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culture makes the acquisition of these skills particularly difficult, but they also come to understand what it would take to be multiculturally competent and how anthropological training can greatly assist in this effort. At this point many of them get enthused about this enterprise and seek advice on how to become an anthropology major. This is something I usually discourage them from doing, but that's another story!

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Claudia Strauss (Pitzer College)

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

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

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

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

I do not think I was wrong to argue that we can speak of a dominant U.S. culture. I realize that in saying this I run counter not only to most U.S. Americans' perception that this society is so diverse that one cannot generalize about it, but also to some anthropologists' critiques in recent years of the idea of "cultures" as shared, traditional, and internalized rather than constructed, contested representations (see, e.g., Wolf 1982, Clifford 1988, Abu-Lughod 1991). Yes, there is a sense in which culture is invented and constructed. But there are different

layers and levels of cultural understandings. It helps to distinguish what I have called degrees of "cultural standing" (Strauss 2004), from the highly controversial, through the disputable, the common opinion, to what is completely taken for granted. Taken-for-granted cultural understandings shape the way people interpret their realities regardless of their ideological disagreements. This last level Pierre Bourdieu called that of doxa, and it tends to be unspoken, in contrast to the heterodox and orthodox dogmas battling at the level of explicit discourses (see also Strauss and Quinn 1997 and Williams 1977).

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

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

entities but quite variable by class, religious affiliation and conviction, and place.

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

Whether that dominant culture is Euro-American, however, I am no longer so sure about. I have never investigated the origins of such typically U.S. American traits as stress on individual rights, including the right to make choices for oneself of a career or romantic partner, the value given to problem-solving and active effort rather than graceful resignation to fate, a fairly rigid set of racial categories, and widespread middle-class identification. Some of these have clear European intellectual antecedents, but may still have been reinterpreted in the United States. What stopped me in my tracks, and forced me to rethink my stance, was rereading the introduction to Bharati Mukherjee's collection of stories, *Darkness*. I turned to it because I had remembered she contrasted her experiences living in Canada, a "country [that] is hostile to its citizens who had been born in hot, moist continents like Asia…[and] proudly boasts of its opposition to the whole concept of cultural assimilation" (1985: 2) to the more hospitable reception she received in the United States. (The dominant discourse in the U.S. has not been one of opposition to cultural assimilation but of requiring it in key behaviors, like speaking English, e.g., Urciuoli 1995.) But when I reread Mukherjee's introduction I saw that the main point she wanted to make about her experience in the United States was the feeling that she could "hear America singing" in the voices of its immigrants. "For me," she writes, "it is a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation [that she felt in Canada], to the exuberance of immigration" (1985:3). And this made me wonder (I am sure some scholars have written about this, and I would appreciate any references) whether some of the traits I was ready to label as Euro-American are

better characterized as the result of the fact that aside from Native Americans, this society had no centuries-old traditions; its culture was shaped not only by the ideas brought by the immigrants from their homelands but by the nature of the immigrant experience in the new land—one at first dominated by immigrants from Europe to be sure but continuing with immigrants from the rest of the world as well. Probably it is some of each. I wish I could find Sue and talk with her again about these issues, but I will have similar opportunities with future students.

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Writing an American Community: The Ethnographic Directory Project
Catherine M. Cameron (Cedar Crest College)

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

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

In its original design, my rendition of the course was roughly divided between a classroom and a fieldwork segment. The field locus was Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, a city of about 70,000, in a region