also included a link to a study information sheet (see appendix D) that informed them of the nature of the study and allowed them to decline participation at that point. Survey respondents could also decline to participate at any point thereafter by simply quitting the survey. Still, some survey respondents provided identifying information on the survey and this information was removed by hand. Finally, when the survey was disabled, all responses were removed from the server and all related documents were deleted from my computer. Printed copies of results were stored in a locked file.

Although contact information for potential interview participants was solicited from department chairs, referring chairs were not involved in subsequent e-mail contacts with potential interviewees. Informed consent forms (see appendix E) were provided to

interview informants by mail and returned to me by the same method. Interview questions were sent to participants by e-mail after the informed consent was signed and returned. When an interview was completed, identifying information of informants was purged and replaced with case numbers, and the subsequent document was printed and stored in a locked file. Then, all related e-mail communication was deleted from my computer files. In addition, participants were able to discontinue the interviews at any time. The delayed nature of online communication allowed participants to carefully consider the prudence of their participation and their eventual responses to questions.

Data Collection

The operational definition of an online course in this study was borrowed from Allen and Seaman (2004) as a course in which at least 80% of the content is delivered online, and in which face-to-face meetings are not typically required. The online survey of anthropology department chairs and online interviews was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, but the protocol for the semi-structured interviews with online instructors was designed to gather qualitative data mainly. The primary advantage of online surveys and electronic interviews is that participants can opt out of the study at any time they choose (Christensen 1998) and some researchers conclude that this choice may improve the truthfulness of participants' responses (Porr and Ployhart, 2004).

The survey respondents in my study were either anthropology department chairs or other department representatives who were designated by the chair. Interview participants were instructors who taught online anthropology courses that fit the definition provided by Allen and Seaman (2004). Since online anthropology instructors

in the U.S. who were willing to participate in e-mail interviews were difficult to find, one teacher who had not yet taught the online course she designed and two instructors who taught outside of the U.S. were also included in the study.

Survey of Department Chairs

The survey was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. My strategy in the design of both the survey and its related Web site was to be as brief and simple as possible. Brevity in online surveys can avoid participant boredom and simplicity on Web sites can overcome slow connections (Christensen1998).

First, I developed a flow chart to guide the construction of the online survey. The first seven questions of the survey were designed to collect information about current online offerings in anthropology departments, including course types, levels, number of courses, and enrollment estimates. Many of the remaining questions were linked to questions in the unstructured interviews, and space was provided for additional comments on most of these questions. These overlapping questions inquired into incentives and barriers to online education and institutional policies regarding ownership of online courses. The final survey question was also linked to the interviews and was the only open-ended question on the survey.

When the survey design was complete, I subscribed to a pay service (www.surveymonkey.com) to generate and post the survey online. After pre-testing the survey, I sent e-mail invitations to 235 anthropology department chairs. The e-mail invited recipients to participate in the online survey and included a link to the survey, a link to the Study Information Sheet, and a request to forward my contact information to

online teachers in their departments who might be willing to take part in the e-mail interviews. Some of the chairs shared my contact information with online teachers in their departments but others sent the contact information of their online teachers to me and instructed me to contact them directly.

Interviews with Online Instructors

The interview questions were divided into three major sections. The first set of questions were concerned with teaching methods and use of course tools, and inquired into teaching problems that the interview participants had encountered online. The second set of questions asked informants about course ownership policies, the incentives or barriers that were in place in their institutions, and incentives that might motivate them to teach more online anthropology courses. The third section was designed to learn more about the conditions that compelled informants to teach online. The final question was the same open-ended question that was posed on the survey – “What are your thoughts about online education in general, and online anthropology courses in particular?”

One advantage of e-mail interviews is that there is no need for transcription, but some virtual researchers report more problems than advantages. Among these problems are the absence of physical cues, the long period of time that interviews take to complete, and the need for constant clarification (Christensen 1998). Although the e-mail interviews in my research took a lot of time, this was only a minor problems compared to the difficulty of locating online teachers who were willing to take part in the interviews.

Initially, 43 potential interviewees’ were referred by department chairs, but only 16 agreed to take part in the research. Of these, six did not return the Informed Consent

form or did not answer the interview questions. When this list was exhausted, I posted a request for research participants on the Council of Educational Anthropology (CAE) mailing list (see appendix F). In response to my post, five more interview participants were recruited into the study. When an instructor agreed to be interviewed, I sent an Informed Consent form by mail, and then sent the interview questions by e-mail upon return receipt of the signed form. Interviews took from two to six weeks to complete, including follow-up questions. A total of 15 semi-structured interviews were completed at the close of the research.

Data Analysis

Literature reviews and participant observation provided the conceptual framework for analysis of the data. Data analysis was conducted during data collection and continued until all surveys and interviews were completed. I organized and sorted quantitative data on an Excel spreadsheet, and organized and coded qualitative data using NVivo, an ethnographic software package. The initial method of both qualitative and quantitative data analysis was deductive. First, numerical data were coded and reduced. Then, qualitative data were subjected to item-level analysis, an especially useful approach in exploratory research for uncovering new themes or items and revealing the connections between them (LeCompte and Schensul 1999b).

Some of the items of analysis were known at the onset of the research. These “known” items of analysis were often included in one or both of the data collection tools, but not always. For instance, since “collaborative learning” is emphasized in literature about online pedagogy, but not in anthropological literature, this item was explicitly

stated in an interview question. On the other hand, anthropological literature often discusses “active” and “hands-on” learning. These terms were items of analysis, but since these were ideas that anthropologists are likely to be familiar with, they were not included in a question on either data collection tool. Instead, I attempted to prompt research participants to discuss these items using questions about the teaching strategies they employed or problems they encountered in teaching anthropology online.

When access to the survey was disabled, I downloaded the results to an Excel spreadsheet. I converted survey responses regarding online courses into numerical data and calculated the results using the formula editor in individual spreadsheet cells. Other data, such as types and levels of online courses, were organized into categories and the totals were calculated by hand. Since the survey generator also provided results in percentages for many responses, these results were validated through crosschecking. Quantitative data provided in interviews were relatively few and these were calculated by hand.

Qualitative data collected on the survey were transferred to separate documents according to the questions they addressed. E-mail interviews were converted to individual text documents in preparation for coding and analysis. In the early stage of data analysis, I sorted qualitative data through a process of reduction in which data were simplified and assigned codes according to known themes (or categories) and items (Huberman 1994). The second stage of analysis involved identifying regularities in data that represented new themes or items. During both stages of analysis, I carefully noted the relationships among and between items and themes and created links between them

using the tools available in NVivo. Finally, I crosschecked the codes and links for accuracy and duplication, and eliminated irrelevant data.

Organization of Research Results

I present the results of the research in the following three chapters. Specifically, I discuss the major themes and items that emerged through the data analysis. Since the main aim of exploratory research is to describe a topic that is largely unknown, it can generate themes and items that have not yet been explored. Indeed, this research produced a description of online education in anthropology. The data analysis also revealed a number of intersecting, overlapping, and conflicting ideas that emerged through the triangulated data. These ideas are discussed throughout the following chapters as I describe the pedagogy and politics of online education in anthropology from the perspectives of department chairs and online anthropology instructors.

The first chapter of results is a report on the state of online education in anthropology to the extent that the research results allowed. I present quantitative data chiefly, although relevant qualitative data are also included. In particular, an overview of the online courses offered in the Fall 2006 semester are described according to type, level, subject, and number of students enrolled. In addition, I describe the online plans of anthropology departments as reported by the anthropology department chairs, and the incentives or barriers to online education that were described by both chairs and online instructors.

In the second chapter of results, I introduce the online instructors who participated in the research and relate their motivations for teaching online. In this chapter, the

practice of teaching online is characterized as “work.” This characterization is presented from the perspectives of both department chairs and online instructors, although the perceptions of online instructors dominate the interpretation of the results since they possess first-hand experience. Online courses are also considered within this context as the products of online teachers’ labor.

The final chapter of results is focused primarily on the pedagogy of teaching anthropology online. I describe the roles and responsibilities of online anthropology teachers, and the functions of online communication according to the online instructors who participated in the research. In addition, the impressions of department chairs and online instructors regarding the value of online education for departments, chairs, teachers, and students are presented. Moreover, the structural and pedagogical problems encountered by the online instructors who participated in the research are identified, and the strategies and methods they have devised to address these problems are articulated. Finally, the designs of the online courses taught by the interview participants are described.

CHAPTER SIX

THE STATE OF ONLINE EDUCATION IN ANTHROPOLOGY

This chapter considers the first research question: “What is the state of online education in anthropology?” The results presented in this chapter are derived from the survey responses of anthropology department chairs (n=84) and the interviews with online anthropology instructors (N=15). Included in this discussion is an overview of online offerings, plans for future online courses, and barriers and incentives that may influence the development of online education in anthropology.

In the first section of this chapter, I summarize the online courses reported by both anthropology chairs and instructors, including course levels, subjects, and number of student enrolled. The next section includes the plans for future online courses, and is followed by the incentives and accommodations for online education that are provided by departments or institutions. In addition, online instructors describe incentives that would compel them to teach or develop more online courses. Finally, the last section is a discussion of the barriers to online education. Some research participants expressed their opinions on the value of online education as a barrier itself. However, only a few of these opinions are discussed in detail in this chapter since many of their comments are concerned with online pedagogy in particular, and therefore are discussed in more detail in chapter eight.

Current Online Offerings

Department Chair Survey

The view of online anthropology courses reflected in the survey is informative, but is incomplete in several respects. First, the rate of response on the survey was fairly low, less than 36 percent, and less than one-third of these respondents reported that their departments offered online courses. Thus, the list of courses the survey produced represents only 13 percent of the 235 departments targeted in the research. Additionally, some online courses were not captured by this research since some chairs did not provide information about the courses their departments offered. Other chairs noted that their departments offered too many online courses to list.

A total of 2,340 students were enrolled in the 52 online anthropology courses reported on the survey. Student enrollments in these courses ranged from 4 to 300 students. The largest percentage of courses had an enrollment of 25 students, and the vast majority of courses had from 20 to 65 students enrolled (see Figure 1 below).

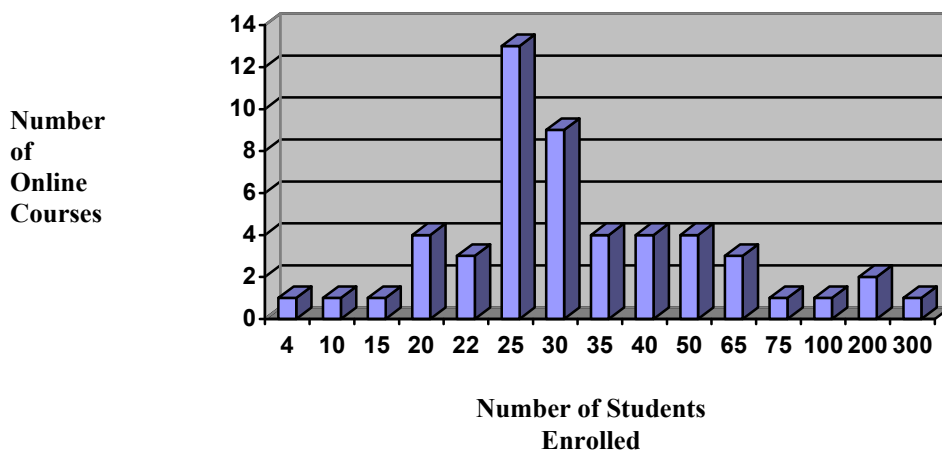


Figure 1: Number of Students Enrolled in Online Anthropology Courses – Fall 2006

The courses listed on the survey are further organized into two separate course-types, major and general education courses. Further, they are divided into three course levels, upper-level undergraduate, lower-level undergraduate, and graduate courses. Five undergraduate courses listed on the survey were not identified by the chairs according to level or type and were therefore eliminated from this chart. The distribution of the remaining 47 courses is shown in Figure 2 below.

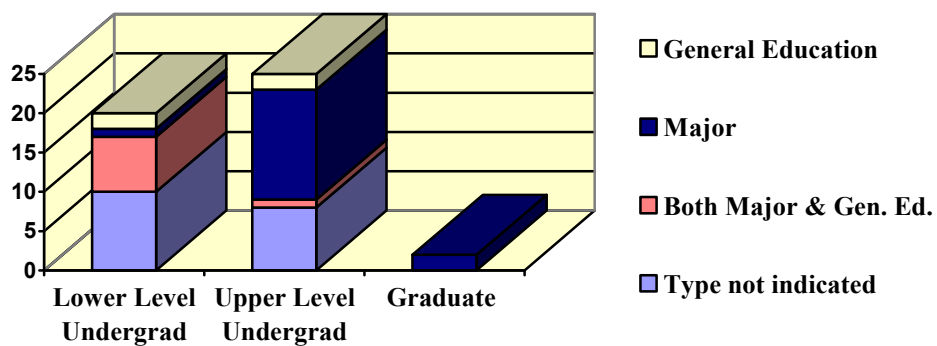


Figure 2: Type and Level of Online Anthropology Courses – Fall 2006

As we can see in Figure 2, there were more upper-level undergraduate courses overall, and more anthropology major offerings than any other course type. In most cases, only the titles of courses were provided on the survey since chairs were not asked to categorize the courses they listed according to a subfield. Still, the majority of the courses (40) could be grouped by their titles as follows: Cultural Anthropology (18), Archaeology (8), Biological/Physical Anthropology (7), Linguistic Anthropology (2) and General Anthropology (5). The remaining courses were specialty courses such as Museum Anthropology, Tourism, Fieldwork, and Applied Anthropology. Interestingly,

three of the specialty courses were focused on virtual anthropology, namely, Virtual Museums, Digital Stones, and Anthropology on the Internet.

Online Instructor Interviews

A total of 24 online courses were taught by 15 interview participants. Student enrollments in their courses ranged from 5 to 200 students. However, more than two-thirds of the online instructors reported enrollments between 10 and 35 students. Only one course was a graduate-level course; all others were undergraduate courses. Similar to the survey responses, the courses reported by the online instructors represented a broad range of topics with the majority (17) divided as follows: Cultural Anthropology (6), Archaeology (5), General Anthropology (3) Biological/Physical (2), Linguistic Anthropology (1). The remaining courses could not be grouped definitively by their titles.

Plans for Future Courses

Department Chair Survey

The plans for online offerings of anthropology departments were modest compared to the goals of their larger institutions. More than half of the survey respondents noted that adding or increasing online courses was an institutional goal, but less than 18 percent reported that their departments had comparable plans. Consequently, relatively few survey respondents provided specific information about their departments' plans for online courses in coming semesters.

Some chairs reported that their departments plan to offer just one or two online courses in the coming year, but other departments had more extensive plans. For instance, one department planned to offer four additional online courses in the following semester, two departments expected to offer five more courses, and two more departments planned to add six online anthropology courses. Many introductory or general education courses were planned, but one respondent also noted that his/her department would offer at least three upper-level courses in the following semester. Another chair reported that the department faculty have discussed the inevitability of “having some graduate anthropology classes that are focused on independent research...go online in the years coming.”

Although relatively few chairs provided information about their departments’ online plans, some reported that institutional pressure to increase online offerings was being felt. They believed that their departments will “be forced by the administration to start developing online courses in the future” because “the cost effective nature is too great to ignore.” One chair simply noted: “The world is flat. Hence, it's inevitable.”

The comments on the survey indicated that many department chairs were considering how anthropology departments should respond to this inevitable turn of events. In particular, they were concerned with how anthropology should participate in terms of suitable courses. Their suggestions for courses that they believed were, and were not, well-suited to an online environment are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Anthropology Courses - Suitable and Unsuitable for Online Instruction

Suited to an Online Environment	Not Suited to an Online Environment
<p>“Grad Classes...students who’re already trained in some areas of the discipline”</p> <p>“Cultural anthro courses”</p>	<p>“Anthropology is not, in our collective opinion, well suited to online study”</p> <p>“disciplines that require critical thinking”</p>
<p>“[courses with] large numbers of undergraduates”</p> <p>“offerings at the introductory level”</p> <p>“intro courses”</p> <p>“intro archaeology & intro anthropology”</p>	<p>“undergraduates with little/no training”</p>
<p>“courses that have very specific student learning objectives”</p>	<p>“Physical, linguistic and archaeological courses”</p> <p>“archaeology classes”</p> <p>“anthropology courses [that] generally include hands-on work”</p> <p>“anatomy, osteology, paleontology, archaeology”</p>

The courses listed as “not suited” indicate that all four- fields of anthropology, including archaeology, and physical, cultural, and linguistic anthropology should be ruled-out. Apparently, any type of anthropology course is ill-suited to an online setting since *all* anthropology courses should require critical thinking to some extent. To the contrary, the “suited” column suggests that introductory courses may be the best choice. This agrees with the plans of some departments to increase the number of introductory courses offerings primarily. However, both Table 1 and the reported plans of

departments conflict with the actual distribution of online courses reported on the survey since more upper-level major courses were listed than any other type.

Online Instructor Interviews

Online instructors were not asked about their plans, but two instructors noted that they were developing graduate online courses for future semesters. Some instructors agreed with the department chairs that anthropology's participation in the online trend is inevitable, although their outlooks regarding this prospect were more optimistic. Two instructors described the online trend as the "wave of the future" and another wrote, "I think that it has a bright future." Another instructor proposed that the online trend "will benefit both the discipline of anthropology and its students."

This view of the benefits to departments, the discipline of anthropology, and potential students was supported by another online instructor who pointed out that his online courses provide "a significant amount of 'advertising' and knowledge about anthropology/archaeology to the broader public." He added, "I most strongly feel that a very large number of the students taking my online courses would never have otherwise taken an Anthropology course." However, his ability to "advertise" anthropology to a larger audience was hampered by a lack of technology and adequate staff.

Incentives and Accommodations

Department Chair Survey

The selections of incentives or accommodations for online education included on the survey were (1) additional time allowance (2) supplemental economic compensation

(3) additional administrative or instructional support (4) technical support. Additional space was provided for other incentives or accommodations not listed on the survey, or for other comments on the topic.

According to anthropology chairs, technical support is the single resource most often provided to departments for facilitation of online courses. In fact, technical support was reported in nearly all cases since it was often paired with other selections. That is, whenever another choice was selected, it was always combined with technical support. Figure 3 below reflects these responses.

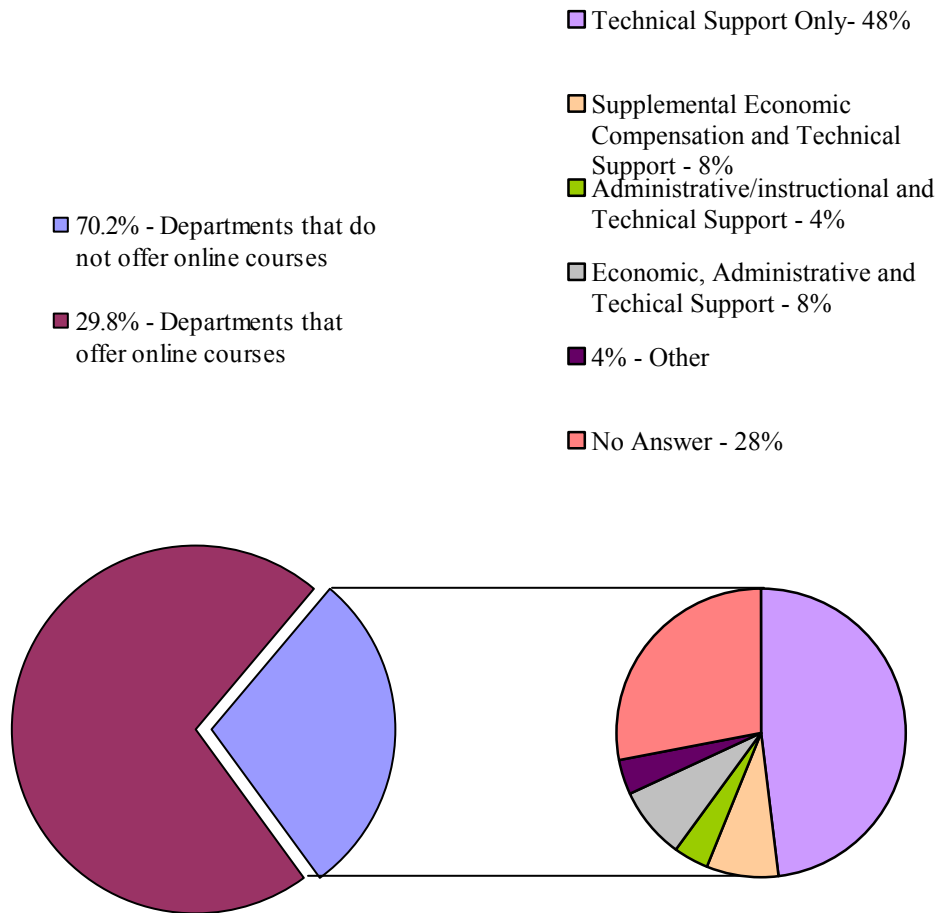


Figure 3: Incentives and Accommodations for Online Education

Incentives or accommodations listed in the “Other” category included small enrollment courses (20 – 25 students), and funds for departments to offer more face-to-face courses or for faculty research projects. While small enrollment courses may motivate individual instructors to teach online, it is arguable that few will be encouraged to accept the increased time demands if the rewards are redistributed to the research goals of other faculty or to increasing the number of face-to-face courses.

Among the additional comments, two chairs reported that online courses are always taught as an “overload” in their departments. They explained that faculty are not relieved of another course to teach one online; teaching an online course is added to their usual workload instead. Although assigning online courses as “overloads” may seem like a burden instead of an incentive, the practice appeals to some instructors since it allows them to increase their incomes. Also in the comments, three chairs remarked that their department received “no incentives at all.” Likewise, none of the chairs selected “additional time allowance” as an incentive or accommodation that was offered by their department or institution. By comparison, online instructors most often listed “more time” as the incentive that they desired most.

Online Instructor Interviews

Interviewees were asked what incentives their institutions or departments provided for teaching online. Also, they were asked to list incentives that might prompt them to teach or develop more online courses. Their answers revealed that institutions or departments rarely provided individual online instructors with substantial incentives. One instructor reported an incentive similar to that listed by some department chairs; he

wrote, “on-line courses delivered to students who are not in residence generate tuition payments that are split between the departments and the college. Professors can build little research funds this way.” This instructor also noted that their department provided a “course development person” to help instructors develop online courses. Another online instructor reported that her department offered the choice of a stipend equal to teaching a course for a semester, or a course reduction, but only if she agreed to teach the course for at least two semesters.

Although many department chairs indicated that technical help was provided in most cases, it appeared to be neither a highly-valued accommodation nor an enticing incentive to the online instructors. Many interview participants offered ideas for incentives that they would find more enticing. The incentives they suggested most often were “more time” or some sort of support in other areas that would free-up their time to focus on online teaching. These incentives took various forms such as, “class time down to develop new courses,” “a TA the previous semester to specifically assist with the creation/preparation,” and “a way of sharing out other duties that would take into account the hours spent online,” For some participants, eliminating the “overload” requirement or being able to “substitute online courses for classroom courses in the teaching load” were most appealing.

The second most often suggested incentive was “more pay,” and one informant wanted “the right to control the profits for a year.” Other interviewees believed that technical equipment (a laptop or home computer) or some sort of formal recognition would make online teaching more inviting. One participant summed it up this way: “just the basics – more pay, more help, more recognition, better technology.”

In some cases, online instructors received fewer incentives than were provided in the past. In some institutions, the reduction of incentives for teaching online was a relatively recent turn of events. One instructor reported, “early on, there was an incentive that you could get development money or release time for creating on-line courses, but now, because so many are developing them, this incentive has for the most part disappeared.” Another remarked, “the money used to be an incentive as well, but now the department takes the money.” As one instructor noted, this reduction in incentives can discourage online teaching because “faculty who developed courses several years ago indicate that the incentives were better in the past and they are not enthusiastic about creating more courses.”

This reversal of incentives, and the apparent disconnect between incentives provided by departments and those desired by online instructors may explain why interest in online education in the discipline of anthropology runs counter to the larger online trend. Taking into account the barriers to online education reported by department chairs and online instructors, the future does not look as promising as some instructors believe.

Barriers to Online Education

Department Chair Survey

When survey respondents indicated that they did not offer online courses, or did not plan to add to the ones they already offered, the following three reasons for their choices were provided on the survey: (1) insufficient funding (2) lack of faculty interest or expertise (3) inadequate technology. Just as on the previous question, additional space

was provided for department chairs to report items not listed on the survey or to add their comments. It was in these comments that concerns about the efficacy of online pedagogy first emerged as a significant theme of this research.

An overwhelming majority of department chairs who reported their departments did not plan to offer or increase online anthropology courses cited a lack of faculty interest or expertise as the primary cause. Similar to the pattern of responses regarding technical support as an accommodation, a lack of faculty interest or expertise was always selected in addition to any other choice. The distribution of these responses is reflected in figure 4 below.

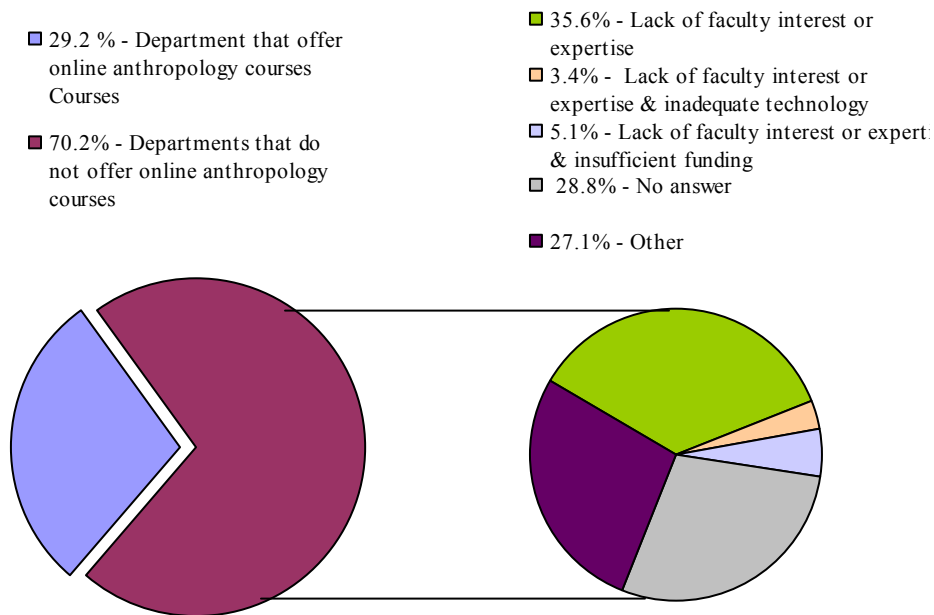


Figure 4: Why Departments Do Not Offer Anthropology Courses Online

More than half of the respondents who indicated that their departments did not offer online anthropology courses provided additional comments, and nearly three-quarters of their comments involved concerns about the quality of online pedagogy, or the value of online courses owing to these concerns. They wrote, “we think they are a poor way of teaching a field research-based discipline like anthropology,” “most of us think you can not teach anthropology in a high quality way online,” and “we are opposed to the pedagogical value of most online anthropology courses.” Other reasons for not offering online courses included “lack of student interest,” “a lack of control for accurate assessment,” and concern about the already heavy faculty workloads.

Concerns about the efficacy of online pedagogy and increasing faculty workloads were reiterated in multiple survey questions. Thus, these issues are more thoroughly discussed in following chapters that are more sharply focused on the work and pedagogy of teaching online. The online instructors who were interviewed were also worried about heavy workloads, but the efficacy of online pedagogy was only a minor concern.

Online Instructor Interviews

The online anthropology instructors who participated in this research noted most often that the increased time demands of online teaching was the main barrier to online education. Instead of poor pedagogy or a lack of interest in online teaching as a barrier, such as noted by department chairs, interview participants pointed to technical problems and, more often, the reluctance or even resistance to online education in their departments as barriers.

In addition to minor technical problems noted by several online instructors, one informant pointed out that the problems of inadequate technology and staff are especially problematic in online classes with high enrollments because they are usually populated with adult students having diverse needs. He described the problem as follows:

Barriers are the need for the large number of live chatrooms to deal with a large number of students who have different work schedules, including both daytime and nighttime chatrooms. The university does not directly supply or subsidize the cost of having the necessary teaching tools (computer, high-speed online service) outside of my office on campus.

More than technical problems, interview participants indicated that reluctance or resistance to online education by faculty and administrative staff was a major barrier they had to overcome. One interviewee argued “the only real barrier is the conservatism and sloth of professors.” Another instructor described the resistance to online education in her department as a systemic problem: “there were a number of barriers put up by some faculty and some administrators...it was difficult, and still is difficult, to make these individuals see that students can learn in online courses”

An interview participant who taught online anthropology courses at multiple institutions wrote about the resistance, or at least the lack of commitment, he had encountered at one institution in particular. His anthropology course was canceled by department staff “saying that they didn’t think distance education was appropriate for their department.” However, he believed the real reason was that online education was “considered an experiment to them.” He reported that there was ample support for his online course in the Department of Distance Education, but the course was blocked by the anthropology department head. He explained,

The Dept. of Distance Education offered the Dept. head all sorts of support; they even offered to pay the instructor (me) to teach the course rather than having the funds go through the Anth. Dept. The Anth. chairperson still refused to have distance ed. courses taught through them...I find it bizarre that the top Anth. departments across the nation teach online courses, yet our flagship university still has no courses to this day!

Conclusion

Since exploratory research generates more questions than answers, this analysis highlights inconsistencies in the research results. These results reveal at least a partial view of the state of online education in anthropology, and also uncover some issues that may enlarge or refine that view upon further investigation. Because online pedagogy and heavy workloads were mentioned numerous in the survey or interview questions, these issues emerged as major themes in the research results.

The research results suggest that the number of anthropology departments that offer online courses is fairly low, but the range of subjects offered is quite broad. Introductory and advanced courses are included, as well as a number of specialty courses. Still, the majority of chairs who participated in the research believed that the range of courses suited to an online environment is fairly narrow. These inconsistent results suggest that the menu of online offerings in anthropology is more a matter of happenstance than it is strategic planning. It appears that online offerings in many departments are online versions of the traditional classroom courses that the online instructors usually teach, or courses in their specialties or those topics that they find compelling, instead of selecting online offerings according to suitability, student demands, or department needs.

Other inconsistencies, or conflicts of interest, existed mainly between anthropology chairs and online instructors. Generally, chairs indicated that their departments provided technological assistance as the main form of accommodation or incentive for online teaching, but online instructors already possess technical expertise and do not appear to regard technical assistance as an incentive. Instead, the instructors who participated in this study mainly desire more money and time (but these are essentially the same thing for many instructors). However, online teachers usually have even less time since their courses are often assigned as an overload. In addition, they would like to encounter less resistance to online education in their departments.

The majority of the department chairs attributed the absence or low number of online courses in their departments to a lack of interest or technical expertise among faculty, and to concerns about the efficacy of online pedagogy. However, none of the online instructors questioned the efficacy of online pedagogy, and few received incentives for their interest in online teaching or rewards for the technical expertise they possessed. It seems that these differences would need to be resolved if the growth of online education is indeed inevitable in anthropology departments, and especially if it is to be successful. In the following chapter, I explore these differences in more depth since as they are main themes that dominated the research results.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ANTHROPOLOGY TEACHERS AND THE WORK OF TEACHING ONLINE

The online instructors who participated in the study are diverse in their motivations for teaching online, but there are similarities in the conditions of their employment. The nature of their work is both demanding and rewarding, and can be flexible and restrictive at the same time. That is, online teaching can be conducted wherever there is a computer and a reliable Internet connection, but that flexibility can also extend their hours of availability and raise the expectations of students.

The majority of online instructors interviewed in this study indicated that the amount of time invested in online communication has major implications for the quality of an online course. Also online courses require constant revisions; if online courses are reused repeatedly without being updated, the quality of instruction diminishes. This view is also supported in literature on online education. In addition, many educators believe that the designation of ownership of online courses has implications for the quality of instruction and, inevitably, for the future of online education. This chapter discusses these issues from the perspectives of both teachers and department chairs.

The first section of this chapter is an introduction to the online instructors who took part in the research, and articulates some personal and professional reasons for their choices to teach online. In the second section, I present the impressions and beliefs of department chairs and online teachers regarding the work involved in teaching online; the

perspectives of online instructors are featured largely in this section since they are the “workers”. Finally, I consider online courses as products of labor.

Interview Participants

Most of the online instructors who participated in the interviews (N=15) came from institutions throughout the US; only two instructors taught online anthropology courses outside of the US. Three instructors taught at the same university, but all other instructors taught at separate institutions. Although specific identifying information was not collected from interview participants, five of the online teachers volunteered that they were adjuncts. Moreover, many comments in both survey and interview responses support the idea that teachers in non-tenurable positions are more likely to teach online courses. One chair explained that “the dept. just recently decided to have only grad students and fixed term faculty teach (online) because the amount they take in salary is so much less than it was when we paid the regular faculty.”

Some adjuncts or part-time instructors see online teaching as a door to a more secure position. One online instructor described her position and the opportunities that teaching online afforded this way:

When I started to teach on-line I was in a somewhat precarious position at the university. I was a fixed-term faculty with no guarantee of a job the next year. There was funding for D[istance] E[ducation] teaching, my department chair wanted to explore that area “to bring anthropology to the people,” and she was looking for someone to try it out. Because I was looking for a way to cement my position here, I volunteered.

Another online instructor already had a secure position as a faculty member, but noted that she “did not have much choice in the matter.” She explained, “my university and department had already decided to push online courses so I fell into it.”

Often, however, online teaching involves low pay or additional work. Three online instructors who were tenured professors reported that the online courses they taught were assigned as “overloads.” Although these conditions do not necessarily result in low-quality courses, it does suggest that online teachers are subjected to conditions that encourage cutting-corners in teaching. Nonetheless, most of the online instructors who took part in my research appeared to be dedicated to providing high-quality courses and were pleased to be teaching online for the many reasons.

Motivations for Teaching Online

Anthropology teachers have many reasons for wanting to teach online, but the one they most often identified was the flexibility it afforded them. While online education is recognized as a form of distance learning for students, it is also a form of “mobile teaching” for instructors. I think that this aspect of online education is one that is overlooked by departments and institutions, although it is highly-valued by online teachers. The following are just a few of the comments of online instructors that demonstrate this point:

It gives me the freedom to stay home; or travel—especially during the summer, while still earning a salary, and retaining a momentum, that is often lost over a free semester.

I am much more willing to provide a summer online course than a face to face course because I travel to see family during the summer, work on my house, do research and so on.

It is a convenient way to teach from a remote location...and I can do it while traveling around.

I like the flexibility it offers for both myself and the students. I don't have to deal with traveling to work (thus saving gas and not polluting especially in these times of peak oil!), I don't have to deal with office politics (I've never even been to the --- campus and I have been teaching there for four years!), and I especially like being able to live anywhere and still teach. In fact, we are moving to Canada in about six months and as long as I have internet access, I can bring my job with me!

I also find the flexibility of teaching online very compelling. I am able to use my time more efficiently since I no longer commute. In my experience, working from home also lends immediacy to the courses I teach. When a newsworthy event occurs, I can immediately engage students in a conversation on the topic via the discussion boards, instead of waiting until the next class meeting such as a traditional course dictates.

According to the online instructors who took part in the research, second on the list of motivating factors was their ability to connect with diverse students. This sentiment was repeated often in the interviews. One instructor wrote, "I am excited about the possibility to engage students in a different format. To be able to have richer discussions and to reach out to students who are not traditionally drawn into anthropology programs." Another instructor was pleased to be able to make an anthropology course "available to a number of students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to fit it easily into their schedule." A third teacher spoke to the rewards of working with non-traditional students:

I do also like the fact that we get very different types of students taking the on-line course. It really is an issue of bringing anthropology to people who normally would not have the opportunity. I find working with the non-traditional students...very rewarding.

Other motivations for online teaching include an interest in anthropology and in the practice of teaching. One teacher wrote, “I like keeping my finger in anthropology, and this compels me to continue my reading in different subject areas. I also like to teach.”

However, the rewards of online teaching also come at a price, and the cost most often noted by interview participants is a feeling of social and professional isolation. One teacher wrote, “I do get kind of starved for intellectual conversation related to anthro out here in an isolated area.” Two other teachers noted the same feelings of isolation and advised other online teachers put forth an effort to balance their social lives. They wrote,

One final thing I have to mention is that being an online teacher, especially full time, can be a lonely experience and one must have a well balanced social life in order to stay sane! Although I like meeting students from all over the country, this is not direct person to person contact and I do miss the direct social interactions with them and my professional colleagues. One must be prepared for this, which is something I don't think is covered too deeply in distance education training.

I think that the feeling of isolation will increase as more demands on those people who teach online courses. Spending hours a day in front of "your best friend, your computer" does not make for a healthy social life so extra efforts must be made to break away and be with friends/family. This is easier said than done, especially if you have lots of students!

However, “breaking away” from online teaching is not always easy. I find it more difficult to walk away from an online course than a traditional class because there is always one more message to answer or one more discussion post to read. In fact, on some days, the real world seems virtual when I finally raise my eyes from the screen. Related to this is an “over-availability” that can have other consequences. I have learned that when I am constantly online and available to students early in a semester, they come

to expect immediate responses all semester long. They then become extremely anxious if am not always able to respond immediately. One online instructor described his frustration with students' expectations that he would be available around the clock:

Over-anxious students who seem to expect immediate feedback and start writing the dean if they don't hear from me right away is another frustration. Even worse is when they complain to the other students. I let them know that I am not sitting all day 24-7 at my computer and to expect delays sometimes if I am traveling or do not have access to a computer. I still get anxious online students.

There are ways to manage the unrealistic expectations of students, and these are discussed in the following chapter, but the expectations of institutions are more difficult to address.

The practice of assigning online courses as an overload, an added responsibility rather than a significant portion of a teacher's regular workload, reflects the persistent institutional perception that teaching online is less demanding than traditional classroom courses. However, this perception was disputed by the majority of both teachers and department chairs in my study. Although teaching as a practice involves pedagogy and methodology, online teaching as "work" is more tightly linked with the political economies of time and money.

Online Teaching as Work

The increased time demands of online teaching were discussed by numerous survey and interview participants. Several department chairs noted that there is an institutional perception that online teaching is easy, or at least requires little expertise, and some online instructors agreed. One teacher explained, "at first it's a lot of

work...setting up the site. But once that is done, it's smooth sailing. You can even reuse the same site with minor changes year after year." Another teacher believed that developing an online course was the bulk of the work, and that conducting the course required little teaching experience. He asserted, "online courses take work to set up, but once running, can usually be handled by a TA or an adjunct." Only one survey respondent believed that online courses "can save everyone tremendous amounts of travel resources and time."

Conversely, the majority of chairs and online teachers disagreed with this assessment. One department chair argued that the "general faculty impression is that on-line courses actually require more work in terms of preparation and in terms of interaction with students." Department chairs argued that "the costs greatly exceed the benefits," and worse, they believe faculty will be the ones to pay the price. One chair wrote, "it is far more expensive of time, money, and faculty resources than was originally considered, and universities still try to do it on the cheap or on the backs of the faculty." Another chair remarked that institutional pressure to offer online courses was just a way to "speed up, a way of getting more work out of professors without hiring more people."

Most of the online instructors who participated in the research agreed that online teaching is very time-consuming. One online instructor pointed out that it takes a lot of time if it's "done right." She explained,

They are far more time-consuming for an instructor than a regular, on-campus course. If done well and done right, there need to be many mechanisms for class interaction and direct feedback (monitored chat rooms, email and response, etc.). All of this, plus the preparation of the

on-line materials, can be far more difficult and time-consuming than 3 lectures a week.

Disputing the belief that online courses can save money and time can be frustrating, but the maneuvers some institutions use to turn this belief into a fact are disturbing. First, low pay for TAs and adjuncts maximizes profits, and the assignment of online courses as overloads avoids the need to hire more faculty. When I asked one online instructor what motivated her to teach online, she replied, “Not the pay, that’s for sure.” Some methods institutions use to improve their bottom line are less obvious, but seem more devious. One online instructor discussed the practice at her institution of increasing enrollments “without warning or advance”, and also without increasing teacher pay. Another teacher described other ways that savings were sometimes hidden. He wrote, “while I get paid the same amount to teach a summer course as one during a regular semester, teaching assistants only get half (and with no tuition benefits). So effectively I must do more work myself, while the university saves on TA salaries.”

Although the majority of online instructors I interviewed volunteered to teach online, at least one faculty member felt pressured into teaching online. She explained that her department indicated that faculty could choose to teach an online course as part of their regular workload, but if they did not, it would probably be assigned as an overload course. The following is her description of how online education was orchestrated in her department:

Online and face to face teaching are conceptually and institutionally so divided that it feels as if you have to choose one or the other. This also happens because the development of online courses has taken place without hiring additional faculty. So, the same faculty that previously taught face to face courses now are being asked to take over the online

courses. Often faculty have to make a choice in order not to increase their already full teaching loads.”

In addition to the savings that institutions can accumulate through low pay and high expectations, the development of new online courses can generate additional revenue. Many interview participants reported that they received little or no compensation for the courses they designed, although designing a new course is a major undertaking. One teacher described how this happened to him:

I was asked to take over teaching Introduction to Physical Anthropology and Archaeology from another instructor. Since this course was not new in the department, I received no funding whatsoever for developing the course...

Other tactics seem more exploitive. For instance, one teacher suspected that the positions of some online instructors are intentionally designed to be precarious so that institutions could capitalize on the fruits of their labor. At her institution, distance faculty work on a year to year contract “so after any year, they can be terminated but their work remains. Once the course is developed, the university can then get someone else who they can pay even less to administer the class.”

This appropriation of the work of online teachers has been a controversial subject in academic circles since the inception of online education. The arguments surrounding course ownership were considered in my study because literature suggests that the designation of ownership may strengthen opposition to online education in some departments, and can discourage some teachers from teaching online. However, my research elicited little evidence to support these ideas. Although numerous online instructors offered opinions on who *should* own the rights to online courses, they did not

indicate that they viewed it as a troublesome problem. Department chairs rarely commented on the issue.

Online Courses as Products of Labor

Some scholars suggest that questions about the ownership of online courses, and related issues surrounding intellectual property rights, are significant barriers to the development of online education, although this connection was not evident in my research. To the contrary, a comparative lack of interest was apparent. This may be due to the fact that the question on the survey was framed as a “yes” or “no” question for the sake of brevity. Still, additional space was provided for comments, just as on other survey questions, but there were fewer comments on the issue of course ownership than any other topic I introduced on the survey. This question was also posed to online instructors, but they were also asked to describe their understanding of the policy. Therefore, they had more to say on the subject, although none indicated that the nature of the policy affected their willingness to teach online.

Forty-two percent of department chairs who completed the survey indicated that their institution had an official course ownership policy, 15 percent reported that their institution had none, and the remaining 43 percent either did not know or did not answer the question. Although I did not ask about the particulars of the policies at their institutions, three department chairs offered explanations. One chair believed that online courses were the property of the department. Another thought they were the property of individual teachers, but the third chair had a sort of “don’t ask, don’t tell” view of the

issue. He wrote, “it seems vague which is why I have not requested institutional support.”

The majority of interview participants thought they understood the policies of their institutions and eight of the instructors attempted to explain them. The remaining seven interviewees did not know the policies that governed online courses, but most of these instructors offered their ideas on what they believed the policies should be. Four interview participants believed that online courses belonged to the teachers. One of these instructors wrote, “We produced it, it is our intellectual property, and the course goes with us.” Another asked the question of his institution and reported, “they told me that I have ownership of the courses and that I can teach them where ever I wish.” The other two online instructors believed that their institutions owned exclusive rights to all online work, and one described it as part of a larger exploitative plan:

I believe the policy of ownership of online courses here is that the university owns the course. I actually find this quite appalling because I think it directly relates to how the university treats strictly DE (online) faculty. Faculty hired for DE generally do not get tenure track positions (and are typically paid less).

Four other interviewees described policies that were somewhere in-between. That is, they believed their institutions distinguished between the course shell and the course content or materials. Two online instructors indicated that they own the course *materials*, but not the shell, and asserted that they are allowed to adapt or reuse their online courses at other institutions: The third teacher was sure; he wrote, “The university owns the course but I own the content. We have a contract.” The fourth teacher admitted his confusion: “I understand that they own the course and can present it as often as they like.

However, I own the intellectual property that went into making it (as you can see, I don't entirely understand how it works).”

The distinction between the course content and the course shell is difficult to explain, at least as it relates to all online courses. A course shell can be skeletal, or extensive. For instance, in my online courses, the course shells are mostly collections of online tools that have been enabled. I enable a discussion board, but the topics of discussion (the content) are created and added weekly. My interpretation of this is that the board itself is part of the course shell, but the discussions are part of the course content. Also, my course shell contains icons that I created to link to writing assignments, but the writing assignments (the content) change each semester.

Although most of the online teachers were not sure about the policies of their institutions, they had strong opinions about who should and should not control their online creations. They believe that other instructors should not use their online courses since they can be very elaborate creations. One teacher asserted, “I would certainly consider it personal infringement if the online course sites/materials that I have created were used by another instructor without my permission.” Another teacher believed it was a matter of ethics; it was the responsibility of all teachers to respect the work of others.

He wrote,

The person taking over should not have access to the courses I spent months preparing and using. To me, that is plain academic laziness. The new instructor should develop their own courses because we are all biased to some degree in what we want to include or not include...

The lack of opinions on the issue of course ownership on the department chair survey is disconcerting, even though it is likely owing to the fact that the majority of

departments represented in the survey do not offer online courses. Considering the large number of negative comments regarding online pedagogy in survey responses, it may be that the question of ownership is thought of as a moot point. That is, if online courses are perceived to have very little pedagogical value, then ownership is not a concern. Still, it is arguable that the rationale for institutional ownership of online courses can bleed-over into traditional education since some traditional courses also exist in a shell form. For instance, faculty at the Anthropology Department at the University of South Florida created a manual of instruction for teaching an introductory course, including selected exercises and a video guide. Justification for institutional ownership would not have to be stretched far to apply to this manual, especially since university property was used in its construction.

Conclusion

The majority of the research participants agreed that teaching online courses requires substantial time and labor, more than is required for their traditional classroom counterparts. Some department chairs worry that institutions will pressure anthropology departments to offer online courses, and that faculty will be exploited. However, all but one of the online instructors who participated in my research taught online voluntarily.

Although it appears that few incentives for teaching online are provided by anthropology departments or their larger institutions, the online instructors who participated in my study are motivated by the opportunity to reach out to non-traditional students, potential employment opportunities that may ensue, and the flexibility that online teaching affords. However, the amount of work that online teaching requires,

departmental resistance to online education, and the lack of financial rewards can be discouraging.

None of the research participants expressed serious concerns about the designation of ownership of online courses. But, the fact that many participants did not know or understand the policies of their institutions suggests that they may be harboring assumptions about ownership based on intellectual property as it relates to traditional classroom teaching. The division between course content and course shells that some online instructors discussed is worthy of further investigation. In the case that only the course shell is institutionally owned, it may be that little of value is appropriated. In the case that both the shell and the course content is considered the property of the institution, the extent of the acquisition is more substantial.

I expected to find that some anthropology departments do not offer online courses because faculty believe online pedagogy to be inferior, but this perception was actually more prevalent than I anticipated. It was reiterated many times in responses to multiple questions on the department chair survey. By contrast, the online instructors who took part in the interviews had few concerns about the efficacy of online pedagogy. Although their opinions may be biased on their own behalf in terms of job security, the following chapter demonstrates that they have devoted substantial effort to ensuring the quality of education in their online courses.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ONLINE PEDAGOGY AND COURSE DESIGN

This chapter is focused on the research results related to the final research question: How do we teach anthropology online? Many of the anthropology chairs who participated in the research pointed out problems in online instruction and voiced their concerns regarding the efficacy of online pedagogy. The large number of these comments may be a measure of the equally large number departments represented on the survey that did not offer online courses. Still, by comparison, the online instructors had few concerns about online pedagogy, although the specific teaching problems, methods, and course designs they discussed were connected to some of the pedagogical concerns raised by the department chairs.

The first section of this chapter is a discussion of online pedagogy and the value of online education from the perspectives of department chairs and online instructors. Online communication is also introduced in this section since it is the main characteristic by which many of the online teachers measured the pedagogical value of their online courses. In the second section, the role of the online anthropology teacher is explored, and online communication, as the defining characteristic of online courses, is examined. Third, I discuss two major groups of online problems that the online instructors identified, followed by some of the strategies and methods that the interview participants

have devised to address them. Finally, online course design is discussed using the examples provided by the online teachers who took part in the research.

Pedagogy and the Value of Online Education

Many department chairs questioned the efficacy of online pedagogy. Although their concerns about online pedagogy were sprinkled throughout survey questions, the majority of these comments were included in answers to the single open-ended question on the survey: What are your thoughts about online education in general, and about online anthropology courses in particular? Over 90 percent of the survey respondents shared their impressions about online education in response to this question, and more than half of these comments expressed negative views of online pedagogy. Despite these negative views, many department chairs saw the value in online education for both anthropology departments and nontraditional students.

The online anthropology instructors who participated in the research shared some of the same concerns, and agreed with chairs about the value of online education. However, they did not share the view that online pedagogy or online education is inferior. In fact, they proposed that online education is superior, or at least has some advantages over traditional education. Also their views about nontraditional students were more specific, and often very complimentary.

Department Chair Survey

Many department chairs who opposed online education in anthropology listed problems that impact both teachers and students. They pointed out that it “removes

critical social elements,” “lacks academic rigor,” “is questionable pedagogy,” and is otherwise “not well-suited to anthropology.” Chairs who were supportive of online education usually gave reasons for their support that benefited institutions mostly. For instance, online courses “can significantly increase the reach of a university”, are “a real money-maker for the university”, and are “useful for reaching a large number of undergraduates.” The combination of problems and benefits create a dilemma for some survey respondents. One chair pointed out,

From an institutional perspective, it is something we have to get involved in for a wide variety of reasons (lack of classroom space, student demand, etc). As such, I support our movement into this area as a department, which will place us among a relatively few units engaged in this activity ...personally and professionally I feel that we will be providing our students with a second-rate learning experience at best.

Instead of online pedagogy itself being poor, some department chairs suggest that faculty or online teachers are the problem with poor-quality online instruction. One chair took the position that online courses can be easier to teach and, thus, encourage “professional laziness.” Another chair pointed out that the problem is more than just the laziness of some instructors; instead, it is embedded in economics and the tradition of teaching:

There is ...very little enthusiasm for such courses among tenure-track faculty...I suspect the reservations are in part inertia – that we are used to how we teach in a classroom setting and changing that has high costs compared to expected payoffs – in part an opposition to the idea that the student doesn’t need to see and hear from the professor directly, and concern about how an on-line course would work (what does a course look like if the professor doesn’t lecture).

The majority of department chairs agreed that the greatest value of online education is its ability to serve “nontraditional students.” This was the most often

repeated observation on the survey, but this assignment of value was sometimes revoked in the same breath. One chair wrote, “online education has a role to play in allowing people who live in remote communities to obtain advanced degrees in some fields. In general, I do not think it is an appropriate way to teach anthropology.” Another chair was “dubious about their value, except for those who are unable to take in-person classes.” These views reflect two main themes that dominated the survey comments: the belief that online pedagogy is inferior, and the idea that online education’s greatest value is to serve non-traditional students. These themes were repeated often. Although the link between them was not usually stated explicitly, the implied connections were clear.

Online Instructor Interviews

Many of the online instructors who participated in interviews agreed with department chairs regarding the value of online education for both departments and non-traditional students. However, their assignment of value to nontraditional students was not paired with ideas about “questionable pedagogy” such as it was in the survey of department chairs. In fact, some online instructors proposed that online education can be superior to traditional instruction in some ways.

The majority of online instructors also indicated that the most important value of online courses is the educational opportunities it provides non-traditional students. They asserted that online education is “wonderful” for “adult learners and those who do not have access to regular face to face classes,” and online courses “are an excellent way for students who have other obligations or scheduling conflicts to take classes that they would otherwise not have been able to take.”

Some online instructors also agreed with department chairs in that online courses can not, or should not replace traditional classroom experiences. They believed that online instruction is “no real substitute for in-class teacher-student and student-student interaction.” Also, online learning can not compare with “the kind of cooperative learning that happens in a good classroom, where through debate students probe an issue deeply, getting engaged and involved and challenged.” Some even suggested that certain limitations to enrollment in online courses should be considered by anthropology departments. One instructor proposed that “students should [not] be allowed to take more than 25% of their course work as online courses, and certain courses should be required as face-to-face.”

Another point of agreement between online teachers and department chairs was the belief that some problems in online education can be attributed to faculty or online teachers. One online instructor pointed out that online courses “are not good or bad in themselves,” but “there is a lot of room for sloppy work and poor communication.” However, none of the online instructors who participated in the study described online pedagogy itself as poor or inferior.

Some of the online teachers admitted to having negative opinions about online pedagogy initially, but reported that their opinions changed after they gained more knowledge and experience. One online instructor wrote: “Before I started thinking about teaching online I had a very negative perspective about it. As I read and learned more about teaching online I became less skeptical.” Another teacher admitted that he “worried that on-line students would not test out as well” but “discovered that after the drop period ended there was no difference.”

Online pedagogy was viewed more favorably among online instructors than among department chairs, and some online teachers even argued that online courses are actually superior to traditional classes in some ways. The instructors reported that they “actually have much more communication with the students than in traditional...courses,” and “students actually seem to be more involved and much less passive than in regular classes.” One online instructor believed that a lack of physicality in his course led to more honest and dynamic discussions, and enhanced students’ learning experiences. He wrote,

I feel that for the two courses I offer that students learn as much if not more than in a regular classroom ...students in live chatrooms, where only their names are showing, are more honest and outspoken than even in smaller classrooms. I think this is very important for communication and learning in the social sciences.

In addition, some online instructors felt that they knew more about their students and the extent of their comprehension of course materials in an online context.

One thing that is very interesting about on-line education is that I actually feel that I know more about what the students actually think about things than I do in a traditional class. While in the traditional class I can tell if they seem to understand or are engaged with the material by seeing their reactions and body language, I really don’t know much beyond that.

Indeed, the majority of the online teachers in this study reported that online communication was the key to success in their online courses. In the following section, online communication is considered as a defining characteristic in the role of an online teacher.

Online Communication and the Roles of Teachers

The type of online communication that dominates in an online course (asynchronous or synchronous) is the defining factor that distinguishes between types of

online courses (facilitated or instructor-led) and also defines the roles of teachers. The idea of a facilitated approach to teaching implies at least two things. First, the course content is delivered through a variety of modes (i.e. interactivity with both course materials and other people in an online setting), consistent with a distributed view of learning. Second, learning is facilitated through interactive communication between the teacher and student, and also among students themselves. This is in contrast to online courses that rely on one-way communication through streamed lectures or videos. In this study, all but one of the online teachers employed a facilitated approach to teaching.

One teacher, in particular, found a facilitated approach to teaching refreshing, describing her role as a “guide on the side.” She wrote,

I very much enjoyed being the guide on the side, which is much, much different than how I do things in face to face settings where I mainly lecture. Both methods have been highly successful with the same course, but I will say, it made things pretty relaxing to be the one to nudge people towards information rather than dumping a great deal of information on them in a lecture hall

Other teachers were not as comfortable in a teacher-guide role, and missed their place as a lecturer at the front of a traditional classroom. One instructor wrote, “there are no lectures in an online class. One of the core components of classroom teaching is giving lectures. Lots of time is dedicated to preparing lectures. In an online situation, there is no opportunity to give a lecture.”

Some instructors indicated that the nature of online communication also influenced their perceptions about students. One noted that “emails have ‘tones’ which can contribute to certain perceptions about students.” A second believed an online

environment was impersonal and the sense of remoteness reduced his level of investment in his students' performance. He wrote:

I feel like I have less responsibility/accountability to my students. It may sound unpleasant, but in an online environment I don't get to know my students personally. Therefore, I am less interested in seeing them improve or perform better. When I see a student on a regular basis, I form a personal bond with them that makes me sympathetic, interested, involved, etc. The online relationship is more like a name on a screen.

Another instructor, who had not yet taught her online course, feared that some students could be forgotten or left out. She noted, "some students tend to be rather silent in an online environment. Although this also happens in a face to face setting, it is easier for students who prefer to be silent to be forgotten in an online setting by other students and even by the instructor."

According to the online instructors, online communication can be both a problem and a solution. Online communication can be isolating for some students, but it can also be the mechanism that keeps students socially connected. Online discussion boards, in particular, helped some instructors to counter the sense of aloneness that distance students can experience. One teacher pointed out that online communication "is a way, first of all, to reach students who would otherwise find themselves quite alone." She asserted that the role of an online teacher is to "recreate this interaction and provide students with the contact that they need and want."

Problems in Online Teaching

The interview participants discussed two main types of problems in online teaching. One type of problem involved imparting anthropological concepts and

assessing student comprehension in an online environment, and the other involved structural or technical issues. I also have experienced both types of problems in my online courses. In particular, I was interested in learning about the problems other teachers encountered in imparting anthropological concepts in an online setting since it had been a challenge for me. Although none of the interviewees described problems exactly like the ones I have encountered, theirs were similar to mine in that all of the problems in imparting anthropological concepts in an online context seem to stem from the lack of physical cues and conversational opportunities.

Imparting Anthropological Concepts

It is difficult to gauge students' reactions when they feel challenged in an online context, and even when reactions are evident, text-based communication is a cumbersome way to address them. In my online courses, some students post lengthy oppositional opinions on discussion boards when they are introduced to what Breitborde (1997:41) describes as "new unprecedented notions of community that...make the world in a very real sense a more complicated, difficult, and troubled place to live in than would otherwise be the case."

The following quotes are two such examples from students' in response to reading the American Anthropological Association's *Statement on Race*. Although the quotes are lengthy, they are only short excerpts from much larger compositions.

I think different races do have differing talents and abilities, although I understand the reasoning behind trying to get people to believe they don't (in a perfect world we all would celebrate each others uniqueness, but as things are at present, differences are used by many to promote hatred). If the different races didn't have different capabilities, how does one explain

the number of superb black athletes in college and professional sports and the Olympics in relation to their proportion in the population? I'm quite certain other examples exist, but this one will suffice to illustrate that the different races are not just different in physical appearance alone.

In order to gather my apparently scattered arguments, I want to make clear that I do not believe culture defines race, rather I believe it is the opposite. Be they 6% or no, the differences that are physical between races, clearly distinguish them. In the interest of brevity, I will again focus only on whites & blacks. Who can deny rhythm? How many Caucasians can you name with rhythm? How many Caucasians can you name with rhythm or the ability to keep time to beats and melodies in music? On the converse, how many Africans can you name that play chess or tennis?

Typically, posts such as these elicit one of three types of responses from other students in the course. Either contentious interactions among students ensue, or conspicuous silence descends, or the disagreements evolve into productive learning experiences as students come to terms with their own ethnocentric ideas. The type of response that occurs seems to depend on how students perceive the level of assertiveness, or even aggression, of the offending poster in previous discussions. Although these reactions may present teaching opportunities in a traditional classroom, they are more difficult to manufacture in an online setting. Lacking the opportunity for immediate conversational interactions, a teacher's attempts to facilitate or guide online discussion can suffer from time lag and are often lost to students because they are buried among hundreds of other posts.

Although interview participants did not specifically discuss the problem of challenging students' beliefs, they did point to the problem of presenting complex anthropological concepts in an online context. One online instructor pointed out that "anthropology courses are especially challenging in an online setting when discussing concepts, because they don't have the opportunity to get immediate clarification by

engaging in a short conversational exchange.” Another teacher wrote, “I think online anthropology courses are especially challenging, more so than a math or science class. Anthro requires less rote memorization and more discussion of abstract concepts”. When I asked this teacher if he meant that it is “especially challenging” to teachers, or to students, and he replied:

I meant that anthro is especially challenging for students in an online setting when discussing concepts, because they don't have the opportunity to get immediate clarification by engaging in short conversational exchange. Now that you mention it, putting those abstract concepts into an online context is also very challenging. It takes a lot of preparation to develop a visual or text based explanation of concepts that can be easily understood by students who have no prior experience in social science.

A related problem is the lack of immediate feedback and visual cues that can leave a teacher guessing about what students comprehend. One teacher remarked: “as opposed to teaching anthropology in a non-on-line environment, I think the hardest aspect is the lack of immediate feedback as to whether what I am trying to get across is actually being understood.” Another instructor described how the problem affected her as a teacher:

I cannot tell whether or not they are getting a certain concept or whether they are interpreting it the way it was intended, etc. So it is hard to really know how to adjust what I am telling them through the text to make it more clear. It seems they have one chance to understand it whereas in a class a student can just raise their hand if something is unclear and we can clarify it right then and there.

Structural Problems

The second type of online teaching problem involves technological limitations and limitations that are a result of an absence of physicality. Several interview

participants discussed problems involving academic dishonesty that they had not encountered in traditional classrooms. One teacher pointed to the “cheating issue in non-proctored exams” and another described cheating as part of a larger sense of a loss of control in online classrooms.

I can see them in a classroom taking a test. I can pass an attendance sheet around to know if someone is there or not. In an online setting, it's very difficult to know if they really did encounter browser problems that caused the test to crash. It's nearly impossible to know if they are using their books and atlases while they are taking the exam. It's the loss of control in a completely online course, such as mine is, that is difficult to adjust to.

A loss of control was related to another technical problem discussed by one instructor. He pointed out, “student training is apparently not mandatory, so every semester there are students who have difficulties attaching and accessing documents, which sets them up for poor grades due to lateness and missed assignments.” This lack of students’ technical skills was a major problem in the first semester I taught an online course, but I discovered that many technical difficulties could be avoided with course management strategies, especially if they are deployed early on.

Teaching Strategies and Methods

Although questions about teaching problems and teaching strategies were disconnected in the interviews, connections emerged through the process of data analysis as they were linked with possible solutions. For instance, the problem of students’ inadequate technical skills was treated by some online teachers with course management techniques and the provision of clear course guidelines. The problem of imparting anthropological concepts in an online environment was addressed through the use of

discussion boards. Although not framed as a problem, keeping students engaged in the course was a major goal of many of the online instructors. Thus, they offered many techniques for promoting and maintaining student engagement.

Anthropological Concepts

Since literature concerned with teaching anthropology frequently describes the effectiveness of active, hands-on approaches to imparting anthropological concepts, I looked for examples of these strategies and methods in informants' responses. However, only one teacher described assignments geared to active learning. He wrote, "I get them into the field. Since they are mostly on their asses at home, I want to expose them to other environments. I often require ethnographic research projects or museum visits as part of the course. This allows them to see anthropology in action."

Because a collaborative approach is seldom mentioned in anthropological literature, but is prevalent in literature about online teaching, I explicitly asked interview participants if they employed collaborative learning projects, and nearly all responded that they did not. However, one teacher remarked, "I'd be willing to try collaborative work but I haven't yet figured out how to do it." Another teacher described the work that took place on discussion boards in her course as "pseudo-collaboration' in the sense that individual students posted responses to discussion board questions, but everyone could learn as a whole from these responses.

It is important to note that many interviewees described extensive use of discussion boards, and many of their descriptions of the learning that took place fit descriptions of collaborative learning that are typically found in literature on online

pedagogy. One online instructor wrote, “students who would never communicate otherwise are able to talk in the student forum, compare ideas, share materials, ask each other questions and help one another.” Another informant remarked, “the discussion boards are a very important component of the course...students are learning from each other in this component and I use it as a way to direct students to reach certain conclusions for themselves.” Thus, it is arguable that the impressions of interview participants regarding the absence of collaborative learning in their online courses are more a matter of differences in definitions of “collaboration” than they are differing approaches to online teaching.

Much as the discussion boards were used to impart anthropological concepts, they were also attributed with creating social cohesion among students. Although none of the teachers described their class of students as an “online learning community” or discussed “building community” in their online courses, some of the interactions they described can be considered fairly intense, and even intimate, social interactions. For instance, one teacher wrote, “I found students willing to post some very interesting and often candid experiences, including marital problems, child abuse experiences, the poverty of their youth, gang activities, growing up in dysfunctional families, experiencing prejudice.” Another teacher compared a lecture model of teaching typically used in face-to-face classrooms to online discussions and argued that online discussions were more effective in promoting student reflexivity:

The discussion boards were great. They allowed me to get answers out of students that I don't get during lecture, even though I ask a number of questions during lecture. I'm not sure what it was, more time to think about and respond to the same type of question that I would ask in class,

or maybe they felt safer in putting an answer out there, but nonetheless it generated a good deal of interaction and correct answers.

Many informants pointed out that keeping students engaged in the course was a necessary prerequisite to imparting anthropological concepts. According to interview participants an important strategy for keeping students engaged in online courses is to ensure frequent communication between teachers and students, in addition to interactions on discussion boards. Specifically, they stressed the importance of accessibility and providing quick responses to students' questions, more so than in traditional classes:

In most traditional lecture classes, which I have taught a lot before too, there isn't a lot of personal interaction between myself and students except for office hours. But since I am available via email 24 hours a day, our communication system is much quicker and students are more likely to ask questions.

Many of the online teachers indicated that they keep students engaged through regular feedback and constant reminders. One teacher wrote "I make sure I have regular email contact with students. This keeps them engaged in the course and prevents them from intellectually dropping out of the course." Another teachers wrote, "I also send e-mails every week to those who miss assignments," "I give lots of group and individual feedback by email" and "regular homework assignments to check that readings are done, with personalized feedback, constant reminders of the reading and homework deadlines to avoid drop-out."

Structure and Organization

Structural strategies and methods are focused mainly on informational content and course management methods. Many online teachers stressed that these things helped

them manage their time, kept students engaged in the course, and optimized student learning as well. One teacher offered this advice and a warning about a poorly managed courses: “The instructor MUST find ways to avoid letting the course turn into a set of one-on-one tutorials. I have seen too many conscientious instructors worn to a frazzle because they failed to attend to this.”

Indeed, my first online course did dissolve into a set of one-on-one tutorials with 175 students! At the end of the semester, it was clear to me that the problem was caused by a lack of structure and a failure to provide adequate information about course guidelines to students. Consequently, I was overwhelmed with e-mail questions about coursework and requests for tutoring from students who did not have adequate technical skills. Many interview participants provided suggestions for avoiding similar situations. One teacher provides “succinct intros and summaries of materials.” Another teacher includes “detailed information on how to create and upload websites, how to use library databases, lists of appropriate websites to visit, lists of keywords to know, sample quiz questions, etc., plus announcements that change week to week”.

The interview participants also suggested many strategies to encourage student self-reliance and investment in their grades. The following are only two examples:

I am strict about students taking responsibility for their own grade. Once a unit is over, it is over...there is no making up of material in this course. My first semester teaching this course, I was very lax about this and found that at the end of the semester I was bombarded with back material and excuses.

They can track their progress...and they know exactly what numerical score will produce a particular letter grade. It puts their grade in their hands and takes it out of mine so that I can be very sympathetic without making ad hoc adjustments.

While many of the foregoing strategies and methods can be considered elements of course design, they are not organic to the design itself. Thus, they were included in this section because they actually work to set the tone of the course in terms of organization.

Online Course Design

For the sake of simplicity in the e-mail interviews, I did not ask informants to provide detailed descriptions of their courses. Instead, I inquired into the course tools they employ, and their answers produced substantial information about the content and design of their courses. According to their responses, online course content takes many forms and is sometimes supplied by both teachers and students. Most of the online instructors who participated in the interviews reported that they used mainly asynchronous tools. In particular, they used online discussion boards extensively. The other main tools they employed were online quizzes, exams, and document submission tools.

Course Content

Interview participants presented course content in a variety of ways in their online courses. For instance, one teacher wrote, “I tape lectures and interviews which the students then watch.” Another teacher used interactive multimedia, claiming that “by embedding images and charts into the course, I can communicate more information that works toward different ways of learning.” Sometimes the course content was provided in part by students in the course. In one class, students submitted “current event summaries

of happenings in each geographic realm” that they learned about. Another teacher’s class was “primarily conducted as a seminar” in which “students contribute to much of the content of each week’s session.”

Another teacher found course cartridges very useful for developing the course content. Course cartridges are multimedia packages provided by some publishers for use with specific texts, and usually include slideshows and videos, along with pools of quiz and discussion questions. This teacher noted, “more and more you see course cartridges out there for different texts that include things like PowerPoint presentations that you can modify, interactive quizzes, flashcards, things like this that make the load much lighter.” Although course cartridges can save teachers time and effort, they require students to purchase a code in order to access the course content. In order to reuse the course design and content, teachers must require students to purchase passes in subsequent semesters.

Course Tools

Most of the online instructors reported that they use asynchronous tools mainly, and some used them exclusively. All but two of the interview participants employed asynchronous discussion boards, the typical markers of facilitated online courses. A majority of the informants’ courses also included online quizzes or exams in their design, and over half of the courses involved the use of a document submission tool for essay or paper submissions.

Many of the online instructors explained that they used mostly asynchronous tools to account for the needs of non-traditional students. One informant wrote, “I use no synchronous (live) tools at all. My students come from all over the country and have

busy lives (most are older working adults with families) and it is not feasible to have them meet at the same time.” Another teacher had tried using synchronous communication tools but it was unsuccessful. She explained:

I tried one semester (synchronous) but part of the attraction to students and teachers alike of online courses is that there is no set time to meet, so I never was able to make a time where everyone could participate. But even with the students who tried, we were unsuccessful because the school’s system was always going down.

Only two online instructors in the study used synchronous communication tools primarily, and they were pleased with the results. One teacher wrote about his successful use of chatrooms in a large undergraduate course:

Having the live chatrooms are particularly useful since there would otherwise be no “face-to-face” meetings like in a regular classroom course. The chatrooms also only have one fraction of the total number in the course, so there is far more student-teacher discussion than would be possible in a large (100+) regular classroom course.

The other teacher used a virtual classroom and an application sharing tool in her graduate course to “make the course as much like a face-to-face course as possible.”

Conclusion

Many instructors believed that the nature of online communication is at the root of most online teaching problems, but frequent online communication between teachers and students is also the most often suggested solution. In particular, the online instructors stressed that the lack of social cues and conversational exchanges require that more information and guidance need to be provided to students, both initially and throughout the course.

These results point to problems and potential solutions that are worth considering in the development of an online anthropology course. Most of the online instructors who participated in the research used asynchronous tools -- online discussions, quizzes, and writing assignments -- as the main components of their online courses. However, these were supplemented with documents and e-mails to provide extensive instructions and guidance to students.

Some online instructors believe that the subject matter of anthropology is well-suited to an online setting, and online students are also well-suited to anthropology. One teacher wrote, “as for online anthropology courses in particular, I think that, with the fantastic subject matter that we have, there are many creative ways we could use an on-line course to present and reinforce material and create debate among the students.” Another observation was that “anthropology is a field that pushes us to be outside our comfort zones, to navigate many cultural differences, this crossing of boundaries is something that I think online students get used to doing.”

The research results, and especially the online instructors’ interviews, provide a picture of the pedagogy of online education in anthropology classes that are fairly small, but another survey of anthropology chairs, conducted by Simmons (2007) provides a different perspective. He describes different types of courses and different motivations of online instructors than those produced by this research. Simmons’ (2007) noted that his survey of anthropology chairs focused on distance or “distant” education is informal and inconclusive. He collected data from anthropology chairs at both public and private institutions and found that anthropology departments at public institutions are more likely to engage in distance education than are private institutions. Indeed, public institutions

are “much more likely to provide online courses than are private schools” and “are over twice as likely” to offer entire degree programs online than any other type of institution (Seaman 2003:5).

Simmons surmised that a possible explanation for greater participation by public institutions is that distance courses are frequently “taped and re-used” (2007:28) and that these time-saving features may appeal to “productive researchers” (2007:29). By comparison, my research focused on online courses at public institutions, most of the online instructors were adjuncts or TA’s, nearly all used asynchronous methods to teach facilitated online courses, and none of the courses were of the “taped and reused” type.

Simmons suggestions may be accurate, however, because it is possible that my research missed the typical online instructor, and the typical online anthropology course. Also, it may be that “productive researchers” are less likely to volunteer as research participants, or instructors of online courses that are “taped and re-used” may not be particularly interested in discussing online pedagogy. In fact, I expected that a significant number of the online courses reported by the research participants would resemble courses such as Simmons described, or at least more closely resemble the online course I teach at the University of South Florida, an introductory course that has an enrollment of 100 or more students. Instead, few courses described by research participants fit either description.

If online education is indeed inferior, and only serves as a means for increasing funds to departments and free-up the time of productive researchers, then “taped and reused” courses can achieve these objectives, and also can also be moderated by relatively inexperienced teaching assistants. However, if we accept that online courses

and can provide students with a viable alternative to learning anthropology, then resistance to online education and the view that online pedagogy is inherently inferior only serves to undermine the efforts of online instructors such as those who participated in this research.

Finally, although nontraditional students were not an initial “item” in my research, they clearly emerged as an important consideration in the comments of both department chairs and online teachers. Many online courses are organized around their needs and lifestyles, and both the online instructors and department chairs indicated that online courses are a good way to reach them. Most of all, the online instructors counted nontraditional students as a reward for teaching online. Thus, I think it is worthwhile for faculty and staff in anthropology departments to consider ways that they might assure the quality of the online courses, and take into account the characteristics of nontraditional students. Suggestions for accomplishing this are included in the following chapter, along with suggestions for possible future research.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

Anthropologists must come to grips with the political and economic issues surrounding online education because the dynamics of these issues contribute to the shape of education in public institutions, including the teaching approaches and methods that must be devised. Anthropology departments are not immune to these larger forces; this has been demonstrated many times in the past. Anthropologists have been required to formulate pedagogical responses to the influx of undergraduate students in the 1960s, declining enrollments in the 1970s, and the demand for applied skills in the 1980s. Today, online education is a pressing concern because it has the potential to satisfy both student needs and institutional demands that are fueled by modern political and economic forces.

A rapidly growing population of nontraditional students, prompted by workforce requirements for higher education, has converged with advancements in interactive technology, and both have exploded onto a stage of increasing financial pressures in public institutions. On a national scale, public colleges and universities are undergoing huge budget cuts, and have inadequate resources to accommodate their rapidly-increasing enrollment rates. Some institutions have reacted with hiring freezes, and others are also freezing freshman enrollments. In a climate such as this, the notion that online education

can save money, space, and time, and can accommodate an increasing population of nontraditional students at the same time, is bound to influence the future direction of institutional solutions. It is time for anthropologists to acknowledge these conditions, and begin to understand how they will affect the profession and practice of teaching in all disciplines, including anthropology.

When institutional pressures changed the shape of anthropology classrooms in the past, anthropologists were prompted to reflect on pedagogy in their search for solutions. The same response is needed again. The main problem in such a project is that conversations about pedagogy in anthropology usually occur only when circumstances require. And, unfortunately, whenever interest in pedagogy has strengthened in the past, it has also faded rather fast. One reason for this is that research centered on the practice of teaching is neither encouraged nor rewarded, and there are few publications in which to publish the results.

Meeting the challenges of teaching in an environment of rapidly transforming technology will require a proactive approach and sustained attention. First, however, anthropologists must conceive of online education as a both a problem and a potential educational opportunity. The participants in this research have supplied many ideas in this regard that require our attention. However, since the majority of instructors who participated in the interviews were adjuncts and teaching assistants, the voices of faculty are largely missing.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the faculty and staff of anthropology departments with a framework for engaging in a conversation about online education. Such a conversation is needed in departments that currently engage in online education,

or wish to in the future. Departments that do not plan to participate in online education should also examine the grounds for their decision, especially if it sets them apart from the goals and trends of their larger institutions. In departments that online education is desirable and appropriate, the recommendations in this chapter provide a guide to addressing problems in online education, weighing the possible educational opportunities, and developing a plan for pedagogical solutions. These recommendations are followed by ideas for future research to fill-in some of the gaps in the research results. Lastly, in the closing remarks, I describe some of the online methods and tools that I have found to be effective, and explain how they have been formed by my experiences as an online student, an online anthropology instructor, and an investigator in this research.

Recommendations

The results of this research can be applied to a two-part problem. The first part of the problem involves the growth of online education in public institutions. Does it affect anthropology departments, and if so, how should they respond? The second part of the problem is pedagogical. If engaging in online education is a proper or necessary decision, how should it be conducted?

This chapter provides three general recommendations designed to help individual anthropology departments answer these questions. The major issues and gaps in the research results provided the framework for these recommendations, and have also informed the questions and observations that should be considered. The general recommendations to anthropology departments are the following:

- To engage in a frank conversation about online education
- To assess the potential resources and institutional structures
- To create a “best practices” guide to online courses, teaching, and course design

The major issues that were uncovered in this research involve complex and conflicted ideas in online education. Some of the beliefs and ideas surrounding the major issues in online education were shared among department chairs and online instructors who participated in this research, but many opinions on these issues between these two groups of informants only intersected, and then diverged. The major issues can be grouped as follows:

- Concerns about the quality of online pedagogy
- Questions about value of online education
- A desire to provide learning opportunities to nontraditional students
- The increased time demands of teaching online

Both the department chairs and the online instructors who participated in this research believe that the quality of online education is a primary concern, but their opinions about the efficacy of online pedagogy differ significantly. Nontraditional students were important figures in both survey and interview responses, but they were characterized differently by the two groups of informants. The increased time demands of teaching online was viewed as a problem by both chairs and online instructors, but each group of informants provided different perspectives on the problem.

Other issues that should be considered are actually gaps in the research findings -- spaces where ideas that are featured in the literature reviews were absent from the

research results. These gaps contribute to the recommendations as well because they represent ideas that need to be developed. Among these gaps are the following:

- The major goals of teaching anthropology - challenging students' beliefs
- Active and participatory approaches to learning
- Collaborative learning approaches in online pedagogy

Having a Conversation about Online Education

Some of the research informants believed that their departments would be untouched by the online trend. Others felt institutional pressure to engage in online education that varied in degree from slight to intense. Whether or not their assessments are accurate, a conversation about online education requires that the participants believe these issues are relevant. The differences of opinion, beliefs, and experiences that were revealed in this research suggest that a wide range of participants should be included in such a conversation. Department chairs, tenured faculty, adjuncts, teaching assistants, and even students, can provide valuable perspectives on the following questions and issues that should be discussed.

What are the major problems in online education?

Problems in online education are the first topics of discussion because they may present roadblocks to subsequent topics. The following problems were identified by research participants as major issues in online education:

- Online pedagogy is inherently inferior.
- There is significant resistance to online education in the discipline.

- Teaching online is more difficult and requires more time.

The belief that online pedagogy is inherently poor should be the first consideration since it leads to a conversational dead-end if it is a preconceived conclusion. Some department chairs who participated in this research hold this view, and others believe that online education poses a threat to traditional education. The main argument to support this view is that online education lacks the social and educational value that comes from face-to-face interactions between teachers and students, although no evidence exists that these social aspects produce more effective or satisfying learning experiences. Also, courses in lecture-halls filled with hundreds of students also lack these interactions. However, the belief that online education is inherently inferior is difficult to overcome. Therefore, it is advisable for participants to become better informed about online pedagogy.

The faculty of UNT held many discussions about online pedagogy, and the needs of their department and students before deciding to develop their online program. To become more informed, they invited experienced distance educators to participate in their meetings and had students conduct a literature review. If we conclude that online pedagogy does not fulfill educational expectations, but a department is compelled to participate owing to institutional pressures, the next question should be: Can online pedagogy be improved or adapted to serve the goals of teaching anthropology?

The problem of working against negative perceptions about online education is a function of the belief that online pedagogy is inherently poor. This perception, and its consequences, was a problem for many of online instructors who participated in the research. It was also a major concern for the faculty of UNT, and they work against these

negative perceptions so that their courses are not thought of as “second-rate, simply by virtue of being online” (Wasson 2007:8).

The pressure on online instructors to prove the value of their courses to an unbelieving audience is an added burden, and an important reason for anthropologists to assess the level of support for online education in their departments *before* adding online courses to their curriculum. The fact that some departments engage in online education but do not actually support it suggests that their decision was based on the potential benefits, but the potential problems were not fully recognized.

According to the vast majority of participants in this research, and many educational scholars as well, the increased work demands involved in teaching online courses is a major concern. However, a larger problem is that administrative proponents of online education subscribe to the belief that online teaching is easier and takes less time, even though reports to the contrary are abundant. The idea that online education is “cheap” is mainly an opportunistic institutional belief, but the consequences are passed-on to academic departments, online instructors, and, ultimately, to students.

In this research, the chairs worried that their departments would be forced to offer online courses, and faculty workloads would increase immeasurably as a result. The online instructors also worried about the increased time demands, but seemed resolute to treat the problem as another teaching challenge that called for methodological solutions. As an anthropologist with a political economic perspective, I am also disturbed by institutional beliefs surrounding the economics of online education, and concerned about the implications of these beliefs in terms of instructional labor. However, as an online instructor, I know that some methods in course management and effective online

communication can reduce the workload of teaching online. The following questions and observations may help departments to balance these concerns.

What are the potential benefits of online education?

The following benefits of online courses can influence the ultimate decision of departments to participate, or not, in online education:

- Anthropology departments can extend their reach.
- Anthropology is made more accessible to diverse students.
- Online education offers unique teaching and learning opportunities.
- Online education offers flexibility to instructors.

In anthropology departments that are experiencing a decline in enrollment, online education can attract more students. As one online instructor noted, many students in online courses would not take an anthropology course otherwise. Departments can benefit from an extended reach since some students that are introduced to anthropology in an online course may eventually decide to declare anthropology as their major or minor area of study. Individual anthropologists can benefit as well since they can introduce their research to a larger audience.

Many department chairs and online instructors make the point that online education can improve anthropology's accessibility to students. Online education can be an asset for students who lack the necessary resources to take on-campus courses, such as reliable transportation or child care. Online courses are an important alternative for students who are pressured for time, such as parents of young children, full-time workers.

They are also an important resource for disabled students for whom attending on-campus classes can be very difficult.

Many of the online instructors involved in this research believe that online education presents significant opportunities to both teachers and students. The main reason for their optimistic view is that they perceive the lack of social cues and face-to-face interactions as teaching challenges, and even advantages, given course designs and teaching strategies that are aimed to elicit and develop independent learning skills in students. In addition to the rewards of facilitating student learning and teaching nontraditional students, many instructors enjoy the challenge of acquiring technical skills and adapting their traditional teaching skills to virtual environments.

The “anytime, anyplace” nature of online education that students enjoy also appeals to many teachers. The flexibility of online teaching can allow instructors to manage their time more effectively. For instance, online teaching can be wrapped around other obligations and responsibilities, and can be conducted at times and in locations that would cause a traditional teacher to be unavailable. In addition, some online instructors elect to teach online to gain teaching experience, keep abreast of developments in anthropology, or to extend their teaching activities into their retirement years.

Can the pedagogy of anthropology be applied online?

This question represents a gap in the research results that needs to be filled-in. Since challenging students’ beliefs is a major goal of teaching anthropology, and because online communication can be easily misunderstood, it seems that challenging students’ beliefs in an online context would have emerged as a problem in the research results. But

that was not the case, and there are at least two possible explanations for this omission. First, my survey and interview questions may not have adequately prompted informants to discuss this topic. Second, it is possible that “challenge” is not perceived as a problem because its perpetual presence in anthropology classrooms makes it obvious to the point of seeming commonplace. Nonetheless, since there is general agreement among anthropologists regarding the unique goals of teaching anthropology, the means of achieving these goals in an online context should be part of this conversation.

Who are nontraditional anthropology students?

Nontraditional students are usually defined as all students who do not fit the description of traditional students (students between the ages of eighteen to twenty-two, enrolled full-time, and living on-campus [Smith et al. 2004]). Using this definition, the National Center for Educational Statistics report that enrollment of nontraditional students grew three times as much as traditional students between 1970 and 2002 (NCES 2004), and traditional students accounted for only 16 percent of the student population in 2004 (Smith et al. 2004). This growth in the population of nontraditional students in recent years is something that anthropologists should take into account, whether or not they decide to engage in online education, since it predicts the future needs of students.

Although we know very little about the identities of nontraditional anthropology students, numerous comments about them were included in both interview and survey responses. Department chairs usually referred to them in general terms as the primary beneficiaries of online education. The online instructors identified them as the majority of their online students and described them more specifically, and often in glowing terms.

One instructor counted them as a reward for online teaching, and another described them as “border crossers” who are able to “navigate the virtual and the non-virtual” realms” and “seem to be able to manage the courses better.”

What is the relationship between online education and nontraditional students?

Online education is known for its appeal to nontraditional students, and there are reasons to believe both are marginalized in higher education. The marginalization of online education in anthropology departments is apparent in the low rate of participation by anthropology departments, and in the large number of remarks about its poor quality and inferior pedagogy in the department chair survey. However, the most disturbing research finding is that an equally large number of statements on the survey emphasize its value in serving nontraditional students.

Most important, I think, is that anthropologists should deconstruct the link between nontraditional students and online education, and between online education and poor pedagogy. If we accept that online pedagogy is inherently poor and cannot be improved, we should ask if online education can be justified by its potential benefits. If so, a worrisome educational compromise is created. This is especially problematic in the presence of institutional practices that already treat nontraditional students “as different, but not positively different, from traditional students” (Donaldson & Townsend 2007:45).

Does online education require special skills of students?

The instructors involved in the study point out that online courses “require more self-motivation and discipline than a traditional class.” Some counted online students as

an incentive and a reward for teaching online because they are self-motivated and possess special skills. This view is also shared by many students in my online classes; they regard their proficiency in online learning as another highly-valued skill. This is apparent each semester when they introduce themselves on the discussion boards. A surprising number of students introduce themselves according to the level of expertise in online learning they possess. They announce the number of online courses they have taken, proclaim their seasoned position, and many assume mentor roles and reassure ‘newbies’ with offers of assistance. Anthropology departments can identify nontraditional anthropology students and the skills that help them to succeed in an online environment, and this knowledge can be figured into online teaching approaches and methods.

The idea that online students possess certain advanced learning skills raises questions about the prudence of assigning online courses to instructors who lack experience in teaching. In my online classes, many students are self-directed and very organized, and many less-experienced students make great progress in these skills with the proper direction. Both can be can be disadvantaged by inexperienced online instructors.

Although both department chairs and instructors dispute the belief that online courses are easier to teach or require less time, the opposite is perpetuated through departmental practices of assigning online courses to less-experienced teachers, or assigning them as overload courses to regular faculty. The larger problem is that these practices are often required by financial pressures and institutional structures.

Accounting for Institutional Structures and Department Resources

If a discussion of the previous issues, and others that may arise, reveal that the level of interest and benefits to departments, instructors, and students, can support the development of online education, the mechanics of developing such a plan should be considered. The following are some of the items that should be considered:

- Labor pools and an emerging dual labor market
- Institutional policies regarding course ownership
- Department resources and teaching Incentives

Just as in the previous assessment, the following questions and observations are drawn mainly from the major issues this research uncovered.

Is there an available labor pool?

Since the findings of the department chair survey indicate that the main reason anthropology departments do not participate in online education is that faculty interest or expertise is lacking, it is advisable to begin with a survey of interest and expertise in online teaching within the department. If the degree of interest in teaching online is inadequate among faculty, part-time or adjunct instructors may be needed. In fact, it is likely that such appointments will be required.

Many online instructors who were research informants are either adjunct instructors or teaching assistants. All of the courses in the online undergraduate minor program in anthropology at the University of Oregon are taught by adjuncts or teaching assistants. These appointments of online teachers are consistent with the larger emerging dual-labor market in higher education, and it is arguable that online education is linked to

this trend. Nationally, the proportion of tenured positions at degree granting institutions is shrinking rapidly, and the proportion of part-time positions is increasing correspondingly – so much so that tenured professors have been referred to as an “endangered species in American higher education” (Lederman 2007). These conditions are an expression of the commodification of education, and the subsequent transformation of public educational institutions into corporations with the power to hire and fire at will. Anthropologists should be concerned about this since the loss of tenured positions also means the loss of academic freedom.

What institutional policies influence a plan for online education?

The research results demonstrate that few faculty or instructors understand the policies regarding the ownership of online courses at their institutions, and some are reluctant to ask. According to Rhoades (2005), the dual labor market in academia “is complicit in the silencing of non-tenured faculty’s voice and rights” (Rhoades 2005:477), and this may account for the confusion concerning course ownership rights among the online instructors in this research. Although the online teachers who took part in this study were not overly concerned about course ownership, many voiced their opinions regarding fair compensation for the time they invest in developing new online courses, and harbored strong beliefs that their work *should* be respected.

By contrast, the department chairs demonstrated little interest in the topic. This may also be a function of the emerging dual-labor market in higher-education since policies regarding course ownership appear to have little impact on faculty members unless they become online instructors. This appearance may be deceiving though,

because the nature of ownership of online courses can blur the lines of intellectual property, and other types of courses may eventually be encircled by the arguments that have successfully divided online courses into discrete components of content and shell.

What resources and incentives can be provided?

Aside from economic rewards, which the research informants numerously mentioned, the resources that are most often either provided or desired are technical support and expertise, tools and supplies, and instructor incentives. Technical support is the resource most often provided by departments represented in this research, but this offering does not appear to entice the online instructors who were interviewed. Technical support is useful for instructors who need assistance with certain tasks that may be fairly complicated, but it is not a substitute for the expertise that is required for maintaining and teaching online courses on a day-to-day basis.

Although the idea of online instruction can conjure images of a lone teacher with a single computer on his/her desk, it does not fit the description of the online courses taught by the instructors who took part in this research. Some online courses require specialized hardware or software. Other optional items, such as laptop computers, can allow online teachers to provide the flexibility that online students value, and can make the work of teaching online more efficient.

The opportunity to explore the possibilities of technology in learning can be an incentive as well, although the instructors in this study were mainly motivated by the independence and flexibility that online teaching afforded. In addition to incentives for online teaching, reward for developing online courses should also be considered. Some

of the online instructors who were interviewed did not receive compensation for developing their online courses, and others were compensated only minimally. In contrast, one department provided online teachers with the choice of a stipend equivalent to teaching a course for a semester or a course reduction for the development of a new online course, as long as they agreed to teach the course for at least two semesters. All of these resources should be considered in developing an online education plan.

Developing a “Best Practices” Guide to Online Teaching and Course Design

Since this research revealed significant differences of opinion on the quality and value of online education, especially between department chairs and online instructors, it would be prudent for anthropology departments to develop a “best practices” guide for online teaching and course design. The following aspects of online education should be considered in the development of a “best practices” guide:

- Teaching approaches and methods
- Suitable courses
- Optimal class size
- Online course design

Although standardizing certain aspects of online education does not guarantee quality instruction or student achievement of learning objectives, it can organize online courses according to the educational needs and standards of individual departments, provide a useful teaching guide for online instructors, and a baseline for future improvements.

What are suitable courses and optimal class size?

There are a number of important questions that should be considered to identify suitable courses and class size, and the answers will influence the eventual teaching methods and course designs. Are graduate courses, upper-level and major courses, or non-major and introductory courses more appropriate? Will high enrollments and packaged/programmed courses dominate, or will smaller, facilitated courses better serve the department's needs, goals, and students?

The survey of department chairs suggest that introductory courses in anthropology may be best-suited to an online environment, although there were more upper-level and major offerings represented in the research. There were also conflicting opinions on the subjects that should be offered online, and it is possible that that some of these conflicts are a matter of individual areas of interest and expertise. As experts in specific areas, we are able to see greater importance in what may appear to others to be the fine points of a subject, and we may believe that these points are more difficult to impart to students in an online environment. This is one reason that it is important to include the input of a diverse group of informants in the course selection process.

Also, we should be aware of the possibility that introductory courses may be relegated to online environments and part-time instructors because many faculty prefer not to teach them. In this regard, we should ask if it is the suitability of the course and the subject that is being weighed, or if the selections are based on the potential instructors instead. The danger in this approach to course selection is that it feeds into the marginalization of online education, nontraditional students, and part-time instructors. It also perpetuates the idea that online courses are less valuable because they are cheaper and easier to produce and teach.

The research results also give us an idea about the size of many online anthropology classes. The majority of courses represented in the research were small to mid-sized classes, between 20 and 65 students. These numbers may be a measure of the course levels and subjects that were reported, and perhaps the size of the institutions. Nonetheless, many institutions apply pressure to departments to increase their enrollments without funding more instructors, and this dictates that some classes may need to be quite large. Should these classes be offered in large lecture halls or as online courses? All of these elements need to be factored into decisions on optimal class size.

What online teaching approaches and methods will be used?

There are many things to consider in determining the best online teaching approaches and methods. The purpose of a teaching guide is to develop ideas that make sense in the context of disciplinary aims and goals, and to enable less experienced instructors to exploit the knowledge of more experienced teachers. Still, it is important to be mindful that teaching is also an expression of creativity, and that many formative learning and teaching experiences are those that occur spontaneously. The following are some of the aspects of online teaching that deserve consideration:

- Connections between teaching methods, class size, and time
- Online pedagogy and distance education theory
- Anthropological concepts and online communication
- Online collaboration, and active and participatory learning
- Assessment of learning objectives

Depending on the degree of concern regarding the efficacy of online instruction, some measure of uniformity in teaching approaches and methods may be desired. This prospect does not need to be alarming. An online environment itself imposes some limitations, but this is also true of some traditional classes. For example, a very large class that takes place in a huge lecture hall can limit the possible teaching approaches and methods that can be employed. Also, online instructors, as a group, appear to be fairly consistent in favoring certain teaching methods and tools, even in the presence of the wide-range of selections that are available.

Course subjects, levels, and enrollment numbers will also affect the teaching methods and strategies that can be used. A facilitated approach to online teaching requires generous attention to online communication which can be difficult to achieve in a large class. My online courses can be used as an example. I use a facilitated approach in three online anthropology courses with the enrollments of approximately 30, 50, and 100 students. Because I believe that online discussions are critical to learning about anthropological concepts, and also provide students with a sense of connection, the discussion boards are an important part of each course.

Since not all students participate in all of the discussions, I have found that a class of 30 students usually does not produce active discussions, and a class of 100 students is chaotic and difficult to facilitate, and requires a great deal of time. However, a class of 50 students usually results in a number of diverse perspectives and produces very active discussions. Of course, large classes can be broken-down into smaller groups, but that solution requires duplication and can increase the amount of time that is required to facilitate a large class. In a facilitated course that involves several online discussions, I

believe a teaching assistant is required for each additional 50 students. Otherwise the course should be redesigned as a “programmed” course that requires less facilitation. In this case, a teaching assistant should be assigned for each 100 students, simply to keep-up with e-mail communication.

Although none of the interview participants discussed distance education theory explicitly, many of the strategies and methods they shared are consistent with the theory of “transactional distance” (Moore, 1989). According to Moore (1989), the degree of transactional distance in online courses is the basis for the sense of isolation that some students may feel in an online environment, and is also the cause of many online misunderstandings.

Supposedly, the reduction of transactional distance is accomplished chiefly through structured online communication such as the online instructors in this research described. They stressed very strongly that clear and consistent guidelines, continuous communication, and constant reminders are essential to student success in an online environment. They also acknowledged that both students and teachers have extra responsibilities in an online setting. Teachers must alter their teaching strategies to enable numerous avenues of communication and maximize technological possibilities, and encourage students to assume more responsibility for their learning and ask questions when they need clarification.

However, there are also problems with online communication. The lack of opportunities for conversational exchanges was identified by the online instructors as the primary problem of teaching anthropology online. At the same time, online communication was regarded as the most effective method for imparting anthropological

concepts. The tension created by this problem and solution should be examined: should we avoid online communication as a central teaching method because it presents problems, or embrace it because it offers learning opportunities? Most of the online instructors in this study chose the latter.

Online communication is also critical to collaborative approaches in online learning, a topic that was missing from the research results. Methods and strategies for collaborative learning, such as developing online learning communities and group projects, are described in the context of graduate courses mainly. Since nearly all of the online courses described in the online instructor interviews were undergraduate courses, it is not surprising that these ideas were absent. However, in anthropology departments that wish to offer graduate courses online, methods and strategies in collaborative learning should be explored. Also, the collaborative aspects of online discussions that appear to occur without being prompted, referred to as “pseudo-collaboration” by one informant, should not be discounted.

Since methods and strategies in active and participatory learning were scarcely mentioned by the research informants, but are highly-regarded in the teaching of anthropology, anthropologists need to generate ideas for encouraging active learning in an online environment. Can active learning actually occur in an online classroom, or do we need to create assignments that will produce active learning during students’ offline time?

Finally, the assessment of students’ achievement of learning objectives received very little attention, as it does in most literature on teaching anthropology. This may be due to the difficulty of assessing the achievement of learning objectives, both online and

off, in social science courses. In anthropology, in particular, the success of imparting anthropological concepts and developing an anthropological perspective are nearly impossible to assess. Moreover, assessment was not a topic that was solicited in the interview questions. However, nearly all of the online instructors indicated that they used online quizzes and exams as assessment tools. Other instructors argued that writing assignments are essential to rendering an accurate assessment of student's ability to grasp anthropological concepts. Thus, the assessment of course objectives is a topic that requires our attention.

What is the best course design?

Online course management systems offer unlimited options in terms of tools and course design. However, the tools and designs preferred by the online instructors who participated in the research are fairly consistent and uncomplicated. Moreover, the majority of online teachers use asynchronous tools in keeping with the flexibility that online and nontraditional students require. Most courses represented in this research are designed for facilitated online teaching, and are organized around asynchronous online communication primarily. Most importantly, the majority of instructors who participated in this research are focused mainly on practical ways to avoid overwork and redundancy for teachers, and to reduce the confusion of online students. They do this through course management and online communication that provides clear and detailed instructions and answers to students' questions in advance. Since these are critical to successful online learning, they should be emphasized in discussions about course design.

Another topic to be considered in the context of course design is the use of course cartridges. These multimedia packages contain course content that is created by textbook publishers and can be downloaded into most course management systems. Course cartridges can make the task of creating an online course easier, but I believe there are reasons to be concerned about their proliferation and use. In my experience, the electronic content provided by publishers raise questions about the credentials of their creators. The exam questions contain numerous errors, and the discussion topics lack creativity and fail to engage students in active learning. In addition, the “keys” that students are required to purchase in order to access the content essentially lock-down the online course since it cannot be reused unless the purchase of keys are required in successive semesters. I think the implications of course cartridges in terms of surrendering control of a course and contributing to the commodification of education should be considered carefully.

Future Research

The motivations that entice instructors to teach online are important to understand if we hope to increase the number and quality of online courses. Also, because challenging students’ beliefs and encouraging the development of an anthropological perspective that extends beyond the classroom are central teaching goals in anthropology, the online methods for achieving these goals need to be better understood. Finally, the specific skills and behaviors that allow students to perform well in online courses need to be defined. The following suggestions for future research are aimed to address these concerns.

An Ethnography of Online Teaching

Since the research results show that a lack of faculty interest is one of the main reasons that anthropology departments do not offer online courses, it is important to understand the elements that make online teaching appealing. Insofar as instructor motivation and satisfaction can influence the quality of instruction provided to students, the motivations of online teachers are important to understand. Therefore, an ethnography of online teaching would be useful to departments that are interested in engaging in online education, whether in anthropology or other disciplines.

Some educators argue that faculty are only interested in “cashing-in” (Fogg 2007) on online teaching. They point out that some faculty teach numerous online courses, in addition to their regular teaching schedules, and are compensated according to the number of students enrolled (Fogg 2007). Although this practice can lead to substantial economic rewards, it probably produces poor educational outcomes for students. By contrast, the online instructors who participated in this research were not motivated by economic rewards. The results of this research demonstrate that lifestyle is an important factor in the decision to teach online since the flexibility that online teaching affords was reported to be a primary motivator for online instructors.

Since my research included the views of only a small sample of online instructors an ethnographic study of online teaching that includes a larger group of online instructors from a broader range of disciplines and institutions may provide a more dense and diverse representation of online teachers and their motivations for teaching online. This information may help departments and institutions to screen-out “cashing-in” as an

incentive for online teaching, and to identify and develop more effective incentives for encouraging quality online education.

Affective Learning in an Online Environment

Research into affective learning in an online environment can serve the development of online courses in the social sciences, especially facilitated courses in which discussions are central. Segal (1993:39) notes that the affective domain of knowledge is not unique to teaching anthropology, “but it is important to that enterprise.” According to the principles of Bloom’s taxonomy of learning (Hall 2005), the affective domain involves a student’s ability to conceptualize and generalize values, processes that are central to the major goals of teaching anthropology and the development of an anthropological perspective.

Educators write about the importance of providing non-threatening learning spaces in online environments, and anthropologists write about the importance of challenging students’ beliefs. Both of these conditions need to be carefully balanced in an online course. This balance, in the presence of discussions of topics that produce defensive reactions and conflicting opinions such as anthropological concepts often do, can promote affective learning objectives. Spatariu et al. (2001) claim that online discussions that engage students in debates or arguments can be very productive, just as disagreements in traditional classrooms produce valuable teaching and learning opportunities. Spatariu et al. also provide multiple examples of methods in content analysis that can be used to measure this quality in online discussions. Measuring this

quality is especially important if confronting students' beliefs is a major aim of teaching anthropology in an online class as it is in a traditional classroom.

Who are Nontraditional Online Students?

Accurate identification of the audience is an important first step in course development. Although nontraditional students were referred to frequently in both the survey and interview responses, we have only a vague impression of who these students really are. Are they "border-crossers," as one online instructor in this study suggested, and better able to traverse the rapidly transforming online environment? An understanding of the ways that these students are similar to one another, or are different from traditional students, can be useful for selecting compatible online teaching approaches and methods in anthropology.

Although many studies have been conducted that surveyed distance students and reached conclusions about their levels of satisfaction, these studies are focused mainly on student satisfaction in response to behaviors of teachers. An anthropological perspective of nontraditional students may be able to reveal motivations for learning online as it relates to students' daily lives. At least one such account that touched upon these aspects of online learning was provided by an online instructor who participated in this research, and who had been online graduate student in anthropology in the past. He wrote,

I had very cooperative professors and was able to take more courses per term than if I was on campus, giving me a broader perspective of all four fields of anthropology...living overseas I could focus on researching aspects of my host country that I never could have done back in the US...I was able to relate my studies to field work in Japan and Italy.

An anthropological study of nontraditional students that provides an understanding of the specific characteristics or skills that help students to succeed in online courses may help to guide the efforts of both online instructors and course designers.

Closing Remarks

It is not surprising that the major themes that emerged from the research results involved concerns about teacher workloads and the efficacy of new teaching approaches since these are the primary conditions that prompted surges of interest in the pedagogy of anthropology in the past -- and there are signs that interest in the teaching of anthropology is on the rise again. I believe this growing interest, if indeed it exists, offers opportunities for anthropologists who teach online to provide a broader perspective of online pedagogy, to connect teaching anthropology to distance education theory, and to share the teaching methods they have devised. The online instructors who agreed to be interviewed shared some of their online teaching methods through their participation in this research, and some of the methods that I use are provided in these closing remarks.

My approach to online teaching has been formed by my experiences as a nontraditional student, a student in both traditional and online classes, an online instructor, and an investigator in this research. As a student in a traditional classroom, I never questioned the image of a teacher as an elevated figure who lectures at the front of a class. Certainly, some anthropologists use teaching methods that involve activities and projects designed to engage students in their own learning, but even in this approach, the

teacher is usually perceived by students as the central knowledge-keeper by virtue of her position in the academic landscape.

As I was a nontraditional student by circumstance, and an independent learner by nature, online education was a welcome learning opportunity. However, not all online courses were the same in terms of quality. Some online courses in which I was enrolled were chaotic; information that should have been linked together was spread out in several different locations on the course website instead. In one course in particular, the online discussions were not interactive, but rather were made-up of an initial question posted by the instructor (the answer to which could be found in the text) and a long column of students' answers posted below. The instructor seemed frustrated whenever I asked a question, and her belated answers were usually confusing.

In another course, the instructor was very well-organized and the course website was well-structured. As a result, I had few questions, but always received friendly and speedy answers that were very useful whenever I asked one. Also, the coursework was designed to encourage active learning through assignments that involved the creation of online projects. At the end of the course, I felt accomplished in the skills and knowledge that I acquired.

These different types of online learning experiences taught me many of the strategies that the online instructors in this study suggested, in particular, to prepare an organized course website with generous instructions, and to provide prompt and concise answers to students' questions. In fact, I discovered that I would receive "zillions" of e-mails unless I answered students' questions preemptively. To do this, I created a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that is always available to students. I add

the questions that students ask to the FAQ and it grows more comprehensive each semester. In addition, I create a “Q&A” discussion board where students can ask questions or assist one another.

Nonetheless, I found that many students do not read the syllabus, the FAQ document, or access the Q&A discussion board, no matter how many reminders are provided. The most useful tool I have devised to address this problem is an orientation quiz that students are required to take during the first week of the semester. The quiz questions cover information provided in the FAQ and the syllabus, such as assignment expectations and grading information. Students can take the quiz as many times as they wish during the orientation week, but must earn a perfect score on the quiz before continuing on to other course assignments. This requires that they read the course documents carefully.

In addition to the quiz, students must practice submitting documents online, posting to discussion boards, and sending messages during the orientation week. This practice usually addresses many of the technical problems students will encounter during the semester. When I receive questions that have already been answered elsewhere, I direct students to the proper location to find the answer so that they will become accustomed to accessing these resources independently.

The courses I teach are facilitated online courses. Just as many of the online instructors in the study, I use mainly asynchronous tools. Online quizzes and exams are part of the coursework, but the discussion boards are the central feature. Anthropology encourages students to observe and interact in diverse environments and communities in

the “real” world, but active and participatory learning projects are difficult to orchestrate in an online context.

To encourage active learning in my online courses, and to avoid the linear type of discussions that I experienced as an online student, I create discussion topics that encourage students to learn about anthropology in their communities and through social interactions. Many of these discussion topics involve conducting interviews (for examples, see Appendix G), and then discussing the results in the online class. These discussions are collaborative, or at least “pseudo collaborative” as described by one online instructor in this research. For instance, students reinforce anthropological concepts interactively when they analyze the interview results online as a group.

Just as many of the instructors who participated in this research, I believe that online education in anthropology has a bright future. The extent to which an anthropological perspective is imparted to students cannot be measured accurately, but many students in my courses have demonstrated (and claimed) that they have been affected, perhaps even enlightened, by the anthropological concepts to which they have been exposed. Therefore, the development of teaching methods that overcome, or somehow exploit, the characteristics of an online learning environment is a worthwhile project, especially if we want to serve nontraditional students and introduce anthropology to a larger audience.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Web Survey Flow Chart

Title of the Research Project: The Pedagogy and Politics of Online Education in Anthropology

Principal Investigator: Linda J. Hose, M.A.

Institution (optional)

Current online anthropology courses (at least 80% of the course is conducted online)

1. Does your department offer online anthropology courses?

Yes

If yes, please list courses:

Title & Course #	Undergrad or Grad?	Major or Gen. Ed.?	Approx. Enrollment
	If undergrad, upper or lower level course?		

(go to 3)

No (go to 3)

Incentives/Barriers

2. Does your institute/department provide any of the following incentives or accommodations to teachers of online courses (when compared to a typical classroom course with the same number of students)?

Additional time allowance

Supplemental economic compensation

Additional administrative or instructional support

Technical support

Other

Comments

(go to 3)

Appendix A (Continued)

Future Plans

3. Is adding or increasing the number of online offerings an institution goal?

Yes

No

Don't know

Comments

(go to 4)

4. Is adding or increasing the number of online offerings a departmental goal?

No

Why not

Insufficient funding

Lack of faculty interest or expertise

Inadequate technology

Other

Comments

(go to 5)

Yes

Does your department have specific goals for adding or increasing the number of online offerings in the 2006/2007 school year?

Yes

How many?

Comments

(go to 5)

No

Why not?

Insufficient funding

Lack of faculty interest or expertise

Inadequate technology

Other

Comments

(go to 5)

Appendix A (Continued)

Don't know
Comments

(go to 5)

Don't know
Comments
(go to 5)

Institutional Policy

5. Does your institution have a policy governing the ownership of online courses?

Yes

No

Don't know

Comments

Your Impressions

6. What are your thoughts about online education in general, and online anthropology courses in particular.

Appendix B

Online Instructor Interview Protocol

Research Study: The Pedagogy and Politics of Online Education in Anthropology
Principal Investigator: Linda J. Hose

Online teaching and course design

1. What online anthropology course/s do you teach, and how many students are enrolled?
2. Please describe the use of synchronous/asynchronous tools in your online course.
3. What types of student-student or student-teacher communication are involved?
4. Is the coursework geared to collaborative or self-directed learning (or both)? Please give examples.
5. What teaching strategies or methods have you found to be particularly useful in an online anthropology course?
6. What issues, if any, are unique to teaching anthropology in an online environment?

Institutions

7. What are the incentives or barriers to teaching online at your institution/department?
8. Does your institution have a policy governing the ownership of online courses?
9. What accommodations or incentives would prompt you to design or teach more online anthropology courses?

Your perspectives

10. What compels you to teach online?
11. What are your thoughts about online education in general, and online anthropology courses in particular?

Appendix C

Department Chair Invitation to Participate

Dear Professor ---

I am a doctoral student in applied anthropology at the University of South Florida, and am conducting a research study on online education in anthropology. I am sending you this e-mail to request your participation in a survey of anthropology department chairs, and to seek your help to identify online anthropology teachers who may agree to participate in e-mail interviews that are another part of the study.

The anthropology department chair survey can be accessed at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=547281489806>

It will take just a few minutes of your time to complete. Your response does not require identifying information, will not be linked to your e-mail address, and will be sent over a secure, encrypted connection. A study information sheet is also available at <http://shell.cas.usf.edu/~lhose/SURVEY/StudyInformationSheet.html> for your review.

The e-mail interviews with online teachers are composed of questions about the methods and design of their online course, and their experiences as online teachers. It will take about 1 hour to answer the initial interview questions, although I hope to also ask a few follow-up questions that may arise from their initial answers. Please encourage teachers of online courses in your department to contact me at lhose@luna.cas.usf.edu if they would like to participate in the interview portion of the study or if they have any questions.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this study.

Sincerely,
Linda J. Hose, MA
Department of Anthropology
University of South Florida
Tele: 813.974.2138
E-mail: lhose@shell.cas.usf.edu

Appendix D

Study Information Sheet

Study Information Sheet: Survey of Anthropology Department Chairs

Research Study: The Pedagogy and Politics of Online Education in Anthropology

P.I.: Linda J. Hose, M.A., University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology

To receive the results of this research, please send an e-mail to lhose@luna.cas.usf.edu or call (813) 361-8301.

This research is conducted at the University of South Florida (USF). We want to learn more about online education in Anthropology and would like to invite you to take part in the survey portion of the study. The survey will take only a few minutes to complete, although we encourage you to include additional comments as you wish. Your responses will be sent over a secure, encrypted connection.

The first question of the survey asks for information about online anthropology course offerings at your institution (course title, #, and enrollment). The remaining five questions are concerned with institutional/departmental goals, plans, and policies. Most questions can be answered with a click of your mouse.

The anthropology department chair survey is part of two-phase study. The purpose of the survey is to achieve a general overview of online education in anthropology in public colleges and universities. The other part of the study involves interviews with online anthropology teachers and is designed to gain an understanding of the methods and issues involved in teaching anthropology online. This information sheet accompanies the survey for anthropology department chairs.

We do not anticipate any risks in taking part in this survey. It does not require that you provide identifying information, but if you choose to include the name of your institution, or any other identifying information, it will be kept confidential.

There are no incentives offered for completing the survey, but we would like to send you the results of our research. We anticipate that the preliminary results of the Survey will be available in June, 2006, and the final results of the research project will be available approximately June 1, 2007.

INFORMED CONSENT FOR AN ADULT

Social and Behavioral Sciences
University of South Florida

Information for People Who Take Part in Research Studies

Researchers at the University of South Florida (USF) study many topics. We want to learn more about online education in Anthropology. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study.

Title of research study: The Pedagogy and Politics of Online Education in Anthropology

Person in charge of study: Linda J. Hose, M.A.

Study staff who can act on behalf of the person in charge: S. Elizabeth Bird, Ph.D.

Where the study will be done: University of South Florida

Should you take part in this study?

This form tells you about this research study. You can decide if you want to take part in it. You do not have to take part. Reading this form can help you decide.

Before you decide:

- Read this form.
- Talk about this study with the person in charge of the study or the person explaining the study. You can have someone with you when you talk about the study.
- Find out what the study is about.

You can ask questions:

- You may have questions this form does not answer. If you do, ask the person in charge of the study or study staff as you go along.
- You don't have to guess at things you don't understand. Ask the people doing the study to explain things in a way you can understand.

After you read this form, you can:

- Take your time to think about it.
- Have a friend or family member read it.
- Talk it over with someone you trust.

It's up to you. If you choose to be in the study, then you can sign the form. If you do not want to take part in this study, do not sign the form.

Appendix E (Continued)

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this study is to gain an overview of online education in Anthropology in public colleges and universities, and to achieve an understanding of the methods and issues involved in teaching anthropology online. This is a two-part study that will be accomplished through a survey with anthropology department chairs and e-mail interviews with online anthropology teachers. This Informed Consent form is designed for interview participants only.

Why are you being asked to take part?

We are asking you to take part in this study because you teach an anthropology course online at a public college or university.

How long will you be asked to stay in the study?

You will be asked to spend about 2 weeks in this study, depending on the number of e-mails to which you respond.

How often will you need to come for study visits?

A study visit is one you have with the person in charge of the study or study staff. In this study, visits refer to e-mail contacts. There will be 1-3 study visits in all.

The e-mail interviews will be conducted between April 2006 and May 2007. If you agree to take part in the study, you will receive one e-mail containing the initial interview questions. You may receive 1-2 follow-up e-mails to clarify your responses.

Most study visits will take about 15-60 minutes. Some may be shorter or longer depending on the amount of time you spend composing your e-mail responses.

At each visit, the person in charge of the study or staff will:

Send you an e-mail containing questions about the online course that you teach, including the course design, the teaching methods you use, and the issues you encounter. Some questions also ask about the resources and policies of your institution. The follow-up e-mails will contain questions to clarify your initial responses.

How many other people will take part?

About 40 people will take part in the interview portion of this study. Approximately 235 other people will take part in a Web survey. A total of about 275 people will take part in the study.

What other choices do you have if you decide not to take part?

If you decide not to take part in this study, there are no other choices for participation.

Appendix E (Continued)

How do you get started?

If you decide to take part in this study, you will need to sign this consent form and return it in the envelope provided. Soon after, the researcher will contact you to set up the initial interview.

What will happen during this study?

When we receive your signed consent form, you will be sent a confirming e-mail containing the interview questions. If you wish, you can also tell us which week or month you would like to receive the interview questions (April 2006 through May 2007). The interviews are strictly a part of the research.

Here is what you will need to do during this study

You will need to respond to the initial interview questions that are sent to you by e-mail to take part in this study. We hope you will also respond to follow-up questions that will be sent within 1 week of your initial response.

Will you be paid for taking part in this study?

We will not pay you for the time you volunteer in this study.

What will it cost you to take part in this study?

It will not cost you anything to take part in the study.

What are the potential benefits if you take part in this study?

We don't know if you will get any benefits by taking part in this study, but we encourage you to request the study results. You will be contributing to our understanding of the factors that encourage or discourage the teaching of online anthropology courses.

What are the risks if you take part in this study?

There are no known risks to those who take part in this study.

If you have any of these problems, call the person in charge of this study right away at 813- 361-8301.

What will we do to keep your study records private?

Federal law requires us to keep your study records private.

To insure that your records are kept confidential, all research documents will be stored in a locked file. Your identifying information will be purged from e-mails when your interview is complete.

However, certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

Appendix E (Continued)

- The study staff.
- People who make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also make sure that we protect your rights and safety:
 - The USF Institutional Review Board (IRB), and its staff and any other individuals acting on behalf of USF
 - The United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

We may publish what we find out from this study. If we do, we will not use your name or anything else that would let people know who you are.

What happens if you decide not to take part in this study?

You should only take part in this study if you want to take part.

If you decide not to take part:

- There are no penalties for declining to participate in this study.

What if you join the study and then later decide you want to stop?

There are no penalties if you decide to stop your participation in this study.

Are there reasons we might take you out of the study later on?

Even if you want to stay in the study, there may be reasons we will need to take you out of it. You may be taken out of this study:

- If you are not responding to study questions/visits when scheduled.

You can get the answers to your questions.

If you have any questions about this study, call Linda J. Hose at 813-361-8301

If you have questions about your rights as a person who is taking part in a study, call USF Research Integrity and Compliance at (813) 974-5638.

Consent to Take Part in this Research Study

It's up to you. You can decide if you want to take part in this study.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study. I understand that this is research. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature
of Person taking part in study

Printed Name
of Person taking part in study

Date

Appendix E (Continued)

Statement of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

I certify that participants have been provided with an informed consent form that has been approved by the University of South Florida's Institutional Review Board and that explains the nature, demands, risks, and benefits involved in participating in this study. I further certify that a phone number has been provided in the event of additional questions.

Signature of Investigator

Printed Name of Investigator

Date

Appendix F

Invitation to The Council on Anthropology and Education H-Net List

Hello:

I'm a Ph.D. student in applied anthropology and am searching for teachers of online anthropology courses who are willing to take part in e-mail interviews as part of my doctoral research on the pedagogy and politics of teaching online. If you (or anyone you know) would like to participate, please contact me at lhose@luna.cas.usf.edu. The interview will take about an hour to complete, depending on your answers, and can be done at your convenience before March 1, 2007,

I appreciate your time.

Thank you,

Linda

Linda J. Hose, M.A.
Department of Anthropology
University of South Florida
Tele: 813.974.2138
E-mail: lhose@luna.cas.usf.edu

Appendix G

Discussion Topic Examples

Economic Anthropology

We hear a lot about a steadily growing “culture of debt” in the US. Presumably, people use credit cards to buy frivolous items and live beyond their means.

Read the article “Dangerous Culture of Debt Must Be Avoided” at: <http://www.dailycampus.com/media/paper340/news/2005/10/28/Commentary/Dangerous.Culture.Of.Debt.Must.Be.Avoided-1038015.shtml?norewrite&sourcedomain=www.dailycampus.com> .

This article advises “If you don’t have the money, don’t buy it”. Interview someone you know and ask about their use of credit cards. How do they use them? Do they buy things just because they want them? Do they spend money to have things because other people they know have them? Or, are their purchases necessary -- a matter of survival (food, dr. bills, etc)? Does the advice in the article, “if you don’t have the money, don’t buy it”, apply to their situation? **How does their culture influence their use (or not) of credit cards?**

IMPORTANT: financial decisions are very personal so, please, DO NOT reveal the identity of the person/s you interview. Remember, you should report what THEY tell you, not just what you think.

Marriage and Culture

Interview someone you know who is married and ask them to tell you about their wedding. What traditional customs involved in the ceremony? What did the customs **mean** according to your interviewee? Did they blend cultural traditions, or create their own ceremony? Your assignment is to **tell us how their wedding was influenced by their culture.** (Review the definition of culture in the text – remember it also involves politics, economics and institutions.)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda J. Hose received her BS in Environmental Science and Policy at the University of South Florida in 1999, and her MA in Women's Studies at the University of South Florida in 2001. Prior to entering the Ph.D. program in Applied Anthropology at USF in 1993, she held notable positions in the non-profit social services sector for over 20 years.

Linda was awarded the Southwest Florida Water Management District Award for Environmental Excellence in 1999, and received the Provost's Commendation for Outstanding Teaching by a Graduate Teaching Assistant in 2005. She has made numerous presentations to both professional and community associations, and holds membership in the American Association of Anthropology (AAA) and the Society for Applied anthropology (SfAA).

Dr. Hose's primary residence is in Tampa, Florida. She has been teaching anthropology courses online since 2000, and currently works as an adjunct for USF and Central Florida Community College.