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VIRTUALIZING ART EDUCATION: 
AN EDUCATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF 
A DISTANCE ART EDUCATION COURSE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for 
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate 
School of The Ohio state University

By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

With the proliferation of advanced technologies, distance education has become increasingly prevalent in art education. Yet, despite attention among scholars in education and cultural studies given to the Internet, cyberspace, and "the virtual," the examination of these in art education is still in its infancy. In this dissertation, I present a descriptive, analytical, and interpretive study of Internet-based distance (virtual) art education that addresses such educational practices in the context of multiculturalism. Such an account is necessary for art educators to improve existing courses and to continue investigating technology-integrated culture's impact on the educational process.

I examine the online course Art Education 367.01: Ethnic Arts: A Means of Intercultural Communication (Ethnic Arts Online) by means of participant observation. Thus, I begin with an overview of educational ethnographic case research methods and the rationale for applying them. Then, I outline the design of the research, the location of research and participants, the methods of data collection and analysis, and the presentation of research. I also discuss the significance of this methodology.

Next, I address "virtual classes," drawing on culturalist theories of virtualization and technology. This enables discussion of particular opportunities and challenges of virtualizing Ethnic Arts, and student observations and reactions to them. It also implies
that virtual classes be studied as operating according to their own dynamics, not merely as "technology enhanced" conventional classes.

In light of theories of virtualization, I overview the formation of the online version of Ethnic Arts. I describe relevant university policies, expectations, supports, and curriculum requirements, illustrating these with examples of course content, assignments and learning outcomes. Then, I overview the design of the online course and summarize the makeup of the enrolled students.

Having discussed the actual and theoretical context, I analyze student interaction, drawing on textual examples from my ethnographic research. I examine students' presentation of their sense of self and social identity. Then, I further consider the student-centered communicative dynamics of the virtual class, analyzing its specifically multicultural implications. Finally, I theorize how virtual classes can address the assumptions and goals of multicultural education.
Dedicated to P.B.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Between 1998 and 2001, I continually enrolled in online, web-based distance education and the Internet technology-enhanced courses at The Ohio State University. These distance education courses were simultaneously exciting and exhausting. They were intellectually stimulating, technologically challenging, and time demanding. In addition to fulfilling course requirements, most online learners spent time struggling to work with the computer technology. Upon encountering technological difficulties, students did not have an instructor or classmates immediately available for on-site help.

Distance education allowed some students to work on a flexible schedule in the places they deemed most convenient. But, it put an extra burden on those who worked full-time, had to make an extra effort to find an appropriate computer lab, had to learn to use the computer on their own, or did not have a compatible computer or program at home. Although students did not attend the class according to a fixed schedule, they were required to participate in class discussions by reading and writing electronic messages (e-mails) almost every day. Thus, in a sense, class time was actually extended. Exhausted from the overwhelming quantity of reading, writing, and online
interaction, students found themselves questioning the number of credit hours, the methods of assessing individual or group learning outcomes, and the quality and quantity of student interaction (listservs, personal communication, September, 1998; May, 1999). Issues like these increased my curiosity about distance education, eventually leading me to teach such a course myself, and to conduct research that can provide suggestions for educators to develop or strengthen distance education programs.

In this dissertation, I present a descriptive, analytical, and interpretative case study of distance art education. My research method is ethnographically based; therefore, my own first-hand field experience and the perspective of students, which I learned from informal conversations, surveys, and formal interviews, have provided the major empirical data for exploring social and educational contexts. Besides these personal responses, educational theories, theories regarding humans' relationships with technology, and cyber-cultural theories have also provided insight and a framework for analyzing and interpreting this information. In short, the following topics are presented in detail: the concept of virtualization, its opportunities and challenges, the formation of a distance education course, (re)presentation of social identity online, and online educational and social dynamics. My aim is to provide an analytical account for educators to improve existing online courses, as well as a theoretical framework for researchers to continue investigating technology-integrated educational processes.
The Impetus to Virtual Art Education

For four years, I have taught a university-level art education course—in a conventional, face-to-face setting—about intercultural communication regarding art, ethnicity, and cultural diversity. Recently having taught this course online, as well, I have come to recognize that distance education classes conducted entirely over the Internet, "virtual classes," offer their own set of potential advantages and pedagogical possibilities. The successful development of a virtual art education course, however, entails more than simply incorporating fashionable and innovative technological tools into the conventional learning process. Indeed, such technology re-organizes and re-structures the dynamics of student- and teacher-student interaction in fundamental ways. Art educators are therefore required to consider their own pedagogical assumptions—about everything from course objectives and curriculum concepts of art, to the role of the learners' backgrounds—and to rethink the educational process from the perspective of virtual educational environments (Krug, 1997; 2000).

Although some might argue that improving art education in the conventional classroom setting should be a priority, this is not necessarily the case. A number of educators (Schofield, 1995; Starkey, 1998; Stankiewicz & Garber, 2000) have found that, due to the increase in promotional commercials and the widespread use of recently

---

1In this dissertation, I employ a variety of terms, such as “virtual art education,” "distance education," "online course," and "virtual class/education," in order to describe the course I am investigating. See Chapter 3 for a complete discussion of the particular meanings of each of them. In short, I use the term "virtual" to describe those particular forms of "distance education" that, because they are conducted online using non-face-to-face and text-based communication, are therefore more flexible in space and time (deterritorialized and asynchronous) than conventional classes.
developed technologies, students' expectations regarding the classroom and student interaction are changing. For instance, students value the "conversational learning style" prevalent in distance education courses (Stankiewicz & Garber, 2000, p. 37). They are interested in student-initiated and student-centered classroom discussions (Starkey, 1998). My own virtual teaching experience has taught me that many students are seeking out new learning environments which better facilitate open and honest discussion (including disagreements), without the fear of being judged by one's physical appearance in actual space-time (e.g. skin color, clothing, the sound of one's voice). The disembodiment of virtual classes, with their lack of physical-social cues, has meant for some students the chance to better maintain a professional relationship toward the class and one's classmates.

Educators and theorists have also argued that the rapid proliferation of computer, internet, and cyberspace technologies have changed not only students' expectations and skills, but their lifestyles, and even the way they think (Schofield, 1995; Stone, 1995; Turkle, 1995; Julian, 1997; Tapscott, 1998; Krug, 2000; 2001; Stankiewicz & Garber, 2000). Their participation in the communicative realms of cyberspace, where people care more about conversations than physical-social rules, has made them eager to share their stories with others—friends and strangers—and to look for exciting feedback (Stone, 1995; Turkle, 1995). Increasingly, students would rather go online to chat with their friends than talk on the phone or hang around with each other face-to-face at a particular place and time (Turkle, 1995). Their participation in interactive networks, lacking in hierarchy, have made them receptive to educational
experiences that are interactive, nonlinear, non-hierarchical, web-structured, and cross-cultural (Julian, 1997; Keifer-Boyd, 1997). As teachers, we can not afford to dismiss coming to terms with the kind of "technosocial life" (Stone, 1995, p. 38) our students are familiar with. This puts the burden on art educators, researchers, and policy makers to understand not only the new technologies themselves, but also, more importantly, the dynamics of virtual class interaction and learning processes.

Context of the Research

Toward this end, I examine the online university art education course, *Art Education 367.01: Ethnic Arts: A Means of Intercultural Communication* (Ethnic Arts, and *Ethnic Arts Online* for its online version). *Ethnic Arts/Online* is one of the undergraduate General Education Curriculum (GEC) courses offered by the Department of Art Education at The Ohio State University. It was designed to fulfill three GEC requirements in (1) arts and humanities, (2) cultural and social diversity, and (3) second-level writing. It examines a wide range of artists, artworks, and art worlds from diverse ethnic and cultural groups of North America, including, for example, African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans. *Art* in this course refers to everything from body adornment to ethnic dances, from quilting to foodways. Students study things people make and "people who make things" (Krug, 1993; 1996) with an emphasis on how diverse groups value and interpret their meanings and functions. Teaching and learning materials introduce several theoretical and philosophical discussions about art and its role in human society. Case studies of North American artists, artworks, and art worlds at the local, state,
national and international level encourage students to examine their own personal views
and socially-mediated preconceptions about art, culture, change, and ethnicity.

_Ethnic Arts_ has been regularly taught in a traditional, face-to-face, on-campus
setting for almost a decade. It was not until the quarter of Spring 2000 that the first
complete web-based online section was offered and delivered entirely through the
Internet. During the time of my research, Dr. Don Krug of the Department of Art
Education, The Ohio State University, supervised the course and directed a graduate
development group for composing the online version of _Ethnic Arts_. Course objectives,
learning units, teaching and reading materials, and examples of ethnic arts remained
largely the same when transferred to the distance education setting. Course readings,
visuals (including slides and videos), audio materials, syllabi, assignments, and lecture
notes were digitized and put onto a course web site. This enabled students to browse,
read, or print out texts from their computer screen and study them on their own, when
and where they wanted. Because intercultural communication is one of the most crucial
ingredients for the pedagogical success of this course, communication technologies are
structured to provide a range of discussion formats. The course web site and the Internet
provided access to several text-based communication spaces: chat rooms, discussion
forums, a listserv, and personal e-mail correspondence. Students used these
communication spaces to contact each other, the class, and the instructor: to express
their ideas, solve problems, complete and post assignments, and receive feedback from
their peers and the instructor.
I have been participating in the *Ethnic Arts* course in multiple ways. Every quarter (including the summer quarters) from Winter 1998 through Autumn 2000, and from Autumn 2001 through Spring 2002, I was an instructor of the conventional *Ethnic Arts* class. In Spring 2000, I participated in the first online version of *Ethnic Arts* as an online observer, while Dr. Krug taught the course. In Autumn 2000, when the online version was not offered, I spent time interviewing students who participated in the Spring 2000 class and editing the course web site for the upcoming quarters. In Winter 2001 and Spring 2001, my role as a researcher changed from online observer to instructor of the online course. My changing levels of involvement in the class have enabled me to gain first-hand experience and knowledge useful for understanding distance education from multiple theoretical and practical perspectives (e.g. that of student, designer, instructor). Long-term participation made it possible for me to analyze student performance and interaction in detail, as well as to continually make pedagogical adjustments to the online courses I taught whenever I deemed it was necessary.

My research is not purely an educational theoretical inquiry, nor simply a matter of recounting—in storytelling fashion—distance education experience. Rather, by employing educational ethnographic case research methods and by using theoretical tools of cultural analysis to examine *Ethnic Arts online*, I have formulated a descriptive interpretation of the distance education experience. Aiming to serve both course
designers and instructors implementing or improving text-based distance education courses, as well as researchers studying the role of interactive technology in education, it is at once practical and theoretical.

Overview of the Research and Research Objectives

The presentation of the crux of my research consists of examining four major topics that address several important and interrelated issues regarding virtual distance art education. They are: (1) the opportunities and challenges of virtualization, (2) the formation of Ethnic Arts Online, (3) students' sense and (re)presentation of social identity, and (4) multicultural and intercultural social and educational dynamics. In this dissertation, I begin my consideration of each issue by reviewing and assessing several relevant theories. Then, using empirical examples from the online course studied, I analyze and interpret the social, educational, and technological practices.

The first of these issues requires that I examine previous research about distance education and theories of cyberspace and the virtual. I investigate the following questions: What is distance education? What are its main characteristics? How does online distance education differ from other types of distance education, like teleconferencing and satellite broadcasting? What benefits might it offer? What new problems arise? Examining these questions allows me to develop the necessary theoretical framework for investigating the particular type of distance education (online) I am dealing with. Then, from the perspective of this theoretical framework, I analyze particular opportunities and challenges which virtual classes offer to the educational
process. This entails coming to terms with the ins and outs of actual student interaction in relation to the various technological tools that are used to facilitate virtual, online interaction.

The second issue deals with the actual process of composing *Ethnic Arts Online*. In order to provide a comprehensive description of how this online course is composed, I begin with a detailed look at the university policies and the objectives, content, and format of this course. What are the university policies, expectations, and supports for this online course? How do they affect the formation and content of the course? How is *Ethnic Arts Online* composed and delivered? What online technologies and curriculum concepts are employed? Then, using the pre-enrollment test, I look at the composition of the student body. Who are the students who take the course? What do they have in common that might constitute the basis for this new form of learning?

Students' online social interactions are one of the most complex aspects explored in my research. In the virtual setting, this demands constant consideration of the pedagogical strategies and communication technologies being used. I have explored the following questions in particular: How do students participate in class activities? How often do they interact with each other? How does the virtual setting of the course affect students' social interaction? For example, how do the course content, requirements, and methods of instruction affect students' participation in social interaction? Does online interaction undermine already fragile relationships (Turkle, 1995), or make it easier for student relationships to develop? Are there any patterns peculiar to online social interaction? Exploring students' social interaction as facilitated by communication
technologies, therefore, provides further inquiry into issues such as the practice of social identity in online course and intercultural learning dynamics.

The third issue deals with students' sense and (re)presentation of social identity in the virtual class. I begin with several general questions: How might a sense of social identity be formed? What is the role of technology in the process of forming a sense of social identity? Intercultural communication that is text-based and facilitated by advanced technologies is a critical component of students' online learning. It encourages students to examine and become conscious of how they project themselves to certain social, cultural, and/or ethnic groups. Hence, I examine the issues from the perspective of the student: How do the students present their own identity/identities in the course? What strategies do they use? What aspects of identity are presented frequently? Do students actively try to foreground or suppress their age, gender, race, or ethnicity when online? How do the course content, requirements, and methods of instruction affect the students' presentation of identity? How do the students negotiate their sense of identity?

Finally, I investigate the online multicultural and intercultural social and educational dynamics. I examine students' social and educational dynamics in detail, paying particular attention to phenomena relating to the group working process and intercultural communication. What are the communication spaces built to facilitate social interaction and learning? How have different communication spaces structured different intercultural communication dynamics? What curriculum concepts are employed to guide the use of such technological tools? What are the advantages and limitations? How do students investigate ideas of culture, ethnic identity, and other
social issues online? What are the benefits and challenges of achieving multicultural and intercultural education online? In addition, I consider these issues in the socio-political context of American education. What political assumptions and/or practices have been influential? How do they affect today's concepts and practices of multicultural and intercultural education? What are the beliefs and implementation of multicultural and technology-integrated education in American education?

Significance of the Research

A number of reports (Duchastel, 1997; Coley et al., 1998; Fabos & Young, 1999; TELR, 2000) have indicated the need for university instructors, policy makers, and researchers to examine distance education. This study, through its use of educational ethnographic case research methods and cultural analysis, provides an intricate account of virtual distance education that can prove practically and theoretically useful to all three categories of educators.

This study is particularly significant to the Department of Art Education at The Ohio State University; the analysis of students' reactions to instruction, course structure, online discussions, and distance learning strategies provide instructors with valuable information for evaluating this new online course. More generally, it provides a detailed introduction to the communication spaces and dynamics of virtual classes to instructors coming to distance education for the first time, as well as a case for comparison to those who have been teaching virtual classes already. In addition, the detailed analysis of student participation and interaction can help policy makers, course designers, and
instructors, to come to terms with many important issues about how to design, implement, or improve future online courses.

On a more theoretical note, researchers interested in dealing with abstract issues regarding the use of digital technology in educational settings can benefit from the theoretical perspective developed here specifically for virtual distance education. This study provides researchers interested in anything from cyberspace education in general to actual curriculum improvement both the terminology and conceptual tools necessary for critical examination of a virtual approach.

Finally, this study begins to fill a conspicuous void in research on the use of distance technologies specifically in a multicultural art education setting. To date, most art educators who have investigated distance education have focused in their studies on the use of technology or on distance education in general. There is almost no research by art educators that addresses distance education's specific impact on *multicultural art* education (Krug, 1997). By extending my own treatment of student interaction in a course on ethnic arts to include such issues as ethnic identity, multiculturalism, cultural representation through art, and intercultural communication, I begin filling in this void.

Outline of the Chapters

In the chapters that follow, I provide further background and methodological information regarding this research project, review and develop the necessary theoretical perspectives, describe and analyze my empirical findings, and provide suggestions for future pedagogical considerations.
In Chapter 2, I give an overview of educational ethnographic case research methods and a rationale for applying such methods. Then, I provide a detailed description of how I actually carried out the research. This includes an account of the design of the research, the location of research and participants, the methods of data collection, the methods of data analysis, and the presentation of research. This chapter ends with a discussion of the significance of using this methodology.

Chapter 3 begins by addressing, in a theoretical manner, the use of digital and the Internet technology to virtualize a class. I consider the major issues that arise in conjunction with online distance education are space-time flexibility and text-based communications. These issues, in turn, point to the central opportunities provided by virtualization as well as the new challenges it issues. I present student observations and reactions to such opportunities and challenges as well.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the creation of the online version of the Ethnic Arts course. I include a detailed description of important university policies, expectations, supports, and General Education Curriculum (GEC) requirements for this online course, and how this online course satisfies those policies and requirements. I have used the course content, assignments, and some students learning outcomes to illustrate a few of the above policies. Then, I provide information regarding the actual design of the online course. This is followed by a summary of the composition of the student body.

In Chapter 5, I discuss theoretically humans' relationships with technology and issues regarding subjectivities. Then, I turn to an examination of how students present a sense of self and social identity and negotiate their identity among their classmates in
the virtual class. I illustrate these issues through a variety of textual examples taken from my ethnographic research.

Having provided a theoretical and empirical account of student interaction in general up to this point, in Chapter 6, I discuss the issue of multicultural and intercultural social and leaning dynamics online. I analyze the various forms of text-based student interaction in relation to the three main communication spaces employed for enhancing students' intercultural interactions in this course: a listserv, discussion forums, and chat rooms. Then, I analyze students' investigations of ideas related to culture, ethnic identity, and cultural representation. This chapter ends with discussing several pedagogical implications for multicultural and intercultural communication in the virtual class.
CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:
EDUCATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE RESEARCH

In this chapter, I outline and describe the educational ethnographic case research methodology employed in this study. I begin by introducing ethnography and its relevance for studying a class as a cultural arena. I provide an overview of the educational ethnographic case research methods employed for studying social, educational, and technological practices in a distance art education course, Ethnic Arts Online: A Means of Intercultural Communication (Ethnic Arts Online). Following this, I review the particular research topics and a series of sub-questions that this study aims to explore. Having examined the theoretical and methodological background, I describe how the actual research process was carried out. I detail the location of research, participants, methods of data collection, methods of data analysis, and the presentation of the research. This chapter ends with my argument regarding the significance of applying educational ethnographic case research methods for studying Ethnic Arts Online.
Rationale for Research Methodology

To understand my reasons for employing an educational ethnographic case research methodology, one needs to know my own particular perspective on the distance education course, Ethnic Arts Online. I treat a distance education course as a social, cultural, and educational arena. Culture, according to Hall (1997), can be used to refer to "whatever is distinctive about the 'way[s] of life' of a people, community, nation, or social group [...] Alternatively, the word can be used to describe the shared values of a group or of society" (p. 2). Culture is an ongoing process consisting of a learned set of beliefs, feelings, and rules for living around which a group of people organizes their lives. Hall (1997) also maintains that culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings — "the giving and taking of meaning — between the members of a society or group" (p. 2).

In order to investigate Ethnic Arts Online from a range of cultural perspectives, I employed educational ethnographic case research methods. One of the important components of such methods is an emphasis on the ethnographic approach for "producing the work of describing culture" (Spradley, 1979, p. 6). I briefly summarize four characteristics of ethnography that provide me with a useful framework:

(1) Ethnography provides culture-bound theories. It provides descriptions that reveal the range of explanatory models created by human beings (Spradley, 1979, p. 10-11).

(2) Ethnography seeks to develop theories grounded in empirical experiences and their cultural representations (Spradley, 1979; Clifford & Marcus, 1986).
(3) Ethnography tries to understand practices in cultural context, and welcomes representation of “multiple, blindly interdependent locales [...] mutually linked by the intended and unintended consequencers of activities within them” (Marcus, 1986, p. 171), because it can show the range of cultural differences and how people with diverse perspectives interact.

(4) Ethnography, in formulating its ‘partial truths’ about social and cultural practices, takes into consideration the accounts of the actors/subjects/participants themselves who are involved in such practices (Clifford, 1986, p. 7).

As such, in this dissertation, I attempt to provide a holistic view of the two classes, including the participants and myself, in order to analyze particular human social practices and their association with a wide range of cultural contexts.

Another important component in this research methodology lies in its emphasis on producing a wider range of cultural contexts for studying a relatively small educational case. Educational ethnographic case research has been used by teacher-researchers, social workers, and educators for descriptive research, for theoretical inquiry, and for evaluation (Goetz & LeComte, 1984; Hammersley, 1990; 1993; Carspecken, 1996; Goldman-Segall, 1998; Jones, 1999; Sudweeks & Simoff, 1999). Guided by their research, I have located my research site as a single distance education course where teaching and learning occur. Participants, in my case, were the course instructor, students, and administrative personnel. I have gathered data from my direct involvement with participants. It represents educational processes as they occur and as
selected by me, the researcher. Then, I study and analyze these processes in relation to a
wide range of social, cultural, cyberspace, educational, and technological contexts.

In light of this perspective and methodology, I present the four researched topics
in this dissertation: (1) the opportunities and challenges of virtualization, (2) the
creation of Ethnic Arts Online, (3) students' sense and (re)presentation of social identity,
and (4) multicultural and intercultural social and educational dynamics. I describe and
analyze knowledge, interests, and rules that influence the virtualization and the
formation of the course, students' social interaction, and their sense and (re)presentation
of social identity. I study the way students organize their social, educational, and
technological practices in order to analyze how technologies have shaped particular
learning processes. I consider students' explanations of their individualistic online
practices, offline life, and educational beliefs. I take human relationships with the
technology (Stone, 1995; Turkle, 1995) into consideration in order to interpret the
students' sense and presentation of social identity in a non face-to-face educational
environment. I interpret the shared values of this distance education course, and how
students ascribe meanings to arts and cultural/social diversity and exchange them
among the members. As a result, this research is not subjective, based wholly on the
intuition of the researcher, but intersubjective, including students' explanations of their
own ideas, issues, and practices as well. Importantly, my research provides rich
empirical information and analyses of selected social, educational, and technological
contexts that are necessary for understanding virtual educational experiences and
processes.
Specifically, I have employed fieldwork (including participation and observation), field notes, thick description, and reflexivity methods for strengthening the descriptive and empirical data (Geerze, 1973; Spradley, 1979). When conducting fieldwork, I intensively participated in and observed day-to-day social interactions among students and between the students and myself. Due to the lack of verbal, visual, and physical cues, "interaction" entailed exchanging writing with students via e-mail, and "observation" meant reading students' texts and simultaneously trying to imagine and interpret what they might be thinking and doing while they produced those texts. In undertaking this fieldwork, I learned to negotiate the students' social patterns and to interact with them using their online language and working schedule. Thus, I have been able to better understand how students learn and interact in a non face-to-face, virtual education environment. Fieldwork also has allowed me to gain valuable first-hand experience of what it is like to be in an online social/cultural arena.

In my field notes, I recorded information (e.g. time and date, subject, to whom the message is responding), pointed out the issues/story identified in the text, mapped students' texts in relation to other texts (such as the course concepts and other students' responses). Field notes also revealed language, beliefs, rules, and issues students shared or argued about. Such details facilitate critical examination of educational processes. For instance, in Chapter 5, I indicate what students wrote about their assumptions in art in relation to their social/cultural experiences and thus their sense of social identity. In Chapter 6, I discuss various strategies for a group of students to complete the online assignments and their frustration and satisfaction in working with each other online. I
believe it is crucial to incorporate both my own voice and the students' voices into my analysis. In doing fieldwork and keeping field notes, I have been able to provide empirical and analytical data for understanding educational processes from multiple perspectives.

"Thick description" is another method that has enriched my descriptive analysis. After reading field notes, I pieced several episodes together to produce thick descriptions. I include many details, such as names, actions, facts, visual and audio effects, conversations, settings, and emotions. Some of these details were from my reflexive field notes. Others were excerpted directly from students' written texts. These details helped me re-examine what had happened in earlier weeks and make further connections between them. It enabled me, for example, to study one student's, or a group of students', learning processes and social patterns. In Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, I provide detailed descriptions and analyses of several online students' individual and group learning processes. In certain cases, I had to re-read a series of the students' original texts in order to understand what I was interested at that time. Thick description allowed me to easily find the subject matter, time, as well as my initial impressions of those specific cases. It also provided me with contextual information for looking into certain practices. The descriptive analysis generated from thick description was intended to be rich in content and context.

Ethnography is also reflexive work. Researcher Hakken (1999), who employed ethnographic methods to study culture and social relations in cyberspace, maintained:

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The idea behind ethnography is that one can learn something worth knowing by doing more intensively something typically human: making sense out of the new situations in which we find ourselves. [...] Ethnographic fieldwork involves doing these kinds of things more reflectively, more systematically, and for a longer time than the ordinary visitor. (p. 38-9)

My research experiences, systematically enhanced by ethnographically based methods, changed my perspectives regarding teaching and learning in a virtual environment. I learned with the students how to act and interact through day-to-day online social interaction. I learned from the students their interests and struggles in every new online learning situation, so I could adjust pedagogical strategies and help them achieve their educational goals. The analysis and interpretation generated by these reflexive experiences are presented in Chapter 4: The Opportunities and Challenges of Virtualization. I discuss how I have refined my own conceptualization of online distance education in view of this research and teaching experience, as well as the students' learning experiences.

The above methods emphasize an interactive and intensive first-hand (field) experience and collection of a wide variety of empirical data. Yet, taking into account Merriam's (1998) observations, I realize that the significance of a "case" research method is not a matter of size, but content. Merriam (1998) has argued that to call a study "case," a researcher should know the boundaries that limit the research topic and methods. She suggests the following techniques to assess the boundedness of the topic.
Ask how finite the data collection would be, that is, whether there is a limit to the number of people involved who could be interviewed or a finite amount of time for observation. [...] If there is no end, then the phenomenon [studied] is not bounded enough to qualify as a case. (Merriam, 1998, p.28)

Thus, I have tried to maintain a reasonable time frame, deal with a manageable amount and kind of information, and develop a specifically educational presentation (as opposed, say, to a full-blown ethnography in the manner of anthropologists) of the research. The overall amount of time I spent teaching and interacting with students was intensive but lasted only for eleven weeks for each online class I taught. The size of each group of students studied was rather small, due to the university policy. To the students and myself, this distance education course was a relatively new experience. And, as it turns out, indications are that each of the three groups of students studied presents a recognizably different set of interests, rules, and social practices. Therefore, I believe it is not appropriate to make sweeping generalizations about certain social or educational practices merely on the basis of this study. Instead, through a descriptive and analytical account of *Ethnic Arts Online*, I provide suggestions for studying potential opportunities and problems associated with distance education. As for the presentation of the research, instead of producing a largely narrative account of my own personal and studied students' experiences, I focus my analytical and interpretive discussions on the four research topics I introduced in Chapter 1. To strengthen my analysis, I include educational, theoretical, social, cultural, and technological perspectives.

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To sum up, in this dissertation, I have employed educational ethnographic case research methodology for studying distance education. Specifically, I have applied the following strategies: fieldwork (participation and observation) in an online, small educational setting; production of field notes and thick descriptions; interviews; production of a theoretical and analytical interpretation, incorporating researcher and student perspectives into the presentation of the research; and, relation of the four topics presented to a range of social, cultural, educational, and technological contexts.

Research Inquires

There are four research topics: the concept of virtualization (and its opportunities and challenges), the formation of a distance education course, students' sense and (re)presentation of social identity, and online multicultural and intercultural social and educational dynamics. In order to present a rich, yet manageable, analysis of these four topics in this dissertation, I narrowed down my inquiries to a series of research questions.

(1) The concept of virtualization: From a theoretical perspective, what framework can be applied to interpret the process of virtualizing education? What is distance education? What are its main characteristics? How does the distance education course, Ethnic Arts Online, differ from other types of distance education, like video conferencing or satellite broadcasting? What benefits might it offer? What new problems arise?

(2) The formation of a distance education course: From an educational and practical perspective, what are the university policies, expectations, and
supports for this online course? How do they affect the formation and content of the course? How is this online course composed and delivered? How do students prepare for taking this online course? Who are the students who take it?

(3) The sense and the (re)presentation of social identity: How might a person's sense of self-identity be formed? What is the role of technology in the process of forming a sense of one's identity? How do students (re)present their social identity in the course studied? Are there any patterns peculiar to their (re)presentation of social identity? What aspects of social identity are (re)presented frequently? Do they actively try to indicate or suppress their thoughts about age, race, gender, or ethnicity online? How do students negotiate their sense of identity during the (re)presentation?

(4) Multicultural and intercultural social and educational dynamics: What communication spaces are employed to facilitate students' interaction? What curriculum concepts are employed to guide the use of communication spaces? How does students' interaction affect their intercultural learning dynamics? How do students participate in virtual educational practices (or not)? Does virtual class interaction undermine already fragile relationships (Turkle, 1995), or make it easier for student relationships to develop? How do students investigate ideas of culture, ethnic identity, and other social issues online? What are some of the political assumptions and practices associated with multicultural and technology-integrated education in
American education? What impact do virtual class interaction have on multicultural and intercultural learning?

Design of the Research

I employ the following seven strategies. These strategies capture the important aspects of educational ethnographic case research methods as I discussed above.

(1) After examining personal experience, conducting a pilot study, and literature review, I identified four research topics.

(2) My research is based on day-to-day social and educational contexts, rather than under isolated or experimental conditions.

(3) I conducted research on three eleven-week distance education courses. My participants included three groups of university students enrolled in those courses. Yet, the primary empirical data for the detailed analysis are chosen from the second and third courses I taught.

(4) Regarding the issue of confidentiality, I explained to the students and interviewees information about this research before they signed consent forms voluntarily. Also, I do not use their real names in this dissertation.

(5) I gathered data from a wide range of sources, but participant observation, students' texts, and interviews were the main ones. Data collection was comprehensive as I saved all course-related documents and students' texts. Texts were broken down into sentences or lines based on concepts indicated (Merriam, 1998) in order to categorize them into the four research topics.
(6) My participation and observation were conducted primarily through text-based communication and reading texts. In total, I recorded and transcribed nine interviews.

(7) The analysis of the data involved description, analysis, and interpretation of students' actions. The purpose of analysis was not to form generalizations but rather to identify some potentially important experiences and issues.

(8) Assessment of empirical results and interpretation was based on the cross-examination of my field notes, students' written records, survey, and interviews.

Locations of Research and Participants

I chose to study the distance education course I taught because it closely related to my research interests, provided rich information, and could contribute to the field of art education in a timely manner. Patton (1990) maintains that "information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (p. 169). The purpose of the research is to explore and analyze social and educational phenomena in a virtualized learning community. The research site I have chosen is a distance education course, and participants are the instructor and students of the course. Thus, they provide me with rich and first-hand information.

The location of this distance education course studied, Ethnic arts Online: A Means of Intercultural Communication (Ethnic Arts Online) is a multimedia, text-based,

See Chapter 4 for detailed descriptions of this distance education course and the composition of the student body.
non face-to-face, virtual class, on the Internet. The course web site is comprised of numerous web pages, including texts, images, animation, films, audios, hyperlinks, discussion forums, chat rooms, a quiz area, students records, and tools for the students' presentation of their assignments. The syllabus, course descriptions, lecture notes, assignment descriptions, samples of ethnic art work, assessment criteria, students' grades, students' assignments, instructor's and students' contact information, and calendar are all digitized and uploaded to the course web site. Course related participants (including designers, students, instructors, and guests) are assigned a password in order to gain access to the course web site. In a sense, participants can navigate the site any time they want. Navigation is a private and individual/independent process. However, the WebCt, a program for site management, can record the time and frequency of students' navigation of the home page. Thus, it gives an instructor a sense of how often the students log onto the web site to post an assignment, say, wander around, or read the online study materials. A hyperlink leads participants to several chat rooms so it allows students to virtually meet each other in real (physical) time. These chat rooms are research sites for me to participate in and observe students' synchronous textual interaction. A course listserv is another text-based site that allows participants to read, write, and exchange e-mail with others. Throughout the course of study, participants met each other online, mostly in an asynchronous way, except those who arranged private meetings in chat rooms or face-to-face.

The participants in the research project included myself (as researcher and instructor), Dr. Don Krug of The Ohio State University (OSU), and three groups of
students. The three groups of students consisted of OSU undergraduate students enrolled in *Ethnic Arts Online* in Spring 2000, Winter 2001, and Spring 2001. Here, I provide some background information about these participants (For more complete information, see Chapter 4: The Formation of a Distance Education Course *Ethnic Arts Online*):

(1) Group One – Spring 2000

Dr. Krug of the Department of Art Education at OSU was the instructor of this course. He directed a group of graduate students and designers to compose the course web site. He provided me with insights into the infrastructure, the curriculum concepts, and the pedagogical strategies of the course. He taught *Ethnic Arts* on campus for seven years before he taught this online version the first time. There were nine students who completed the course. I informally interviewed four of the students (three who withdrew from and one who completed the course) after the quarter ended.

(2) Group Two – Winter 2001

I taught the class and managed the course web site. There were fifteen students enrolled in the course initially; ten students completed the course; one student withdrew from the course four weeks before the quarter ended; and four students withdrew from the course during the first week. Among those ten students, I formally interviewed five of them after they completed the course and received their grade. There was one student in this course who had withdrawn from the Spring 2000 course, then enrolled in this
course and completed it. This student was interviewed twice. The majority of the data regarding student social interaction is from this course. Thus, a look into the make up of the students in this course is necessary. There was one Asian American student, one Taiwanese student (the only one for whom English was a second language), one Jamaican American student (a full-time working mother of two children), and eight white students. There were three art- and art education-related majors and eight non-art-related majors. There were four male students and seven female students. All the students, except the Jamaican American student, lived close to the campus and were taking other university courses (online and on campus) at the same time. The majority of students in this course were confident about using the computer and the Internet, and had a computer at home or in the dorms. Two students, instead of using their home computer, often used the Ohio State University public computing sites for completing their course work.

(3) Group Three – Spring 2001

I taught the class and managed the course web site. There were twenty-eight students enrolled in the course and twenty-three students completed the course. The ethnic composition of the student body in this course was diverse. More than half of the student body consisted of international students or immigrants. There was one student from The Netherlands. There were seven East Asian or Asian American students, including Koreans, Taiwanese, and Indonesians. There were eight students from the Middle East
and Central Asia: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and India. There were eighteen male and ten female students. There was one student with a learning disability who required more time for understanding materials and completing exams, and one student who took the course from California. The diverse religious beliefs of the students included at least Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, all of which were frequently brought up among the students in their texts online.

Methods of Data Collection

Stake (1998) notes that case researchers search for information that indicates both "what is particular about the case and what it has in common with others" (p. 90). In this way, a holistic view and unique situation (that makes the case result worth reading) are both maintained. Toward this end, I have employed various methods to collect relevant data and produce descriptive and interpretive notes during my fieldwork. The main sources of data include a wide range of documents, field notes from participation, observation, and informal conversations with students about the research topics, website documents, students' written texts, and recorded-then-transcribed interviews. I collected as much data as possible, as outlined above, that related to Ethnic Arts Online. The approach to data collection was meant to be comprehensive.

Participation, Observation, and Field Notes

Participation, observation, and the recording of field notes were employed for collecting data for this research (Spradley, 1979; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984;
Hammersley, 1990; 1993). I participated in the course as researcher, instructor, technical supporter, and sit-in student. Participation and observation in my research meant reading students' texts and interacting with them through exchanging e-mails. During the pilot study, I was interested in a series of questions. What are common discussion topics? How long or short are the messages they write? How often do participants interact in this learning community? What are the reasons they interact with each other? How do they develop strategies in order to survive the course, complete assignments, and deal with technological difficulties? Do any interpersonal, gender, racial, educational, religious, or social conflicts take place during the interaction? How do the participants react to the technology? Do they have an explicit sense of self-identity? If so, how is it (re)presented? To explore these questions, I paid attention to students' interests, social interactions, and explanations of their online and offline actions. Eventually, this enabled me to develop the four research topics for focused presentation of research results.

One unique situation I faced during observation was that in a virtual environment, I had to constantly interpret and construct students' online actions and thoughts based on their texts. This was due to the lack of verbal, visual, and physical cues in a virtual environment. Therefore, I paid attention to the students' descriptive statements, stories, words used, the writing style and tone, and textual symbols. From these, I learned to understand and use their online language, ways of expressing feelings
through text, and patterns of social interaction. From their writings, I also learned demographic information as well as their interests and ideas regarding ethnicity, art, technology, and self-identity.

I constructed my field notes in a descriptive and analytical way that helped me gather information for the research questions and also about the general common and particular scenario. I recorded date, time, names, and subjects of potentially important e-mail in my field notes. However, to protect the students' confidentiality, I do not use their real names in this dissertation. I also included the most common topics and patterns of behavior I observed, including the topics the majority of students' found interesting, the problems they often complained about, and the ways they would begin a message. I also made interpretive comments on certain unique practices such as flaming and aggressive debating. Some of the messages used explicit words, while some were indicated implicitly. My interpretation was based on my knowledge of students' background in relation to students' use of words, writing styles, and tone of voice.

Making sense out of students' social practices was the most critical part of this research. Participation, observation, and taking field notes were thus the most important and perhaps the most effective methods for gaining a deeper understanding of the social and educational practices studied. Information gathered using these methods provided me evidence and insights regarding students' social interaction and the sense and (re)presentation of self/social identity.
In order for me to gain a holistic understanding of the course and participants studied, the data gathered extended to:

1. the limitation of the case,
2. its historical background,
3. the physical setting,
4. other contexts, including economic, political, legal, and aesthetic,
5. other cases through which this case is recognized or can be compared, and
6. those informants through whom the case can be known. (Stake, 1998, p. 90)

I obtained the following documents pertaining to the course: university and departmental policies, TELR documents, course descriptions, class rosters, pre-enrollment questionnaires, and students' online written texts from a listserv, chat rooms, and the discussion forums. The pre-enrollment questionnaire contains questions about students' background from personal information and education, to technology. I have systematically saved all the students' texts into the electronic files. These documents provided me with information about the position of the course in the university structure, the curriculum concepts, the infrastructure of this distance education course, and composition of the student body. Thus, it helped me answer my research questions regarding the formation of distance education (see Chapter 4).

Formal and Informal Interview

Interview is an important aspect of ethnographic research. Spradley (1979) suggests that skilled ethnographers can interview people effectively, merely carrying on
an amicable conversation while introducing a few ethnographic questions. I employed this method for the informal interviews. Often, when students came to my office, I talked with them, attempting to understand their reactions to the distance education process. Such informal conversation was not recorded. Nor did I prepare interview questions. Rather, this served as a way to "get to know" the students and simultaneously helped me to make sense of their online practices. Informal conversation was a very helpful strategy for gathering information about how they dealt with disembodied educational experiences and for learning about their fears and interests regarding the class. Unexpected responses sometimes brought up important issues that later helped me theorize the meaning of "virtualizing art education," as I discuss in Chapter 3. I used informal conversation as a way to learn more about some problematic and vague ideas that students express in their e-mail correspondence.

During the process of participation and observation in the course, my anxiety in terms of the research interests and the validity of my interpretation gradually increased. I had made intuitive and interpretive analyses of students' beliefs, interests, and social patterns; yet, I believed that it was necessary to include students' voices and perspectives in order to mediate, and even strengthen, my own interpretations. After the initial data analysis was conducted, I came up with a series of questions that could only be answered, in an explicit way, by the students themselves. Most of these questions concerned their sense of self-identity, their response to a virtualized educational environment, strategies for maintaining social relationships, and multicultural and intercultural learning experiences. Finally, I decided to use quasi-structured and
open-ended questions for the interviews. In this way, I was hoping to learn descriptive, self-reflexive, and perhaps unexpected ideas.

All the interviews were conducted after the quarter ended and the final grades had been received by the students. I sent e-mail to eleven students asking for voluntary interviewees. I was hoping to interview those who showed explicit concern in their e-mail correspondence about the issues I was investigating, those who participated critically and actively in listserv discussions, as well as those who participated minimally in the course. Such variety would allow multiple voices to be examined. Finally, I conducted five formal, recorded-then-transcribed interviews. One of my interviewees, Student M, chose to have a chat room interview. This interesting case indicated a sense of self/social identity in relationship to the technology, as I describe in Chapter 5. Each interview took between one and two hours. During the interviews, I asked open-ended questions. Sometimes I merely let the students change the topic, because this often provided unexpected insights (for example, they might express their personal opinion about their classmates). This information, in fact, became a valuable component of my analysis of the opportunities and challenges of virtualization (see Chapter 3) and students' (re)presentation of social identity (see Chapter 5).

Methods of Data Analysis

I conducted data analysis continuously during the process of data collection. Merriam (1998) describes the principle of data analysis as follows:
Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data. And making sense out of data involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning. (Merriam, 1998, p. 178)

During the process of making meaning out of the data collected, I was faced with loosely structured dialogues, concepts, and narratives. Thus, I had to come up with a system for dealing with this. The initial data analysis was conducted intuitively after I collected information from the first group (Spring 2000). Such intuition was grounded in theories, day-to-day reading of e-mail correspondence, and conversations with the instructor. In this pilot study, I simply wrote down what I thought would be interesting, unique, and problematic. From there, I gathered a series of research topics related to the various social, cultural, educational, and technological contexts. And, finally, I reduced the research focus down to the four topics. These four topics were chosen based on their feasibility, manageability, and interconnectedness. After this initial process, I drafted the research questions outlined earlier in this chapter. They also served as guidelines for keeping subsequent data collection manageable.

The next data collected included the second group's (Winter 2001) online texts, transcriptions from the formal interviews, and field notes. I came up with a citation system for organizing the data. As for the students' online texts, I used the student's name, date, time, and where it appeared (e.g. listserv or chat room) for citation. As for the field notes and transcriptions, I assigned each line with a number, so, for example, when I used a quote from a student, I could reference the student's name, page and line
number, and the type of data (e.g. field notes or interview). This citation system helped me to sort back and forth through the information with relative ease.

When reviewing the first set of data (students' texts), I kept the four topics and research questions in mind, and I eliminated unrelated passages. As for frequently repeating passages or ideas, I saved only messages that were clear and descriptive. In addition, I made a note indicating their frequency. Then, I searched for explicit "concepts" and "issues" that related to the four topics and which were indicated by the words, sentences, and/or whole texts (Merriam, 1998, p. 179). This was a reading, re-reading, and note-taking process. For example, while looking for the students' narratives regarding the sense of social identity and multicultural and intercultural learning, I found that arts and ethnicity, social and cultural experiences, family stories, gender, and generational issues were commonly discussed among the students of the second group. Thus, I made a list containing the main research topics, concepts and issues related to the main topic, and quotes from students' texts to support those concepts and issues. These quotes were also identified with the citation system. This list, then, served as a guideline for drafting the formal interview questions.

When examining the transcriptions of the interviews, I applied the same method. Thus, the list developed early on grew richer and more complicated with concepts, issues, and quotes related to the research topics. Of course, not all the ideas that indicated in students' quotes agreed with each other. For example, all the interviewees made comments about how they tried to identify one of their classmate's, Lin's, gender.
by making observations about Lin's writing style. Yet, not all the interviewees could agree whether Lin's writing style was "male" or "female."

At this stage, I did not try to discover deeper relationships among the data. I just grouped the concepts and issues together for later analysis. Finally, I compared this list with my field notes to find out if there was other evidence related to the list. In this way, these concepts and issues were cross-examined. Throughout the process of data analysis, I regularly used the students' own voices and perspectives to describe their own practices and ideas.

The last stage of the analysis was to interpret the concepts and issues identified on the list. Denzin (1998) asserts that "an interpretive text would emphasize socially constructed realities, local generalizations, interpretive resources, stocks of knowledge, intersubjectivity, practical reasoning and ordinary talk" (p. 318). Take the disagreement about Lin's gender as an example. My interpretive statements were that gender is important for online social interaction; yet, it often is taken for granted; and lack of gender recognition may hinder students' social interaction. These statements can be supported by the fact that all the interviewees indicated that they were trying to make sense out of Lin's gender in order to respond to her message. Yet, as I read through these interviewees' online texts, none of them indicated their own gender explicitly. This led to another interpretation that students' probably assume that their names had already indicated their gender. Cyberspace researchers (Stone, 1995; Donath, 1999; O'Brien, 1999), indeed, point out that a person's name can serve as a gender cue; thus, he/she does not have to explicitly state it online. This example shows that a meaningful
interpretation should include multiple resources. Therefore, my interpretation reflects the research topics, my own perspective and knowledge, theories, and the intersubjective meanings made explicit by the students themselves.

The Presentation of the Research

This educational ethnographic case research was aimed at exploring educational, social, and technological practices in a distance education course. Specifically, I presented four topics – (1) the opportunities and challenges of virtualization, (2) the formation of *Ethnic Arts Online*, (3) students' sense and (re)representation of social identity, and (4) multicultural and intercultural social and educational dynamics. To protect the students' confidentiality, I do not use their real names in the empirical examples presented in this dissertation. In order to help my intended audience (e.g. teachers, departmental policy makers, art educators, and distance education researchers) to make sense out of the data collected and analysis generated, I present each topic according to the following strategies. I start with theoretical reviews. These include reviews of educational, social, and/or technological theories and conceptual frameworks pertinent to the topic discussed. These theoretical/conceptual frameworks are included not only because they provide a point of reference and support my interpretation, but also to help the reader gain an understanding of broader ideas from a theoretical perspective.

Next, I present my analysis and interpretation of certain practices, ideas, and issues using empirical examples. In analyzing what I found important related to the research topic, I first describe my own research and students' experiences. Then, I
analyze ideas, strategies, unusual actions, and problems associated with these experiences. Students identify some of them explicitly. In such cases, I use direct quotes from students' texts and interview transcriptions to support my analysis. Others are indicated implicitly by the students or are based on my own observations. In such cases, I interpret what I deem important. My interpretation is based on conceptual connections to the theories and empirical examples as discussed before.

I conclude each research topic with my suggestions for future considerations regarding pedagogical improvement and directions of research. I discuss potentially important aspects of this research that have yet to be investigated more thoroughly. Thus, the theoretical, empirical, analytical, and interpretive dimensions of this research should provide readers with useful ideas and suggestions (Krug, 1993).

Significance of the Research Methodology

One argument regarding the significance (or assessment) of an educational ethnographic case research concerns its generalizability (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Donmoyer, 1990; Merriam, 1998). I agree that case research can be valuable, reliable, and useful if it is carried out systematically, and that its value lies not primarily with its generalizability, nor its ability to generate a grand theory. During this research, I recognized that the four topics presented here were actually a series of issues that guided me through the data collection process. They were not necessarily "discovered" and "theorized" during the fieldwork. Nor did I treat those four topics as initial hypotheses. I have not intended to use this research to prove or disprove some particular hypothesis and/or theory.
The significance of applying educational ethnographic case research methodology rests in its ability to produce an analytical framework that provides rich, contextual information, interpretations, and "vicarious experience" (Donmoyer, 1990, p. 196) useful for understanding social, educational, and technological practices in a distance education course. The analysis, interpretation, and suggestions generated by this research are aimed at providing university instructors and art educators with new insights, specifically regarding the four topics on which I concentrated my analysis. Toward this end, this particular methodology focuses on applying various research methods (e.g. fieldwork, thick description, and holistic analysis) systematically to reveal and explain various concepts and issues that are important in distance education. The holistic discussions in this research, then, I hope will benefit art educators, policymakers, teachers, and other researchers in related areas (e.g. cyberspace, technology, and social study). Thus, on a broader scale, case research can be of "value in refining theory and suggesting complexities for further investigation as well as helping to establish the limits of generalizability" (Stake, 1998, p. 104).

In conclusion, in this dissertation, I have followed educational ethnographic case research methods systematically. Echoing the suggestions of Goetz and LeCompte (1984) for checking the completeness of research methodology, I have included in this chapter, discussions of:

(1) the goals of the effort and the questions it addressed,

(2) the conceptual and theoretical frameworks that informed the research activity,
(3) the overall design or variant that characterized the endeavor,

(4) the group that provided the data,

(5) the experiences and roles of the investigators,

(6) the data collection methods used, and

(7) the analysis strategies developed. (p. 233)

The investigation of Ethnic Arts Online that follows, conducted in accordance with the methodology outlined in this chapter, will provide theoretical, empirical, analytical, and interpretive insight into distance education that will contribute to the discipline of Art Education and beyond. In Chapter 3, I analyze the concept of "virtualization"; and using Ethnic Arts Online as a specific case, I discuss the characteristics, the opportunities, and the challenges of this virtualized art education course.
This chapter examines theoretically what is entailed by virtualizing a conventional class by means of an online distance education course. Bringing a course into the realm of cyberspace, "becoming virtual" (Lévy, 1998), almost sounds like something out of science fiction. Indeed, the first of eleven definitions of cyberspace Michael Benedikt (1991) included in his *Cyberspace: First Steps* is drawn from the science fiction novels *Neuromancer* and *Count Zero* by William Gibson (1984; 1987):

[cyberspace]—visions of corporate hegemony and urban decay, of neural implants, of a life of paranoia and pain—but a word, in fact, that gives a name to a new stage, a new and irresistible development in the elaboration of human culture and business under the sign of technology. (Benedikt, 1991, p. 1)

In Gibson's dark metaphor, cyberspace is an alternative reality. Actors, in a sense, are the slaves of the corporate system and machine, in cyberspace and real physical space. Living experiences in both spaces are both intense and real. Confusion, excitement, deception, desire, anxiety, death are all real. By linking cyberspace to the brain, if an actor's body dies in cyberspace, his/her physical body dies in the physical world, and vise versa.
Not all conceptions of cyberspace and the virtual world, however, are quite so foreboding. Stone (1995) describes cyberspace as a space of electronic network communication facilitated by interactive technologies. She also believes that most people have been living part-time in cyberspace on a daily basis; when they use banking systems for financial management, for instance, cyberspace is where the money is. Turkle (1995) also believes that cyberspace is part of the routines of daily life. Many people use the Internet to make purchases and e-mail to communicate with each other. For her, cyberspace is where one can create alternative personas that are not necessarily grounded in the physical body or real life, where mind, body, self, and machine are simultaneously interrelated and separated. Rheingold's (1993) cyberspace is a "conceptual space where words, human relationships, data, wealth, and power are manifested by people using computer mediated communication (CMC) technology" (p. 5). Rheingold's romantic version of cyberspace is for people who believe democracy can be practiced and the meaning of life can be enhanced both by collective intelligence and care (Rheingold, 1993; 1998).

Virtualizing Education

Distance education classes conducted over the Internet have brought education into the world of cyberspace. Pierre Lévy (1998) provides a way to conceptualize distance education as the result of a process of virtualization. It enables us to formulate an abstract understanding, in precise terms, of the transformations from a world of
classrooms and chalkboards to one of computer terminals and hypertext. I will now outline Lévy's theory and, as a means for demonstrating it more concretely, apply it to a case of distance education.

Lévy conceives of virtualization in terms of such basic concepts as problems and solutions. Consider conventional classes. Typically, a university is comprised of buildings with classrooms. Before the beginning of an academic period, a schedule is developed that assigns a particular room and time (according to a regimented schedule) to a particular instructor and the enrolled students for getting together for the purposes of learning. Following Lévy, one can formulate a problem to which such conventional classes are responding:

Problem (conventional class):
How can a teacher and a group of students get together throughout the academic period in order to discuss, present, teach/learn course materials and achieve the learning objectives?

In response to this problem, various solutions are developed:

Solution 1 (conventional class):
Classroom 450 with 25 chairs and two chalkboards is assigned to Instructor X from 11:30-12:18 Monday through Friday

Solution 2 (conventional class):
Lecture Hall 128 with 150 theater seats, a podium and microphone, and an overhead projector and screen is assigned to Instructor Y on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30-3:48.
Lévy names the *process* of formulating a solution to a specific problem such as this one "actualization" (1998, p. 25).

In order to conceive of virtualization, we must do so with respect to such a particular "problematic." That is, virtualization is always conceived of in relation to an assessment of the conventional situation in terms of a specific problem like the one above. Virtualization, then, is the determination of a *more general problem* to which such particular solutions respond. For example, a more general version of the above problem might be the following:

**Problem (virtual class):**

How can a teacher and a group of students communicate with each other throughout the academic period about the course materials in order to achieve the learning objectives?

This problem is more general (or, less specific) because it contains the previous question within it, but has fewer constraints (or, more degrees of freedom). Specifically, it does not require the teacher and students to "get together" and it does not require "discussion," but more generally, "communication." The *process* of formulating a more general problem to which the (conventional) solutions respond is what Lévy calls "virtualization" (p. 26). Since actualization entails coming up with solutions to a problem, and virtualization the formulation of a (more general) problem to which (already actualized) solutions have been developed, Lévy views virtualization not as antithetical to *reality*, but as the process of actualization *in reverse*. 

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Increased generality means the abolition of certain constraints, increased flexibility, or more degrees of freedom when it comes to formulating new solutions. In this case, the space-time constraint of "getting together" (the classroom and the schedule) and the face-to-face constraint of "discussions" are abolished. This enables the formulation of solutions that would not have been conceivable according to the first problem posed:

Solution (virtual class):

A web-based distance education course is made accessible over the Internet and passwords assigned to instructor and students for use throughout the academic period any time of day, every day, from any location where a suitable Internet connection is available for communication.

Classrooms and schedules are substituted with student and teacher participation in an electronic communications network in which text-based communication can occur asynchronously, from a variety of locations at a variety of times.

At the same time, increased generality also entails dealing with a new set of challenges in actualizing a virtual class, challenges that arise exactly because of this generality. Whereas before, the administration set the class place and time once and for all at the beginning of the academic period, questions of space and time become problems that must be addressed by the teacher and students alike on a daily basis: From which sites can I gain access? At which times? How often? For how long? In addition: Which communication spaces should I use for which circumstances? How can I express my emotions accurately without the use of facial expressions and sign language? These are new problems. In short, the process of virtualization takes the constraints of space (classroom) and time (class schedule), and means of

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communication (face-to-face interaction), and turns them into new degrees of freedom, but also "into a continuously renewed problem rather than a stable solution" (Lévy, 1998, p. 26). What were once the immutable assumptions of a given problem, have now become the flexible means for responding to a different, more general, problem. It is worth noting, though, that at least one of my students found that facing such a continuously renewed problem can itself be a beneficial experience as well:

It helps you become organized in a way. You know you have a deadline, and you have to meet that deadline, and if you don't, then, okay, that's my grade. It helps you focus on what you have to do. (Student C, personal communication, 04/07/2001)

Consequently, the conventional class changes from a collection of buildings, rooms, schedules, and in-person interaction, into an ongoing process of coordination and technology-based communication and interaction, "which redistributes the spatiotemporal coordinates of the [student/teacher] community and each of its members as a function of various constraints" (Lévy, 1998, p. 27).

One of the advantages of Lévy's theorization of virtualization, in addition to drawing our attention to the conversion of conventional constraints into continuously renewable problems, is that it demonstrates that virtualization is not something new to our own period of history. Indeed, he even claims that "the process of virtualization that disengages us from a specific environment did not begin with the human species. It is inscribed in history, in life" (Lévy, 1998, p. 31). These are discussed throughout his book using examples of virtualization, including that of the body, text, and the economy. If one adopts Lévy's stance, then the introduction of distance education technologies in contemporary education is theoretically analogous to the introduction of the written text (another example of virtualization) to the educational process, thousands
of years ago. Thus, his theory provides a non-catastrophic perspective on virtualization that rejects such apocalyptic notions as "derealization" (Lévy, 1998, p. 15).

The Autonomy of the Virtual Class

The course Ethnic Arts Online I have been studying is an example of one of many modes (but not the only possible one) of virtualization, namely, "deterritorialization" (Lévy, 1998, p. 27). Insofar as the relevance of geographic position and regulated time schedules is greatly diminished, the virtual class can no longer be precisely located. This is not to say, warns Lévy (1998), that it is "totally independent of a referential space-time" (p. 27). After all, it "must still bond to some physical substrate and become actualized sooner or later" (p. 27). The computers, in other words, which are home to the Internet, for example, exist somewhere, and are operated by employees at particular times and places. Moreover, insofar as space and time become new variables in a continuously renewed problem, virtualization entails a procedure of never-ending reterritorialization as well. Each participant must face actual time and space constraints in terms of gaining access and sitting down at an actual computer. Still, the virtual class, by taking the actual constraints of space and time and turning them into contingent variables, becomes largely detached from them. Or, to be more precise, it provides the opportunity for new constructions of time and space themselves. This implies more than the mere acceleration of already known processes, but the creation of "qualitatively new velocities, mutant space-time systems" (Lévy, 1998, p. 33).
Therefore, not only is it misleading to view distance education as the obliteraton of "real" classes, but it is also fundamentally inaccurate to conceive of it as a mere accelerated version of conventional classes. This suggests yet one more reason why it would be methodologically unsound to simply import criteria for analysis developed for conventional education to the domain of virtual education, with its own new variable sense of space and time. Indeed, education in virtual classes can not be adequately conceived of as technologized versions of conventional education, any more than education in a literate society can be well understood as if it were the same as education in oral societies with the mere addition of books (Ong, 1982). Modern educators (in literate cultures) do not consider the (now conventional) educational process as a "technologized" (via writing) version of oral forms of education—that is they treat it as an autonomous educational process with its own features, problems, and dynamics. Similarly, so must online educators recognize that virtual education is not merely a computerized version of conventional education, but that it is an educational process that constructs and operates according to a distinctive logic and spatio-temporal dynamic. This is not to say that virtual education is "independent" of the world of conventional education, any more than conventional education that uses writing is independent of orality. Rather, it is to recognize the fact that virtual education is not just simply "different" from conventional education through its use of the internet, but that it responds to a new, more general, problematic (in Lévy's sense) in ways that conventional education does not. Thus, virtual education is not independent of the
conventional world of education, but it operates in accordance with a problematic ("nomos") with its own ("auto") time-space communicative dynamics.

So, the process of virtualization is not new phenomenon in a human history. Once a conventional entity has undergone a process of virtualization, it becomes "reterritorialized" in a sense. Thus, to fully understand what the power, meaning, and system of this reterritorialized entity entails, one needs to take into consideration a new problem and solution, new degrees of freedom and constraints, and how they shape a so-called "virtual" something. Edward Hall's (1976) theory of an extension transference (ET) process provides further support for treating a virtual class as an entity in its own right, and not simply as a technologically modified conventional class. In other words, virtual classes should be viewed as educational and social realms with their own infrastructure and body of knowledge, different from what they were first intended to be: "technology enhanced," more spatially "convenient." (To put this in Lévy's terms, the introduction and development of a virtualized form of education may not have been initially or intentionally pursued in response to a generalized problematic, but the effect is nevertheless, in hindsight, the same.) Hall's extension transference process is the process by which humans create and use their technological extensions, and then these extensions gradually establish a system that "accretes to itself a past and a history as well as a body of knowledge and skills that can be learned" (Hall, 1976, p. 37). Furthermore, such a system (extended process carried out by the extensions) is often confused with the extensions. Using spoken language and writing as examples, Hall argues that spoken language and writing are extensions created in order to know what is
inside people's heads (i.e. thoughts). Without spoken language and writing, people from a distance are not able to know what each other has in mind. Humans continue to develop spoken language and writing, which evolve and no longer are used merely to know what people have in mind. Literature, religion, and art are examples of the extended system which are "treated as distinct and separate from the user and take on an identity of their own" (Hall, 1976, p. 37). Initially, spoken language and writing may be treated as extensions used to solve a communications problem; yet, as they have evolved, branched out, and intertwine with each other, they constitute a different set of knowledge. The process may keep evolving, as Hall wrote: "The spoken language is the primary extension. The written language is a second-generation extension" (Hall, 1976, p. 28).

Hall (1976) further asserts that people may confuse the extension with the process extended. In the above case, people may still treat spoken language and writing as tools to solve a communication problem and ignore their new identity as literature. Or, conversely, people may be overwhelmed by this new identity and forget that language and writing can be used to solve communication problems; or, that besides spoken language and writing, there are many other ways to know what people have on their mind. Regarding technology, Hall notes: "The ET process is at work in technology as well, with the result that technology has become an end in itself and is viewed as the arena of study and problem solving in today's troubled world -- problem solving not by social scientists but by engineers" (Hall, 1976, p. 34).
The ET process provides a way to see the changing role of technology from conventional to virtual distance education. As we have seen, distance education and many distance education technologies (i.e. the Internet, telecommunication tools, and multimedia) may be treated as extensions initially used to solve some specific educational problems related, for example, to the economy, large distances, schedules, or physical disabilities. In this way, technologies are inserted into the educational environment, but the infrastructure, purpose, instruction, and curriculum concepts of the first-generation distance education are generally based on traditional educational perspectives and ideologies. As distance education technologies are vigorously improved, an extended system—e.g. a more time-space flexible, text-based virtual education—can become an autonomous educational reality. Within the new degrees of freedom and constraints, virtual education now operates according to its own general problematic, establishes its own body of knowledge, and requires appropriate educational perspectives. As an "extended system," things like time and/or space constraints or physical disabilities are no longer the collective problems motivating the use of distance education technologies. Rather, virtual education is used regardless, and creates its own problems such as accessibility, means of communication, and assessment of students' learning progress. To understand distance education therefore requires first-hand experience, knowledge, and skill in disembodied, text-based learning environments.
Opportunities and Challenges of Virtual Education

Space-time Flexibility (Deterritorialization) and Its Effects

The concept of the virtual class provides a means for understanding how online distance education differs significantly from other closely related notions of distance education, computer-enhanced or online learning, and nonterritorial electronic learning communities. For example, standard definitions of distance education (e.g. Carey, 1991; Hawkins, 1991; Willis, 1994; Pennsylvania State University, 1998; University of Idaho, 2001) tend to focus on the use of technology in making distance only—not time—more flexible. For example, Carey (1991) describes distance education learners at a distance from sources of learning as well as the broad education needs inside and outside the classroom. Hawkins (1991) refers to distance learning as electronically mediated activity between students, teachers, and information sources that are separated by significant geographical distances. University of North Texas (online, 1999) described distance education on its virtual campus like this: "A course is considered delivered by distributed learning if the faculty and student are not physically present for at least 50% of the class time during which the medium of transmission is digital" (e.g. Web, Internet, Videoconference, CD-ROM). Pennsylvania State University (online, 1998) defined distance education as follows: "Distance education is planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, and special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements."
In many of these cases, where distance education is primarily a matter of extending spatial possibilities, distance flexibility often remains minimal. In cases such as those involving satellite, video, or teleconferencing, (e.g. Stankiewicz & Garber, 2000), while long-distance communication is certainly made possible, participants are still required to appear at (usually one of two) fixed locations at the same time. Computer-enhanced and online learning are concepts which focus on the technological tools themselves, and not on the specific ways such tools can be used to affect "classrooms" and "schedules." Online learning, for example, can just as readily be applied to the use of online technologies within, as opposed to in place of, conventional classes. Krug's (1997) notion of "electronic learning communities"(p. 29) captures this sense of the virtual class (Ethnic Arts Online) by theorizing distance, time, intercultural communication, and interactive flexibility. These were some of the characteristics he developed into the pedagogical and curricular organization of the Ethnic Arts Online course.

Not surprisingly, many students in this study have found that the flexible configurations of space and time provided by virtual classes are among its most attractive features. During an interview, one of the online students told me what she believed were the primary benefits of taking such a class:

I could stay home. I learn better from doing it on my own... from reading the material. I don't have to rush. I have a time frame that I know I have to follow, but still I can do it in the morning, or I can do it at night. (Student C, personal communication, 04/07/2001)
Of course, such flexibility can also be the source of problems. One of my students complained that:

The biggest problem I had was most people waited until Friday or Saturday to do most things, so you couldn't really respond to anybody until then. Since it was the due date you had to do it on Saturday, so for me it sort of ruined my Saturdays. (Student B, personal communication, 04/09/2001)

It is clear that the space-time flexibility of a deterritorialized class presents opportunities, but is also the source of obstacles.

Lévy (1998) suggests that, in addition to a new deterritorialized sense of space and time, virtualization also implies a reconfiguration of the boundaries and transitions between such categories as public and private, personal and shared, subjective and objective. For example, the student of the conventional university moves back and forth between his or her private home and public classroom. The virtual university student, on the other hand, in some sense transforms his or her private home space into a shared, public classroom space when participating online. Also, private realities at home, and various other personal criteria (like when the student prefers to sleep), might play an important role in determining the times at which he or she participates in the online community. An interviewee’s comments about the way she managed her schedule illustrate this:

It's hard because I work night, and I have two kids, a two year-old and a six year-old, so it was very hard. What I did was I get home at eight in the morning, I sleep for four hours. Then, I'm up from about eleven until two and that’s my online time. My daughter and my son would play and watch TV while I'm online. Then, in the meantime I give them lunch, snacks, and so forth, and, you know, am doing stuff with them while I'm trying to do the online class. (Student C, personal communication, 04/07/2001)
In Lévy's (1998) words: "The limits of interaction are no longer self-evident [i.e. constrained by classroom/classtime]. Place and time blend together. Clear borders give way to fractalized division. The very concepts of public and private are called into question" (p. 34). Lévy calls this configuration of transitions the "Moebius effect" (Lévy, 1998, P. 33), taking his metaphor from the strip made into a one-sided ring by twisting one of its ends by 180 degrees before reconnecting. The two sides of the linear strip, when made into a Moebius ring, blend into one another. All of this has a profound effect on the notion of social identity in the class community. I discuss such issues in detail in Chapter 5.

Text-based Communication and Its Consequences

An integral aspect of web-based virtual classes is the largely text-based communication. Communication spaces often are implemented to facilitate interaction between instructor and students and among students. In a case like Ethnic Arts Online, the only way that students are required to communicate with each other and with the instructor is through writing messages which are exchanged over the internet through e-mail, a listserv, discussion forums, and chat rooms. Online participants use these tools to contact each other to express their ideas, to solve problems, to complete and post assignments, and to receive feedback from their peers and the instructor. It is also important to note that, in a virtual class, textual messages are often exchanged asynchronously and not in accordance with "face-to-face turn taking" (Davis & Brewer, 1997, p. 3). As one student remarked:
In the classroom on campus you can't really have your conversation go on for so long because you can only have one person say something. Then one person responds to it, and after that nobody wants to respond to it. But if you have it online, you can have a lot of people respond to one person. (Student B, personal communication, 04/09/2001)

This means that such textual interaction can not properly be viewed as the mere textualization of conventional oral classroom communication, and that web-based virtual classes are best understood as the text-based virtualization of conventional classes.

Conducting text-based virtual classes introduces a range of challenges and opportunities for educational interaction. From a practical perspective, for example, text-based communication provides a convenient written record which students can benefit from:

I don't have to hear the professor lecture, and go home and try to remember what they said. I can always go back online and read it again and again and make sure it sinks in as opposed to trying to write down everything the professor says, and trying to remember notes or key points of the lecture. (Student C, personal communication, 04/07/2001)

On the other hand, sometimes the lack of social cues can be frustrating, especially when it leads to ambiguities in etiquette and politeness:

I don't know if I came off the wrong way, but you can read into words, and I don't know if I was reading into it or took it in the wrong way, because I e-mailed her and said, "Well, what do you think of the paper?" and she e-mailed me back and said, "Well, I told you just post it online." So, okay, was I rude? (Student C, personal communication, 04/07/2001)

From an even subtler point of view, “The lack of social cues in an online environment implies that students are more likely to pay attention to the content of the message”
In addition, several students have indicated that text-based communication is conducive to more candid interaction. One of them noted:

I was more than fine with not knowing who I was talking to. That way no judgments could be formed and it was easy to open up more and speak your mind. I was glad to see that people weren't scared to voice their opinions. (Student M, personal communication, 04/17/2001)

Nevertheless, Fabos and Young (1999) and Burkhalter (1999) argue that in an online environment, physical cues are not the only way people come to recognize, interact, and construct self and other. Online communications implicitly and explicitly reveal information about oneself. For example, the communication style and the use of revelation about self—both in formal statements while taking a position in class discussion and asides—might establish a recognizable identity. Fabos and Young (1999) call particular attention to the stereotypical signs revealed through online discussions. People may use slang, reveal their various beliefs toward real life experiences, and discuss their cultural background. The fixed reference of the body is transformed online into the largely immutable text of the message, and in online interactions these text resources can be just as determinant as physical indicators are offline. No doubt, it is clear that educators should come to terms with both the opportunities and problems associated with text-based virtual class interaction.

Many researchers (Johnson-Eilola, 1998; Taylor & Ward, 1998; Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999) on cyberspace and distance education, therefore, have focused on electronic literacy. They raise various issues regarding the impact of electronic reading and writing on students' critical understanding and interpretation of knowledge and online social interactions. Jonassen, Peck, and Wilson (1999) state that although
knowledge construction is sometimes conceived of as an individual process, it can become a social process when students participate actively in online learning. Furthermore, because text-based communication is often separated in time and space from its source (Lévy, 1998), receivers of messages must often infer meanings attached to a text out of the original context. From the writer's point of view, it is necessary to assume that certain signifiers construct meanings that can be understood by the writer him/herself and at the same time might be understood by readers. As a result, in text-based communication, meaning is constantly undergoing a coding and decoding processes. Using texts, through electronic transmission, students of distance education experience such processes of meaning-making and understanding every day. In an online discussion, a reader may interpret a message differently than the writer and other readers. Such inconsistency may hinder on-line students' participation intellectually and socially.

Meaning is what is signified by a message conveyed through the words and/or signs that we give or receive (Dimbleby & Burton, 1992). When a person writes or reads a message, the meanings are not merely in his/her words or pictures. They require interpretation. What a writer means by the texts offered may be different from what the reader understands by the texts received. Even within the same language system, people can use the same words to signify different meanings. The same message received by two different people can end up evoking different responses. For example, a sign served to denote a generally agreed-upon basic meaning within a culture might also serve to connote a broader personal and cultural implication.
Take several postings from the Discussion Forums in *Ethnic Arts Online* (Spring, 2000) as an example. Words like "outsider," "primitive," "naive," and "untrained" have similar denotations but also suggest different connotations when they are attached to artists in different art worlds.

From this, I gather that the works of Outsider Artists are to be considered shoddily made, and because the maker is usually uneducated in the classical sense of the word as a trained artist. From this perspective, there seems to be an exploitative nature of these artists. [....] Now that I have received formal training in art matters, my greatest fear, is that I will lose the spirituality of my work. I am afraid now, that when one views my work, they will see references to other artists and styles. When I was untrained, rarely did someone say my work reminded them of such and such artist. I may not have received the monies according to fair market value, but my work was of personal and spiritual nature. (Student J, 05/25/2000, discussion forum)

Outsider artists are people who have virtually nothing in the grand scheme of art. They have no formal education or training in art, are poor working class, use materials that are less than standard, and the workmanship in itself is not considered great. [....] However, if there is one thing that we have learned during this course is that art can be many things and that other things besides the so called high arts can also be art. [....] Since the people who are normally labeled as outsider artists are not doing there art for profit or intentionally trying to make art, I do not consider the term to be pejorative to them. The only people who would really consider it belittling would be those people who have spent a portion of their life becoming academically trained for art (Student BI, 05/28/200, discussion forum).

I do consider the term ‘Outsider Art’ kind of condescending. There are different styles of art that we categorize such as: Abstract Expressionism, Cubism, Conceptual...etc [....] but to label a certain group of people whose works are completely different from one another’s seems absurd. I think art should be accepted for whatever it is not by who is buying or dealing it. No one wants to be called an outsider or excluded from something [.....] there is no legitimate reason as to why these artists should be excluded. (Student K, 05/29/2000, discussion forum).

The denotative meaning of "outsider artist" is understood by this group of students as "people who have virtually nothing in the grand scheme of art. They have no formal
education or training in art, are poor working class, use materials that are less than standard, and the workmanship in itself is not considered great." Yet, because the individuals' conceptual, historical, and educational backgrounds are different, they assign different connotative meanings with this term. Student J associates his current trained artist's experience and attaches to outsider art a personal and spiritual meaning. Student B responds to the outsider artist in a similar light; yet, he associates it with meanings he has learned in the course previously, and implicitly criticizes those who had formal art training as having become biased. Student K, on the other hand, associates outsider art with a personal perception of how she thinks art should be. From this example, one can see the different meanings that emerge when each individual relates the words to his or her own background.

In summary, this chapter demonstrated how the virtualization of a conventional class in the case of online distance education implies a distinct configuration of space flexibility, time flexibility, and text-based means of communication. Such a class environment is best considered not simply as an acceleration, generalization, or extension of conventional classes, but as a unique class process that presents a wide range of educational opportunities, but also many new challenges for student interaction. It is to these that I now turn in the following chapters in more detail.
CHAPTER 4

THE FORMATION OF A DISTANCE EDUCATION COURSE

ETHNIC ARTS ONLINE

In this chapter, I provide an in-depth description and discussion regarding the formation of the specific distance education course studied: Ethnic Arts Online. I begin with examining the university policies, expectations, and supports for the course. What are they? How do they affect the objectives, format, and content of the course? Then, I describe how Ethnic Arts Online was composed to focus on integrated distance education technologies, the design of the course web site, and pedagogical concerns. Then, using the pre-enrollment test, I survey the composition of the student body. Who are the students who take the course? What do they have in common that might constitute the basis for this form of learning?

University Politics

As one of the distance education courses in The Ohio State University (OSU), the university's politics regarding the development of distance education certainly have had an impact on the creation of Ethnic Arts Online. In what follows, I discuss some of the university policies, expectations, and supports that I deem relevant and important for the Ethnic Arts Online. These include the university suggestions for the faculty
instructional technology development, distance education pricing and policy, the guidelines for intellectual property, and the university technology supports for online faculty and students. Then, I describe the OSU academic policies associated with the undergraduate General Education Curriculum (GEC) requirements. *Ethnic Arts Online* is designed to fulfill three requirements: second level writing, cultural diversity, and arts and humanities. I analyze their impact on the course objectives, contents, and the design of various curriculum units and assignments.

**University Policies, Expectations, and Supports**

In order to prepare students to learn better in the technology integrated twenty-first century education, several OSU offices suggest for improving its faculty members' ability for using technological tools effectively, attractively, and innovatively in their classrooms (TELR, 1999a; 1999b; The Ohio State University Faculty and TA Development, 2001). Several committees were formed toward this end. The Faculty Instructional Technology Development (FITD) committee, after having identified the major barriers to faculty adoption of new technological tools in their instruction, outlined three broad themes regarding the development of faculty technology capacity (TELR, 1999a). Here, I summarize the committee's findings concerning the three themes and the its suggestions of specific policy changes:

1. **Adequate and Appropriate Resources:** The committee identified that instructional delivery, the systems, and resources including hardware, software, connectivity, and professional support staff expenses are significantly expensive. Yet, the financial models necessary to build and
maintain technology are lacking. Thus, the committee indicates the following policies: (a) The University will engage all units in strategic planning aimed at developing consistent and sufficient internal financial resources, and other incentives, to develop new approaches for using instructional technologies. (b) The University will encourage collaboration between the Office of Technology Enhanced Learning and Research (TELR), The Office of Information Technology (OIT), and the Colleges in the creation of new external sources of income associated with instructional technology innovations. (c) The University will re-analyze current policies which limit units' ability to develop new sources of income and develop "enterprise zones" (TELR, 1999a) that can aggressively seek new funding for instructional technology applications.

(2) A Culture of Innovation: The committee which conducted survey-based and observational research identified that the use of technologies for instruction is not a part of the "culture" that many faculty members are familiar with, and it is not a reward system for faculty. Thus, the following policies that provide faculty with incentives for innovative technology in education are needed. (d) The University will encourage the development of methods that promote and reward the appropriate use and demonstration of technology in the teaching and learning process. These efforts must have a direct impact on the promotion and tenure process and on staff reward, recognition, and retention programs. (e) All College administrators will exert leadership in
the development of a variety of incentives (e.g. release time, GA support, supplemental cash bonuses) to support their faculty and staff in the creation of new forms of technology-enhanced learning opportunities.

(3) A Dynamic and Responsive Infrastructure: The committee determined that there is an inadequate quality of infrastructure for access, security, support, and training for sustaining technological innovation. In the FITD Final Report (TELR, 1999a), the "infrastructure" includes hardware, software, video/audio, networking, connectivity, facilities, and centralized/decentralized technical support. Thus, the committee indicated the following policies. (f) The University will engage all units in the short- and long-term planning necessary to make a practical, high-quality infrastructure that is responsive to its constituents. (g) The University will provide an adequate and appropriate support system that permits the wide- scale implementation of proven technological innovations into the teaching and learning process.

The FITD committee's suggestion of these specific policies implies the university's intentions in promoting technology enhanced learning and teaching environments. First, faculty members play important leadership roles in establishing such environments, so that the university will help familiarize them with innovative technology. By understanding the impact of instructional technology, faculty members are encouraged to take their course concepts and teaching objectives into consideration and find out the suitable technology for their class. Following this, the university would
like to see an undergraduate class like *Ethnic Arts* be taught in an innovative technology enhanced learning environment. *Ethnic Arts*, which deals with issues of cultural/social diversity in North America, can take advantage of interactive technology (e.g. discussion forum, live chat room) to facilitate students' learning of course contents and to foster intercultural communication among students of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Second, technology enhanced education requires additional professional technical support beyond the instructor's familiarity with technology. As the *FITD Final Report* (TELR, 1999a) indicates, many faculty members are still unaccustomed to the use of technologies for instruction because it was not a part of the culture that they grew up with, their educational experiences have not involved in the regular use of technology, and they are not trained to use specific technological tools for their current teaching. Furthermore, teaching has been a highly individual endeavor; the faculty member in a traditional class often prepares and delivers his or her own teaching independently. However, in technology integrated teaching environment, the instructor may also have to deal with additional technological difficulties. Therefore, a collaborative approach can provide additional professional supports necessary for teaching successfully with today's technology. TELR and OIT have created a new type of "Tech GA," which is primarily responsible for programmatic and technological integration with faculty members.

As related to the professional support, another issue I deem important, however, has not yet been fully discussed in TELR's document (TELR, 1999a; 1999b; 2000a). My concern regards faculty members' pedagogical professional development in
technology-enhanced education. Teaching with technology requires a careful consideration of instructional strategies, pedagogy, operation, and evaluation (Krug, 1997; 2000). The University is able to provide technological support for the online faculty; however, in terms of pedagogical implications, the OSU faculty may need to search for curriculum concepts related to their own fields on their own, turn to in-practice colleagues for suggestions, and/or consulting instructional technology support units (available on campus) for help. As supplement to this issue, the Office of Technology Enhanced Learning and Research (TELR) and the Office of Faculty and TA development, for example, provide handbooks, workshops, and office hours for discussing with the instructors and helping them gain insights into issues and strategies about the integration of existing teaching materials and technology.

Third, when discussing technology enhanced learning and research, the financial model has to be critically evaluated. Costs for hiring faculty members, graduate associates, and other professional support staff, re-structuring administration systems, and purchasing university-wide resources (including computing systems, hardware, software, and connectivity) are significantly expensive. Yet, technology enhanced education is a must, long-term, and serious enterprise in the university. The university, then, has to evaluate more models in order to adjust its existing financial strategy, develop new sources of income, and seek new funding.

The university policy for distance education is continuously being revised. As the Cassady Report (TELR, 1999b), prepared by The Distance Education Pricing and Policy Task Force, indicates, the existing distance education experience (e.g. models,
data, the University's budget system) is not sufficient for establishing a permanent policy, and establishing policies will certainly take a long time. Yet, it is now developing an interim policy to support current distance education and to evaluate experience for the purpose of setting a long-term policy. Specifically, the Cassady Report (TELR, 1999b) suggests strategic assessment and long range planning for distance education: "The university should develop a more comprehensive system of encouragement and evaluation of distance learning. It is necessary for the University to gather data systematically and establish strategic policy for distance education" (TELR, 1999b). To achieve its goal, The Distance Education Pricing and Policy Task Force makes four recommendations in the Cassady Report for the long-term policy. I briefly summarize these four recommendations as follows:

(1) The university needs to encourage the formation of policies and practices that support the relationship between distance education and the strategic academic goals of the university.

(2) Information about the costs and revenues of all distance education courses should be forwarded to a central office.

(3) The university should analyze the following policy, pricing, and revenue distribution issues: the amount and structure of financial incentives to encourage the development of content for distance education courses, a revenue sharing model, a mechanism to increase venture funding, the need for a pricing model, and the need for an access charge.
(4) The university should evaluate the following issues in order to articulate impact on distance education and establish an action plan to address: intellectual property ownership, faculty development, state policy and subsidy infrastructure, and mechanisms to insure thorough consultation with the faculty and appropriate governance bodies in the development of a long range strategy.

Moreover, to facilitate faculty members' as well as the departments' financial plan for distance education, The Distance Education Pricing and Policy Task Force suggests a course development and delivery model. This model is based on the theory and practice of instructional design and established models of teaching and learning. First, the model is divided into four categories: activity, player or agent, incentive, and percentage of allocating costs and revenues. Activity includes the course design and development, delivery, student support, and program evaluation. According to the model, Ethnic Arts Online, for example, involves activity as follows:

(1) Course design and development: content creation (intellectual concepts and syllabi), presentation (actual course offering), mediation (HTML conversion, animation, videotape production, and audio production), and interaction (class management, grading, student contact);

(2) Delivery: Internet delivery system;

(3) Student support: student advising, registration, and technical support;

(4) Program evaluation: data collection and analysis.
Second, each activity also involves different players or agents. For example, content creation is carried out by the faculty, while mediation (i.e. animation, video clip production) is carried out both by faculty and staff. Third, as the Cassady Report (TELR, 1999b) indicates, the producer of the distance education course coordinated by multiple players must give them an incentive to participate in development and delivery of the course. For example, incentives may include work-for-hire, general fund, credit hours, and presumed royalty are provided to multiple players. Fourth, following the model, faculty members and department are continuing to evaluate the percentage of allocating costs and revenues.

Web Policy and Guidelines (Office of the Chief Information Officer, 2001), Policy on Responsible Use of University Computing Resources (Office of the Chief Information Officer, 2000), and Virtual Legality: An Overview of Your Rights and Responsibilities in Cyberspace (Virtual Legality) (McDonald, 2000) indicate a number of Web policies. What follows is a brief summary of policy that I have discussed with students of Ethnic Arts/Online and the policy associated with the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of Ethnic Arts Online.

The university computing resources are intended for university-related purposes, including direct and indirect support of the university's instruction, research, and service missions; of university administrative functions; of student and campus life activities; and of the free exchange of ideas among members of the university community and between the university community and the wider local, national, and world communities. The use of university computing resources is subject to the normal
requirements of legal and ethical behavior within the university community. Thus, legitimate use of a computer, computer system, or network does not extend to whatever is technically possible.

All users of university computing resources must comply with all federal, Ohio, and other applicable laws, all generally applicable university rules and policies, and all applicable contracts and licenses. The laws of libel, privacy, copyright, trademark, obscenity, and child pornography must be followed when conducting distance education (Office of the Chief Information Officer, 2001). Online students and people involved in the development and design of distance education courses are also informed of The Electronic Communications Privacy Act and the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, which prohibits "hacking," "cracking," and similar activities (McDonald, 2000).

Students of Ethnic Arts/Online indeed have been concerned about whether they were allowed to duplicate certain portions of Web documents (e.g. images, texts) and contribute them to the class during their group presentation. According to Virtual Legality (McDonald, 2000), students and instructors may reproduce copyrighted works for classroom use (including for the purpose of the class discussion) and for research without securing permission and without paying royalties when the circumstances comply with the "fair use" law. Making copies of materials or texts on the Internet for commercial use without permission is restricted. It is compared to photocopying and distributing a magazine article. The law does recognize situations where private, noncommercial copying can be permitted according to the "fair use" law. The considerations for determining "fair use" are as follows: The purpose and character of
the use, including whether such use is of a commercial or is for nonprofit educational purpose; the type of the copyrighted works; the amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and the effect of the use upon the potential market for or value of the copyrighted work as a whole.

This issue regarding the use of intellectual property was brought up in my past Ethnic Arts (on-campus) classes. In the class, students and I frequently use software to produce visual images for the class presentation. Students also frequently use web documents as references for written assignments. Thus, it is necessary to inform students about legal, illegal, and ethical use of the university computing resources. In my classes, students are encouraged to reference pictures and text from the Internet for their projects. However, the Internet resources can only be used for the purpose of class discussion. In the written assignment, I clearly indicate the proper use of Internet resources. I encourage student to read the original web document by choosing reliable electronic journals and/or web sites that contain the author's name, title of the web site/article, copyright symbols, and date. In assignments, students are not allowed to directly copy the text from the Internet. Students have to learn the formal referencing formats to cite the Internet resources. Through the placement of such restrictions, students are held responsible for their Internet activity and made aware of copyright issues. In Ethnic Arts Online, students frequently attach hypertext links to the body of their online text-based discussion and assignments. I consider this as non-commercial, fair use of the Internet material; thus, links to other web documents (that are course related) are accepted in students' online discussion. In addition, the OSU policy, in this
area, indicates that there is insufficient legal precedent, so it is advised to go by the law of net-etiquette (netiquette). Netiquette dictates that other web sites be told when a user plans to link to them, and links to other web sites be removed if the linkee objects.

As mentioned before, OSU believes the professional supports and collaborative effort can be helpful for teaching and learning in technology enhanced environments. Toward this end, several offices play active roles. The Office of Technology Enhanced Learning and Research (TELR) is an office which focuses on the uses of technology in the distance education and the on-campus learning environments. TELR's primary mission is to support faculty and students of on-campus and distance education to build a sound technology infrastructure and to use it as they incorporate technology into their teaching and learning (TELR, 2000a). TELR provides them with instructional design, course assessment, media evaluation, human resource staffing, course creation, timelining, marketing, course delivery preparation, student preparation, and course delivery support. For the past two years, I have attended several meetings and symposia held by TELR, and I frequently receive messages via electronic mail that encourage faculty members to "develop distance education and course support web pages accessible to all of our students" (R. Bucy, personal communication, July 01, 2000). To do so, TELR develops regular workshops and an internship program that pairs up students with faculty members to build a course web site according to the faculty's need. TELR offers the university faculty members several software packages (e.g. WebCT,
Course Sorcerer, and FrontPage) for designing technology enhanced courses. TELR also offers online technological support for the online students and faculty via e-mail correspondence.

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) is an organizational unit of the Office of the Chief Information Officer. OIT and TELR have been coordinated with each other to facilitate and develop policy for distance education. OIT provides information technology assistance and support for students, faculty, and staff in learning, teaching, research, and administrative settings (Office of Information Technology, 2002). Its services include Internet access, e-mail, and web resources and servers; administrative computing; media tools for the classroom; multimedia creation and design; support of distance education; and a Help Desk. The university student can obtain Internet access and an e-mail account from OIT and use the university computing resources and computers.

In the case of Ethnic Arts Online, it also requires professional supports for visual production. The Advanced Computing Center for the Arts and Design (ACCAD) and the Department of Art Education have been helpful in providing equipment and high-end multimedia software for composing the course. Their participation further insures the university’s promotion on technology enhanced education.

Although Ethnic Arts Online did not involve all the above offices for the development and teaching of the course, the university policies, expectations, and supports that I have discussed above indicate the university’s politics for the development of distance education. It seems apparent to me that the university is
promoting and working on the support systems for the distance education. Leadership is
one of the important issues. As Palloff and Pratt (2001) asserted, faculty members need
to feel supportive in order to teach a distance education course confidently and
effectively. The supports should be from the university, other offices for professional
development, and the academic unit the faculty is affiliated with. The university is
concerned about the faculty's willingness and capability to teach online course. To
strengthen leadership, TELR and OIT provide technical supports, such as regular
workshops, grants, and GAs to help faculty members to compose their online course as
well as for the faculty members' self-professional development. As an instructor of a
distance education course, I have frequently received such announcements. I was also
encouraged by TELR's staff to direct the online students to TELR should they
experience technological difficulty. Such messages provide useful support to instructors
who teach online. Having understood the university's position in promoting the use of
technology in an educational environment, I now turn to a detailed discussion regarding
OSU's undergraduate academic requirement and its influence on the course objectives,
content, and pedagogy.

The OSU Undergraduate GEC Requirements and The Ethnic Arts Online

AE367.01: Ethnic Arts: A Means of Intercultural Communication (Ethnic Arts
Online) is a distance education course offered by the Department of Art Education at
the Ohio State University (OSU). The purpose of this course according to the university
policy is to fulfill General Education Curriculum requirements in three areas:
humanities and arts, social diversity, and second level writing (The Ohio State
Since the teaching and learning materials, course concepts, assignments, assessment, ways of communications, the implementation of various interactive multimedia, and the design of the web site are all intended to satisfy those three requirements, an in-depth look at the three areas is necessary. In this section, I describe how the *Ethnic Arts Online* course studied has fulfilled this part of university policy.

An excerpt from the Interim Report of the Special Committee for Undergraduate Curriculum Review (as cited in The Ohio State University Bulletin, 1999) indicates several curricular expectations for a liberal education in a university in the United States today. First, a liberal education should aim to develop, nourish, and sharpen its members' capacities in the ability to write and speak with clarity and precision, to read and listen critically and with comprehension, and in the ability to engage in careful logical thinking and critical analysis. Second, a liberal education should also develop an understanding of the effect of science and technology on the natural and social environment, and a historical, artistic, and literary consciousness. Third, a liberal education should foster an understanding of American institutions and the pluralistic aspect of American society. Fourth, an American university should aim to develop a deep appreciation for the cultural traditions that have formed and informed this nation and to develop a sense of the place of other cultures in world history.

General Education Curriculum (GEC), in response to the above broad curricular expectations, includes eight areas: writing and related skills, quantitative and logical skills, natural science, social science, arts and humanities, diversity experiences, foreign
language, and issues of the contemporary world. Undergraduate students of OSU who seek a degree must take a prescribed number of GEC courses. Ethnic Arts offered in the Department of Art Education also responds to the university's curricular expectations and GEC requirements in second level writing, cultural/social diversity, and arts and humanities.

Sequential courses under writing and related skills are designed to develop students' skills in writing, reading, critical thinking, and oral expression. These courses with an emphasis on writing are aimed at "enabling students to progress from the development of fundamental skills to their application and mastery" (The Ohio State University Bulletin, 1999, p. 9). The second level writing course is designed to develop skills in expository writing and in oral discussion and presentation. Expository writing, as set forth in the first course in writing, is characterized by a clear sense of purpose, effectively ordered and fully supported ideas, style appropriate to purpose and audience, control of grammatical and mechanical elements. Through the study of major topics and writings (varying in different courses) pertaining to the United States, students will be able to improve their skills in writing, reading, critical thinking, and oral expression.

Ethnic Arts Online is designed to satisfy the curriculum demands of second level writing in various ways. In distance education, students must rely on writing to communicate their ideas. Discussion Forums, synchronous Chat Room discussion, Listserv, and person-to-person electronic mail exchange are designed to enhance students' writing habits and skills on a daily basis. These technology facilitated

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communicative spaces encourage students to use an immense amount of writing to post, share, negotiate, and learn ideas about ethnic arts and cultural diversity.

Unlike in a face-to-face classroom setting, understanding and expressing ideas in Ethnic Arts Online is no longer supported by facial expression, body language, and other verbal cues. Writing effectively and in a manner which goes by the Internet netiquette become highly significant. Writing in Ethnic Arts Online involves collecting and analyzing resources, making choices, organizing those choices effectively, and then expressing them precisely. In an online classroom, all written works that appear in public communication spaces become tangible works for everyone to review and critique. This might yield peer pressure; however, it might further increase students' self-consciousness as well as their motivation to improve their writing. Thus, this course can foster a rich, expository writing experience for students.

Ethnic Arts Online can also foster the student's capacity for analysis, reflection, and writing with the goal of extending his or her ability to read carefully, to reflect on readings critically, and write clearly and precisely. This course emphasizes the study of artists, artworks, and art worlds in North America. Electronic course readings and written assignments are designed to help students investigate various ideas, mainly cultural factors, ethnic identity, and conditions of change, associated with ethnic arts. Students are encouraged to investigate topics of their own interest in various written assignments.

A weekly assignment is designed to enhance students' reading habits and critical inquiry skills on a daily basis. It includes reaction and response papers to works being
read, posting questions, and discussions with the class about particular issues. These assignments, when carried out in different technology facilitated communication spaces, can facilitate students' knowledge about ethnic arts not only through reading but also through interactive discussion (textually). Indeed, students have to read carefully in order to understand assigned readings and posted questions. Students also have to critically analyze others' writing in order to respond to it.

Short reading and writing pieces include day-to-day online discussion on the Listserv and Discussion Forums, summaries of some online discussions, and peer reviews. Longer pieces, such as theme papers, are evaluated based on characteristics of expository writing: a clear sense of purpose, effectively ordered and fully supported ideas, a style appropriate to purpose and audience, control of grammatical and mechanical elements, and specific criteria as specified in the class assignment and discussion. Students can have opportunities for discussing and revising their written work. Peer review and group projects also provide chances for students' revisions. These assignments indeed can satisfy the university's curriculum concepts in a liberal education as well as GEC requirement in second level writing.

Arts and Humanities explores questions about "the values by which individuals and societies live and the tolerance and mutual understanding needed to allow the full realization of human potential and diversity" (The Ohio State University Bulletin, 1999, p. 12). The overall goal of this component is to develop "knowledge of the humanities and the arts and a humanistic perspective that fosters the capacity for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; interpretation and evaluation; critical listening,"
reading, seeing, thinking, and writing; and experiencing the arts and reflecting on that experience" (The Ohio State University Bulletin, 1999, p. 12). Analysis of texts and works of art, as one of specific category under arts and humanities, is aimed at facilitating students' achievement toward the above goals. *Ethnic Arts Online*, as one of the courses under analysis of texts and works of art, is thus designed to respond to the curriculum goal in arts and humanities with emphasis on analysis of texts including visuals, audio, and writing, and ethnic arts.

*Ethnic Arts Online* satisfies the GEC requirement in arts and humanities in several ways. *Ethnic Arts Online* examines a comprehensive range of artists, artwork, and critical writing in the art worlds from diverse ethnic cultures in North America. These cultures include, but are not limited to, African American, Asian American, Chicano/a, Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Indian American [India], Mexican American, European American, and Native American. This online course examines ethnic arts from a humanistic perspective with emphasis on how diverse ethnic/cultural groups ascribe and interpret values, meanings, and functions of arts. This subject matter can foster students' capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment. Online course readings, visuals, and video and audio materials are selected to respond to humanistic inquiry in arts and culture. These teaching materials introduce various theoretical and philosophical discussions about arts and human society with various case studies about artists, artworks, and art worlds at the local, state, and national/international level in North America. The readings also examine personal and social biases and stereotypes using ethnographic and historical methods. They can
facilitate students' critical analysis to the functions of age, race, gender, and socioeconomic status in relationship to various ethnic groups' artworks and their methods of production.

Humanistic inquiry assesses, across temporal, cultural, or theoretical divisions, how humans view themselves in relation to other humans, to nature, to the divine; what questions they ask about important concerns; and how they express their responses to the conditions of their existence (The Ohio State University Bulletin, 1999). Ethnic Arts Online, equipped with high-end technology, produces photos, images, slides, animation, video, and audio to enrich students' visual arts experiences. It also engages students in critical viewing and discussion about issues and factors (e.g. age, race, ability, gender, religion, sexuality, environment, and technique) associated with art form, art making, and presentation of diverse ethnic groups. All the assignments in Ethnic Arts Online also respond to these concepts.

In the beginning of the quarter, students interview each other via e-mail, and then post a summary that introduces their peer onto the Week One Discussion Forum. Students in the spring quarter of 2000 asked each other questions about their reasons for taking the online class, personal opinions about art, and important things to do before they die. This assignment encourages them to examine their own feelings and experiences regarding art and life. It also serves as an initiation to make a connection with other students, and to familiarize themselves with a wide range of feelings, experiences, opinions, and narratives about art and life.
In the longer writing assignment, applying various research methods, students are encouraged to interview people from the family, local, or community level. They are encouraged to observe places and/or participate in events so that they have opportunities to gain first-hand experience. In the assignment, students ask questions about how art is made, under what conditions, and how it relates to an artist's life experience. They contemplate art and raise questions about the values and meanings of art, to the artist, to the society the artist lives in, as well as to the student. They examine and interpret meaning, value, and function of art from historical and ethnographic perspectives. Students then investigate conditions of change as related to environment, education, technology, religion, and spirituality. Students take pictures and post them on their web assignment so that they are able to refer to visual information such as patterns or symbols in their assignments. In an online environment, students can still get in touch with people around their community. As they conduct their research, they listen to the artists, ask questions, and observe how they view their artwork. Students of Ethnic Arts Online extend their knowledge of ethnic arts by sharing with the class their research and experiences. These assignments, indeed, reinforce their connection to people and society, thereby enriching their arts and humanities experience.

*Ethnic Arts Online* is also designed to satisfy one of the GEC requirements—diversity experiences, cultural diversity in the United States, in particular. The University maintains that a liberal education should foster "an understanding of American institutions and the pluralistic nature of American society. Only with such understanding can citizens appreciate the significance of diversity in
this society and the importance of the values of tolerance and equality" (The Ohio State University Bulletin, 1999, p. 13). Moreover, an American university aims to develop a deep appreciation for the cultural traditions that have formed and informed this nation and to develop a sense of the place of other cultures in world history. Ethnic Arts Online, thus, gives significant treatment to the pluralistic aspect of institutions, society, and culture in the United States, with special attention paid to issues of race, class, gender, and ethnicity.

In order to foster students' understanding and experience of the pluralistic nature of American society, Ethnic Arts Online examines written texts, visuals and audio, artists, and art worlds including American educational institutions, museums, galleries, and the outsider art world at local to national levels. Students engage in discussions about people and art of various ethnic groups. Art is an important medium that can help students to see the nation's history, social and cultural paradigms, and its changing conditions. Analyzing artwork and interpreting its meanings enables students to learn about social and cultural conditions in today's United States. Different aesthetic arguments also imply the different values yielded from this culturally and socially diverse nation. Exposing students to diverse values of art through readings, research projects, and online day-to-day discussion can foster their understanding of the pluralistic aspect of American society. It also promotes a significant value of respect and equality.

Students need to learn how to talk about social and cultural problems, to come up with possible ways to deal with the problems, and learn to appreciate differences; all
these can be supported by readings and online class discussions. The course readings, such as Takaki's (1993) and Gollnick and Chinn's (1998) articles, address issues related to American pluralistic society and the conditions of contemporary American institutions. Both articles emphasize ideas of the United States as a multiethnic nation. These articles with other case studies about ethnic arts enable students to learn to respect the aesthetic contributions and experiences of various ethnic groups. Students' personal diverse background can also reflect on the ideas addressed in those reading. When students present themselves through the online class discussions, they (re)present their cultural and social experiences through personal narratives. They examine their own and others' narratives and may realize that each ethnic group, no matter where they are from, contributes to the nation. It is through an understanding and appreciation of diversity that one can build a sense of social identity. Online class discussion is a distinct feature. It allows students to discuss ideas and personal socio-cultural experiences in a written form so they are able to revisit their previous ideas about American society.

In several weekly assignments (e.g. leading discussion, Listserv discussion) students are encouraged to be critical, analytical, and self-reflexive; they include discussions of their own cultural and ethnic identity and critical insights in relation to their own lifestyle, cultural interests, and values toward art. They identify, debate, and write about ideas, values, and issues about artists, art work, and art worlds of diverse ethnic cultures in North America that they learn from the course readings or their own life experiences. In leading discussions, students analyze how art reinforces, exemplifies, and/or reveals cultural interests, satisfaction, and values associated with the
artist's sense of ethnic identity (Krug, 1993; 1994). Through sharing and negotiating ideas, they reaffirm and sometimes defend their own and others' cultural value. These assignments enrich their learning about today's cultural and social diversity in America.

In Ethnic Arts Online, the instructions, subject matter, readings, online interactive discussion, and weekly assignments together can fulfill the university policy in GEC requirements. It is designed to enrich students' learning of arts and humanities, understanding and experience of cultural diversity in the United States, and practice of second level writing.

Composing Ethnic Art Online

Thus far, I have provided information regarding the university polices, expectations, and supports. I have also discussed how Ethnic Arts Online was designed to satisfy various academic requirements established by The Ohio State University. Now, I turn my discussion to the integrated distance education technologies, the design of the course web site and communication spaces employed.

Among various delivery systems for distance education, such as videoconference and satellite broadcasting, Ethnic Arts Online is delivered entirely online through the Internet. Additional distance education technologies, as I discuss later in this section, were also implemented in order to maximize the Internet's capacity for facilitating virtual educational process.

Jonassen, Peck, and Wilson's (1999) description of the Internet highlights the ideas of interconnectedness, multi-layers, and computer networks around the globe.
[The Internet] is a worldwide ‘network of networks’ composed of thousands of smaller regional networks connecting millions of users in more than 90 nations around the globe. These regional networks are composed of still smaller networks that serve institutions, businesses, and individuals who connect their computers to the regional networks via modems and telephone lines. (p. 20)

To access the Internet, users typically will need to have a modem, a telephone line, communication software, and an Internet service provider in order to connect their computers to a regional network that is also part of the Internet. When connecting to the Internet with this equipment, users are able to exchange data with other computers over telephone lines. This implies, typically, text-based interaction with people and computers on other servers all over the world.

The Internet has changed dramatically since its early days of 70s. Back then, the Internet primarily delivered only (alphabetical and numerical) text across a distributed network. Users sent and accessed text documents only. Today, the Internet is being advanced and used to deliver texts, images, sounds, music, animations, and video streaming. A distance education course delivered through the Internet means its participants will most likely enter a virtual educational environment consisting of access to the World Wide Web, electronic mail, interactive conferences, information resources, electronic conversations in the form of bulletin boards (or discussion forums as it is called in Ethnic Arts Online) and network news, and the ability to transfer files from computer to computer and from person to person (Jonassen, Peck, & Wilson, 1999).
Students of *Ethnic Arts Online* gain access to the Internet through several Internet service providers. Some students purchase services, communication software, and modems or cables from American Online or Time Warner Roadrunner for multifunctional and convenient access. The Ohio State University also provides its students three ways to access to the Internet. Students can access the Internet using public computing sites for free, and normally there is no time restriction for each connecting time. Students who live in selected dorms (Baker, Jones, and Taylor) can purchase and install a modem and ResNet for access to the Internet. Students who live off campus can purchase and install a modem, a telephone line, and HomeNet for access to the Internet. Both ResNet and HomeNet are a group of programs that enable users to connect to the OSU campus network and the Internet. With ResNet or HomeNet programs installed on a desktop computer, users can connect to other networked computers, such as an OSU regional servers, retrieve information from servers, exchange electronic mails using communications software, Eudora, and connect to the World Wide Web (University Technology Service, 1996). In several conversations about the use of technology with *Ethnic Arts Online* students, I have learned the following. With ResNet or HomeNet, students, most likely, can only access to the Internet for thirty minutes for each connection. Rarely, students are able to access to the Internet for a long-term connection due to limited number of available lines. Bearing with such inconvenience, students who log on to the Internet every thirty minutes are still able to exchange data and interact with other people and computers, but in limited time frames.
Once the equipment necessary for accessing to the Internet is set up, users are able to enter to the World Wide Web (WWW). The WWW is a component of the Internet that allows for access to a large amount of information of text, hypertext, image, sound, and video. Hence, it makes the course materials publicly available on the course web site, through WebCT (an educational management courseware), to the course developers, instructors, and students. It also allows for interrelated transmission of such information from all over the world through the Internet. Information made available to the public has a Universal Resource Locator (URL) that functions as an address and includes the address of the server on which it is located. To retrieve each piece of information, users send a request to the appropriate server by using software known as a browser such as Netscape or Internet Explorer. Browsers provide a point-and-click interface with the entire Internet enabling users to search for information, and then to display the information on the user's computer.

With the above structure, the developer of Ethnic Arts Online requested a password and a URL from TELR for the course web site and a vast archive space for the course materials from different servers on campus, and employed various modes of interface design and hyperlinks to build the web site.

Then through the WWW, students gain access to the course web site. For the purpose of security, only the formally enrolled students are assigned a user name and password for accessing the course web site. Typically, when entering the Ethnic Arts Online course web site, instructors and students need to enter their user name, password, and a URL address into browser software or click on text or images designers
have identified as a "link" that will bring them to the desired site automatically. In this way, instructors and students only need to remember a URL address for accessing the course web site; and from there, they are able to use hyperlinks to continuously explore the course materials.

The majority of the OSU's students gain their access to distance education course web sites through a TELR server; and TELR provides WebCT (on the WWW) as course authoring and managing software for building and maintaining a course web site as well as for managing administrative processes (TELR, 2000a). WebCT is a client-server application. According to Palloff and Pratt (1999), a definition of client-server application is

A network architecture in which each computer or process on the network is either a client or a server. Servers are computers or processes dedicated to managing disk drives (file servers), printers (print servers), network traffic (network servers), or other processing services. Clients are work-stations on which users run applications. Clients rely on servers for resources such as files, devices, communications, or processing power. Client-server architectures are sometimes called two-tier architectures. This means that the program reside on a server, which is connected to your computer via a network connection. You access this computer by means of a client (in this case, a Web browser). (p. 189)

The client-server model allows designers, students, and instructors to use WebCT through a Web browser (such as Netscape or Internet Explorer) without installing any additional software. All the WebCT software resides on TELR's server, which means
that any changes the course designers and instructors make to the course web site are immediately available to students; and any entry instructors and students make to the WebCT integrated pages, such as discussion forum and quiz, are posted immediately onto those sites (*WebCT: Getting Started Tutorial for WebCT Version 2.0, 2000*).

In the case of *Ethnic Arts Online*, WebCT functions as a "host" providing password protected access to the course materials. These materials were designed by a variety of graphic and multimedia software, such as Adobe PhotoShop, DreamWeaver, and Flash and archived on several servers. The WebCT and its subordinate web-based applications are on the TELR's server. The majority of the course materials including texts, course readings, images, sounds, music, and animations were archived on the AACAD's server while video streaming was archived on the OIT server. *Ethnic Arts Online* also take advantage of the WebCT's built-in, web-based administrative tools, Discussion Forums (for Spring 2001), chat rooms, students presentation tools, and quiz tools to manage students' records and enhance virtual educational experiences.

The course web site incorporates innovative and advanced technologies and visual elements not only to foster its virtual art education experience and visual quality, which indeed is necessary for visually rich course such as *Ethnic Arts Online*, but also to make navigation of the course web site easy to handle. First, educational resources have been digitized and uploaded to the course web sites. They include images, animation, video and audio streaming, slides, and links to other web sites. In order to view animation, watch video, and listen to audio online, users need to install multimedia plug-in software: Flash Plug-in and RealPlayer. Figure 4.1 shows the "resources" page.

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From there, one can gain access to "course readings," as shown in Figure 4.2. Figure 4.3 shows a still frame from the video and audio streaming. Because online course reading and video/audio streaming contain a large amount of texts and images, instead of being embedded in the main frame, they can be automatically opened as separate windows from the course web page. Figure 4.4 is an example of online slide lectures. Figure 4.5 is an example of unit galleries.

Figure 4.1 *Ethnic Arts Online* Resources Page
Mint Okubo: A Japanese-American Experience

Figure 4.2 An Example of Online Course Reading

Figure 4.3 Video and Audio Streaming
Figure 4.4 Online Lecture

Figure 4.5 Unit Gallery
The course web site is designed using a concept of "frames." Frames offer "the ability to divide a web page into multiple regions, with each region acting as a nested web page" (Weinman & Weinman, 1998, p. 416). Frames allow regions of a web page to change while other regions remain stationary. Clicking a "frames-based navigation" bar can launch other documents on a screen while the navigation bar itself remains unchanged (Weinman & Weinman, 1998, p. 248). Take Figure 4.6 as an example. This page is designed with three major frames. The top frame contains links: contacts, navigation, communication, and announcements. Within this frame, when clicking the link "contact," other links related to this subject, such as getting started, e-mail, course roster, and credits then emerge underneath it. The left frame contains two links: course overview and syllabus. When clicking "course overview," other links, such as description, contacts, and so forth, will show on the same side of the frame. The main frame occupies the largest region in a web page. Thus, it allows a larger amount of text to be displayed. In Figure 4.6, the main frame displays detailed course description. When clicking "writing assessment criteria" in the center frame, the center region changes to a page about writing assessment criteria, as shown in Figure 4.7; yet, the overall page layout and top and left frames remain the same.

Besides the use of frames, some other web design concepts also affect the design structure of the web site. An appropriate use of contrast colors not only can catch users' attention on certain message but also provide a sense of unity (Weinman & Weinman, 1998). Ethnic Arts Online uses black for the background color, white for text, and various green to yellow hues for links or as emphasis on text. All the frames and pages

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follow a specific color system. Repetition of visual elements such as color, frames, links, and headers, throughout the entire course website also provides for each page a sense of belonging within its virtual space. Moreover, each page is created to focus on one subject matter. It does not contain overwhelming texts so users are not exhausted in reading lengthy texts all at once. Instead, each page contains a numbers of links to guide users to find a page they need. For example, in the syllabus page (see Figure 4.6), users can only find descriptive texts about course descriptions. Yet, if users wanted information about writing assessment criteria, they would need to go deeper by clicking the hyperlink on the syllabus page. And, in the writing assessment criteria page (see Figure 4.7), users only find descriptions related to that subject. By using frames, frame-based navigation, and some web design concepts, the course website is visually consistent and provides users with a strong unified sense of where they are. These can be seen from Figure 4.1 to 4.7.

As I mentioned above, the course websites contains a vast quantity of links. Feedback about the web site design and web page organization collected from informal conversations and interviews with students showed that to some students, links are kinesthetically pleasing as they enjoy clicking and navigating through the various pages to find a desired page. Advanced visual elements and the design of the pages to some students are attractive; therefore, they are eager to try out various educational resources. As I have discussed in Chapter 3, educational experiences that are interactive, nonlinear, non-hierarchical, and web-structured have gradually become part of a virtualized education; and, Ethnic Arts Online indeed reflects such characteristics. On
the other hand, for some students who look for straightforward directions to a desired site, the design of a web site and organization can be cognitively challenging as they feel frustrated in finding or remembering how to get to a particular site.

Figure 4.6 Syllabus: Syllabus Page – Course Description
As I discussed in Chapter 3, the flexibility and problems associated with space, time, and means of communication which emerge with virtualization generate a range of possibilities, as well as challenges, for student interaction in the virtual class. In *Ethnic Arts Online*, different communication spaces have been developed and utilized to support a variety of communication dynamics, and their implementation plays a crucial role in facilitating learning. It is, indeed, necessary to integrate virtual communication technologies with considerations of varying scales of educational activities and time flexibility in order to foster person-to-person, person-to-group, person-to-class, and group-to-class interaction in the educational process. This enables students to address their opinions to other individuals and different groups of students, and to be responded
to in multiple forums. In this way, students are able to develop online social relations that, in turn, provide further motivation for participation in learning activities.

Advantage of the Internet is taken through the implementation of web-based communications: discussion forums, students' presentation tools, and chat rooms, supported by WebCT, e-mail correspondence, and an e-mail listserv. These communication spaces can foster diverse dynamics of student interactions as well as enrich the virtual educational experience. Each communication space can play an important role in student interaction in a virtual class. Moreover, each one of these has something to offer specifically to a culturally-oriented class like the ethnic arts course in art education.

Discussion forums were used to facilitate asynchronous person-to-group, person-to-class, and group-to-class communication. In Winter 2001, I used web-based discussion forum for students to post their weekly summary. As shown in Figure 4.8, in week four, students studied ethnic arts related to concepts of diversity and representation. At the end of the week, students wrote their summary to three questions indicated on the top of the page and posted to a discussion forum as shown on the bottom of the page. This discussion forum is easy to use and visually consistent with the overall web site design.
In Spring 2001, because I was unfamiliar with using the administrative tools of the previous Ethnic Arts Online's discussion forum, I turned to a web-based discussion forum provided by WebCT. A large number of students enrolled in this online course, and the small group discussion strategy became helpful to monitor and enhance students' online interaction. Students and I posted text which was accessible to the entire class. Postings were organized using a threaded format, such that "all responses to a particular post are automatically placed directly under that post, forming a clear distinction between various strands of the conversation" (Gorski, 2001, p. 61). The first page of the discussion forum, as shown in Figure 4.9, includes links (underlined text) to each week's discussion topic. Take week four as an example. When clicking on week
four's link, a window opens up, as shown in Figure 4.10. In this page, the three questions are listed on the left frame, while on the right frame, group four's thread discussion as well as links to several individual weekly summaries are shown.

Figure 4.9 Discussion Forum for Spring 2001 – List of Weekly Topics
Figure 4.10 Discussion Forum for Spring 2001 – Thread Discussions

Figure 4.11 Discussion Forum for Spring 2001 – Student Presentation
Another way in which students were required to use discussion forums is for developing and posting a group project. Students were divided into small groups that share an interest in a particular theme or topic, based on a paper they have already written and posted to the discussion forum. Each group then conducted its own thread-discussion (over a period of several weeks) in which they discussed content, developed a focus, negotiated and assigned individual tasks to each other, and prepared a final report. The discussion forum allowed students to post their projects as attachments that include not only the text of their report, but also the audio-visual materials that accompany it. This can be seen in Figure 4.11. Thread discussion link number 570 to 618 indicates links to group C5's presentation and responses from other students (e.g. Student T in 609) and the instructor (e.g. Alice in 573). Take group C6's presentation as another example. When clicking the link number 558, a presentation posted by group C6, a window opens up, as shown on the top left. There, one can see a note posted by the group and an icon reading "see attached". When clicking that icon, one can start downloading group C6's presentation file. After downloading the file, one can view group C6's presentation, as shown on the bottom left window. The attachment feature allows students to include styled text, visuals, audio, and links to other web sites (shown as underlined text) in their presentation. Discussion forum can be layered and complicated; yet, it still allowed inclusion of a wide variety of the types of students' works (from plain text to multimedia projects).
It's what I can figure out that we need to do: write an intro, an analysis of group findings and summary.

Yeah, I see a connection with our papers but not with martial arts.

We were thinking we could explore a few topics, like ethnicity, cultural values and beliefs, interests, and functions. Within each of these we can do a comparison and contrast of our three topics.

I agree that Sanho's topic is a lot harder to relate.

Hm, RACHEL. Sanho, do you think of ways that your topic relates to ours? I find that quilting and skin art have a lot of similarities, but have trouble thinking of any relation to martial arts.

Do your guys want to split up the sections and each work on one?

How would each of your describe the ethnicity of your arts?

Quilting is of American ethnicity... mostly women, middle to lower class... 

Well, martial art, Taekwondo is originally from Korea... Taekwondo in America is very popular regardless of class. I think... 

Tattooing is very diverse, it has origins from almost everywhere but I focus on American culture.

Mostlywhile Americans, Asian americans... 

I think there aren't much black people practicing Taekwondo.

I think tattooing has more to do with stereotypes other than races.

Figure 4.12 Chat Room 1 – Group C6's Discussion for a Group Project

The Chat room employed in Ethnic Arts Online is a web-based application also provided by WebCT. By clicking a link named "chat" on the course web site, students and instructors can enter several chat rooms. Chat rooms allow people in the course connected from anywhere on the Internet to join in on a live discussion that is not limited to just two people. Chat rooms are essentially windows that can be used for simulating near-real-time inter-group communication, and thus require participating

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students to be online at the same time. Chat rooms are divided into three main sections (see Figure 4.12), one indicating all the participants' usernames (which, in this case, correspond to their real names) on the right, a scrolling line for the participant to compose his or her own messages on the bottom, and a large space displaying the contents of the participants' "chat" as it occurs on the left. Students working on a group project occasionally use chat rooms to organize when and how the group members should communicate with each other about the project, as well as to conduct discussions about the project material itself. Figure 4.12 shows group C6's discussion regarding their group presentation. Twice per quarter, students were divided into small groups and required to arrange their own time for a chat room discussion of a topic based on the online-readings and an online video. This web-based communication space is particularly valuable for a visually-, culturally-, and inquiry-based course because students can have both their chat room windows and windows displaying visuals (from the readings and/or videos) open at the same time. This enables them to make concrete references to the artworks they are discussing and critiquing in the chat room (see Figure 4.13 for an example). All assigned chat room discussions are recorded and available for the instructor for assessment purposes and archiving.
Figure 4.13 Chat Room 2 – Critiquing Maya Lin's Art Work

The Ethnic Arts Online also relied on electronic mail (e-mail) and a course listserv to foster student-student, student-instructor, and student-class interactions through the Internet. E-mail is the most common application used to facilitate interpersonal communication online (Palloff & Pratt, 2001). It allows users to send messages to other users on the same network or to people on other networks through the Internet. Person-to-person e-mail correspondence allows individuals to communicate...
with each other about any business that does not concern all other class members. It also provides students a means to communicate with the instructor "privately" which might not otherwise be achieved in a distance education course. Moreover, "a message can be sent by an e-mail address to a single person or can be 'posted' so that a number of people can read and respond to it" (Roland, 1997, p. 45). A Listserv is an example. All the instructors and students of *Ethnic Arts Online* were assigned an e-mail address to a course listserv provided by OIT to facilitate asynchronous person-to-class communication, which comprises the bulk of student interaction in this class. When a student sends an e-mail to the class listserv, it is automatically distributed to all members of the class. Using the listserv, students take turns leading asynchronous class discussions about the weekly reading materials. These are largely informal, and offer students the chance for inquiry, reflection, and debate on a wide range of issues.

Among various communications implemented, e-mail correspondence, discussion forums, and student presentations are asynchronous. They can occur at any time and at irregular intervals. On the other hand, a chat room is synchronous. It provides chances for students to participate in focused, fast-paced interactive conversations. In Chapter 6, I use student examples to analyze and discuss how these communication spaces employed have an impact on students' learning and social interaction.

The Survey of Students Body

In Chapter 2, I provided some information about the students, collected from informal conversation and formal interviews, regarding the make up of their ethnic,
socio-cultural, and educational backgrounds. In this section, I include a survey of the composition of Winter, 2001 and Spring, 2001 student body. This detailed information was collected from the online pre-enrollment test, consisting of four questionnaires: (1) personal information, (2) system requirements, (3) tool set, and (4) learning style. TELR (2000b) has prepared questions for each questionnaire, and instructors can also add their own questions necessary for their own online course. I have included complete questionnaires in Appendix A. The first question in Questionnaire 4: Learning Style is derived from How to Learn Anything...Fast (The Center for New Discoveries in Learning, 1996), a Web-based Newsletter. I have also included this part of questions in Appendix B.

Before students enrolled in Ethnic Arts Online, they were asked to take an online pre-enrollment test. This test gave students an initial understanding about the distance education technologies they will need to use in this online course and help students to become aware of their learning style that in the future may affect their virtual educational experiences. After sorting the two groups of students' feedback (Winter, 2001 and Spring, 2001) in the questionnaires, I present them in three categories in this section: personal information, familiarity with various technology components needed in this online course, and learning style.

Students of Winter, 2001 Online Course

In Winter, 2001's online course, there were ten students who completed the course. All of them completed the pre-enrollment test. In Table 4.1: Personal Information, I summarize the general characteristics among these ten students.
1. Eight out of ten (8/10) students provide their work phone number in the questionnaire.

2. All of them (10/10) prefer to be contacted by e-mail.

3. Seven out of ten (7/10) students do not provide information as when would be the best times/days to contact them.

4. All of them (10/10) believe that their work and personal schedule are predictable. (See Appendix A, Questionnaire 1: Personal Information, Question P21 for a complete selection for answer.)

5. Six out of ten (6/10) students are sophomores.

6. Seven out of ten (7/10) students do not have online learning experience.

7. All of them (10/10) have experience with chat rooms.

8. Six (6) students take a distance education course because they are interested in the subject matter—ethnic arts—not computers per se.

9. Three (3) students take a distance education course because they could not fit the course into their regular class schedule.

10. One (1) student takes a distance education course because she works full time.

Table 4.1: Personal Information (Winter, 2001)

In Table 4.2: Familiarity with Distance Education Technologies, I summarize these ten students' familiarity with various technology components needed in this online course.

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1. All of them (10/10) have more than five years experience of using computer.

2. Six of them (6/10) have more than ten years experience of using computer.

3. Five of them (5/10) have not completed college computer courses.

4. All of them (10/10) use computers and the World Wide Web daily.

5. All of them (10/10) are familiar with e-mail and can use most of the basic features including replying, forwarding, and sending attachments.

6. All of them (10/10) are able to perform a "copy and paste" task between different web pages.

7. All of them (10/10) have modems or cable modems with a speed at least 33.6kb and Internet Service Provider, either from OSU or other commercial providers, to access to the Internet.

8. All of them (10/10) have a CD ROM drive, a sound card, at least a Windows 95/98 operating system, a word processor, browser software: Netscape or Internet Explorer, and an e-mail program.

9. Seven out of ten (7/10) students have anti-virus software installed on their computer.

10. All of them (10/10) have Real Player Audio and Video for streaming audio and video.

11. Six out of ten (6/10) students are able to play QuickTime files, a popular format for audio and video.

12. Seven out of ten (7/10) students are able to play Shockwave files, used for animation.

13. All of them (10/10) feel more competent with computers than their friends do.

14. All of them (10/10) agree that they can use a computer and the Internet without difficulty, they easily learn to use new computer programs, and they are able to handle technical tasks on computer.

15. All of them (10/10) agree that using e-mail and learning features available through the Internet is easy for them.

Table 4.2: Familiarity with Distance Education Technologies (Winter, 2001)
Students' learning styles are rather diverse. In Table 4.3: Students' Learning Styles, I summarize students' individual and group learning preferences from the questionnaires. This provides some details about how students recognized their own learning style.

1. Nine out of ten (9/10) students identified themselves as "visual" learners—they learn best by reading or seeing a task done (see Appendix B for an online learning style test sheet).

2. When attending a new class or meeting, five (5) students listen for a while then offer their opinion when they have something to contribute; four (4) students actively participate in class discussion; one (1) student sits and observes to see things progress.

3. When working in a group setting, four (4) students do their own part assigned and their group accomplish the task on time; four (4) students take a leadership role to get the group started; two (2) students prefer to work independently rather than with the group.

4. When given a task to do, seven (7) students prefer general directions and having freedom to determine how to accomplish the task; two (2) students prefer overall objectives and being creative; one (1) student prefers step-by-step specific instructions.

Table 4.3: Students Learning Styles (Winter, 2001)

Students of Spring, 2001 Online Course

In Spring, 2001's online course, twenty-three students completed the course. However, twenty (20) students complete the questionnaire: personal information and
system requirements. And, seventeen (17) students completed the questionnaire: tool set and learning style. Personal information, summarized in the Table 4.4, indicates the following general characteristics among these twenty students:

1. Six out of twenty (6/20) students provide their work phone number in the questionnaire.

2. All of them (20/20) prefer to be contacted by e-mail.

3. All of them (20/20) believe that their work and personal schedule are predictable. (See Appendix A, Questionnaire 1: Personal Information, Question P21 for a complete selection for answer.)

4. Ten out of twenty (10/20) students are seniors. Six (6) students are juniors, and four (4) students are sophomores.

5. Thirteen out of twenty (13/20) students do not have online learning experience; while two (2) students have taken ‘several’ (TELR, 2000b) previous online courses.

6. Twelve out of twenty (12/20) students have used chat rooms many times.

7. Nine (9) students take a distance education course because they are interested in computers.

8. Six (6) students take a distance education course because they could not fit the course into their regular class schedule.

9. Three (3) student takes a distance education course because they need it for education credit.

10. Two (2) students take a distance education course because they work full time.

Table 4.4: Personal Information (Spring, 2001)
The following summaries, in Table 4.5, regard these twenty students' familiarity with various technology components needed in this online course. Notice that in some part of questionnaire, only seventeen out of twenty (17/20) students completed all the questions listed.

1. Seventeen (17) students have more than six years of experience using computers. Among them, seven (7) students have more than ten years of experience using computers.

2. Four (4) students have not completed college computer courses.

3. All of them (20/20) use computers and the World Wide Web daily.

4. Sixteen out of twenty (16/20) students are "very familiar with e-mail and utilize some advanced feature, like message filtering and nicknames files." The rest of the four (4) students are familiar with e-mail and can do most of the basic features including replying, forwarding, and sending attachments.

5. Seventeen (17) students are able to perform a "copy and paste" task between different web pages.

6. All of them (20/20) have an Internet Service Provider, either from the OSU or other commercial provider, to access the Internet.

7. Ten out of Twenty (10/20) students have cable modems (RoadRunner), and the other ten (10) students have modems with a speed more than 33.6kb.

8. All of them (20/20) have a CD ROM drive, at least a Window 95/98 operating system, a word processor, browser software: Netscape or Internet Explorer, and an e-mail program.

(continue)

Table 4.5: Familiarity with Distance Education Technologies (Spring, 2001)
9. Nineteen out of twenty (19/20) students have a sound card.

10. Sixteen out of twenty (16/20) students have anti-virus software on their computer.

11. Seventeen (17) students have Real Player Audio for streaming audio.

12. Ten (10) students have Real Player Audio and Video for playing streaming audio and video at the same time.

13. Thirteen (13) students are able to view Real Player Audio and PowerPoint synchronized slides.

14. Thirteen (13) students are able to play QuickTime files, a popular format for audio and video.

15. Twelve (12) students are able to play Shockwave files, used for animation.

16. Seven (7) students feel more competent with computers than their friends do, while ten (10) students make a neutral comment.

17. Seventeen (17) students agree that they can use a computer and the Internet without difficulty, they easily learn to use new computer programs, and are able to handle technical tasks on the computer.

18. Seventeen (17) students agree that using e-mail and learning features available through the Internet is easy for them.
Students' learning styles are also rather diverse. The summary in Table 4.6 reveals some details regarding students' diverse individual and group learning styles.

1. Nine out of seventeen \(^3\) (9/17) students identified themselves as "visual" learners - they learn best by reading or seeing a task done. Four (4) students are auditory learners. Three (3) students are kinesthetic learners. (See Appendix B for an online learning style test sheet).

2. When attending a new class or meeting, eleven (11) students listen for a while then offer their opinion when they have something to contribute; four (4) students sit and observe to see things progress; and four (4) students actively participate in class discussion.

3. When working in a group setting, thirteen (13) students do their own part assigned and their group accomplishes the task on time; six (6) students take a leadership role to get the group started; one (1) student prefers to work independently than with the group.

4. When given a task to do, nine (9) students prefer step-by-step specific instructions; eight (8) students prefer general directions and having freedom to determine how to accomplish the task; three (3) students prefer overall objectives and being creative.

Table 4.6: Student Learning Styles

In this section, I discuss the survey of students' personal information, degree of familiarity with distance technology necessary for Ethnic Arts Online, and learning style. After examining the above data, I consider the following common characteristics among these two groups of students. However, note that I am not generalizing here as I

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\(^3\) Only seventeen students completed the questions about personal learning style.
do not believe this data and these characteristics can be applied to all distance education
courses. Also note that in the pre-enrollment test, most of the questions appeared to be
technology related. This does not mean that students' success in distance education is
merely dependent on technology. Rather, the survey can be used to help students
prepare for using tools necessary for the course and the instructor to prepare online
pedagogy. In addition, although two groups' students might appear to be familiar with
distance education technology, their ethnic, socio-cultural, educational background as
well as the size of the class are significantly different. These factors are also taken into
consideration when preparing for online teaching. I believe by pointing out and
discussing this data and these characteristics, one might start getting ideas for
examining students' relationships with technology and for coming up with better online
pedagogy for future online courses.

(1) None of these students are freshman. This indicates that the majority of
students have taken some university courses; hence, they might be familiar
with some administrative processes, such as how to get their OSU e-mail
account and set up their access to the campus network and the Internet.

(2) Students prefer e-mail rather than other means of communications. Among
various ways for contacting the students, all of them prefer to be contacted
by e-mail. Although all students leave at least a phone number, convenient
time for contacting them, and believe that their schedule is predictable [so
they will be able to answer the phone or meet face-to-face], they prefer
using e-mail for the business related to this online course. And, apparently
students are familiar with e-mail's basic features such as replying, forwarding, and sending attachments.

(3) Using computers has been part of their everyday life activity as they indicated that they use e-mail, the Internet, the WWW, and computer everyday and sometimes more than five times a day.

(4) Students' computer knowledge and skill are gained from everyday use of technology, not necessary learned from the computer course they took. As Table 4.5 Item 2 indicates, four students have not completed a college computer course. When cross-examining these four students' familiarity with computers, it appears that they have more than six years of experience using computers, and they use computers and the WWW daily.

(5) Students' basic knowledge about their software, computer, and equipment is sufficient. Notice that on Questionnaire 2: System Requirements and Questionnaire 3: Tools set, there are a number of technical questions. Those questions are to provide students information regarding the software necessary to complete the course, as well as the knowledge to use selected computer technology and the software. All the students are able to choose proper answers or fill in the questionnaires with their answers. I gather, from this, that all the students are able to identify their computer systems and the equipment they have for a distance education course. They have basic knowledge about their machine.
(6) Students are confident with new technologies and in dealing with technological difficulties. Some students do not have everything ready for this online course (such as QuickTime). Yet, they all agree that they easily learn to use new computer software, and are able to handle technical tasks on computers.

(7) Students might be accustomed to multi-layered web-based learning. I believe that, by completing this test, students show that they are capable of opening and navigating various windows and web sites.

(8) The majority of these students are visual learners. This might indicate that they feel comfortable or learning better by reading text, watching videos, and viewing attractive web pages.

(9) Students' learning styles are diverse. This indicates that there are many different kinds of learners in the online course. Employing various online pedagogy to help different learners learn better should be taken into consideration.

(10) Students may not be familiar with the kind of distance learning that emphasizes intercultural communication. Very few students have previous online learning experiences. Only a few students agree that when attending a new class, they take an active role participating in class discussion. Most of the students when working in a group setting only do their own part assigned to accomplish the task. This may indicate that students need to be further motivated in order to participate in online interactive discussions.
Examining students' background information can help instructors better prepare their online teaching. Particularly in this case, because the instructor can review each individual student's background information, the instructor should be able to help each individual with his/her specific problem. For example, more students from Spring 2001's online course demand specific step-by-step instruction for completing tasks. This information might indicate that these students would need more help to accomplish a distance education course.

Previous online learning experiences, tools necessary for the course, and different learning styles may have impact on students' performance in succeeding in distance education. After understanding the students' overall familiarity with distance learning and technology, the instructor can ease students' anxiety by creating specific student- and teacher-student learning activities. For example, students in Spring 2001 who had several previous distance education course experiences were encouraged to share with the class their learning experiences in order to suggest strategies for solving learning problems. This can help reduce students' learning anxiety. Learning activities should allow students to be involved in both independent work and group work. This can help different learners learn better.

Information included in this chapter has provided an overview to the creation of *Ethnic Arts Online*. In what follows, I turn to issues regarding human subjectivity in relationships with technology and the (re)representation of sense of self and social identity.
CHAPTER 5

SUBJETIVITY IN VIRTUALIZED EDUCATION:
STUDENTS' VIRTUAL (RE)PRESENTATION OF SELF

This chapter examines issues regarding subjectivity—the construction of one's sense of his/her own position in a given situation—in virtual education. I explore two aspects. First, I deal with subjectivity in relation to technology. What theories or concepts can be applied to understand human subjectivity in a technological setting? How is subjectivity constructed in the virtual world? As an example, I interpret a student's sense of subjectivity in a virtual class. This example illustrates that a person's subjectivity in the virtual world is not only affected by the technology itself, but also by such other factors as interaction with other online social actors and educational (institutional) practices. Thus, the second aspect of subjectivity I deal with is social identity. How is a person's sense of social identity formed? How do students present their social identity in a virtual class? Using examples from the online course, I analyze in particular various strategies that students employed in order to present their social identity in a virtual setting.


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drawing on empirical examples. In a technology-mediated virtual world, subjectivity is constructed by complex relations and interactions among technology, self and other social actors, narratives of identity, and various discursive practices (Stone, 1995; Turkle, 1995; Kendrick, 1996). Subjects can view themselves as agents "outside" of the virtual world, as control agents that create and/or control cyberspace; or, they can see as being subjected to, even manipulated by, virtual technologies. Subjects can see themselves as agents in control of their own identities, and they can see themselves as the subjects of social processes, as constructed by such discourses as education and gender. Thus, how theorists conceptualize the complex interactions between humans and machines, and their impact on the sense of self, has bearing on my research. The shifting of subject positions can create anxiety. It can make subjects question their own integral and coherent identity (e.g. body and mind; the virtual and physical self), rethink their relationships with other social actors and groups (in both virtual and physical worlds), and (re)construct narratives of who they are. This raises another issue, also explored in this chapter, regarding one's sense of social identity. Students' (text-based) narratives of who they are indicate that their sense of self is expressed through their social identity as associated with a variety of social actors, groups, and discourses. Issues of subjectivity, therefore, include the subject's relationship to technology, their sense of self, and their sense of social identity.
Humans' Relationship to Technology

The relationship of human beings to machines/technologies can be conceptualized in at least three ways: as instrumental, as substantive, and as dialogical (Barglow, 1994; Kendrick, 1996). From an instrumental perspective, humans treat machines merely as extensions of the physical (as opposed to the mental) human body. The notion of machine-as-tool ensures humans' role as a master who is capable of inventing, using, fixing, and throwing a tool away. Machines, in this sense, are seen as lifeless and mindless. Following this concept, humans are in the position of the subject taking control over their machines, and machines are objects being controlled.

Furthermore, this makes humans believe they "know" their machine (because they invent it), that they have freedom and power to make decisions, and can be a coherent center of comprehension and agency. Both humans and machines alike share physical ability, but because humans have the mental ability to think, their agency as subjects is ensured (Barglow, 1994). Humans believe that mental ability is what makes them distinctive from machines.

From a substantive viewpoint, since the machine has become increasingly sophisticated, it not only extends humans' physical abilities, but also their mental abilities. Consider the following popular commercial messages: The Cartesian/logically functioning computer is designed to resemble human thinking strategies. An electronic organizer is designed to "memorize" and "plan" a person's daily schedule. A graphic design program can imitate an artist's stylistic visual effects. Communications software can be programmed to "sort" e-mail for the user. From this perspective, humans relate
to technology as an important aspect of their life. The computer is constructed as something that has the ability to "make decisions" and to think for humans—with a mind of its own that is comparable to humans' mental ability. People also seem to have a vague idea that machines can operate independent of human control. Humans gradually accept the idea that the machine possesses (artificial) intelligence. It can think independently—even more accurately and faster than humans.

As humans' relationship to technology has continuously evolved, technology has become a powerful metaphor. Humans use mechanical terms and structure in everyday language to describe their behaviors and social structures. Technology becomes both a technological and cultural concept (Barglow, 1994). Take the computer as an example. If asking where the command central is, technically one can say—at the central processing unit (CPU). When studying the CPU, one finds the microprocessor chip, logical circuits within the microprocessor, programs, and a numbers of peripherals. However, in everyday life, one doesn't need to understand what a CPU is or how it works in order to use the computer. When talking about how information is processed inside the computer, one understands that programs process it, not moving mechanical parts. In this way, humans' understanding of sophisticated technology and its structure is rather intangible. Yet, technology and concepts of technology metaphorically affect human life.

In everyday conversations about a complicated machine, people not only want it to function like a human, but also are inclined to attribute its features to themselves. The term "network" used in everyday social life, according to Merriam Webster's Collegiate
Dictionary (10th ed.), originated in 1560. One of the definitions of network is "a fabric or structure of cords or wires that cross at regular intervals and are knotted or secured at the crossings" (p. 780). All the definitions in the dictionary refer to mechanical structures; none refers to human behaviors. Barglow (1994) gives another example. Terms such as "input" and "feedback" that originally had technological meanings are now used in everyday conversations about human interaction. These examples show that technology is both a technological and cultural concept. It continuously shapes and reshapes humans' conceptual associations with their technocultural surroundings.

As the relationship of humans to technology continues evolving, virtual technology further permeates everyday life. Technology as either instrumental or substantive is too oversimplified and dichotomous to conceptualize the complex human relations to and interactions with technology in cyberspace. Kendrick (1996) believes that there is a dialogic relationship between humans and their technology (p. 144). They must co-exist, interact, and manipulate each other. Complex dialogues between humans' and technologies, then, can characterize the construction of subjectivity in cyberspace.

Kendrick (1996) asserts:

Cyberspace does not exist as a coherent, technologically created spatial arena but as the discursive site of ideological struggles to define the relationship between technology and subjectivity. In this sense, cyberspace is both an imaginary projection of the idealized telos of technologically mediated existence and the latest instance of the technological interventions in human subjectivity that, I argue, always have structured definitions of the human. (Kendrick, 1996, p. 143)
She would disagree with the *instrumental* view because it presumes that there exists a cyberspace that is rationally created and mediated by humans' operations of machines and mathematics. This view dismisses the idea that one needs to engage various discursive practices in order to make sense out of cyberspace as a placeless, timeless, and textually bodiless site. She would also disagree with the *instrumental* view because it mystifies technology and triumphantly celebrates too much the idea that "electronically mediated experience marks a decisive break in the humankind's relationship to technology" (p. 143). She believes that technology has always effectively intervened the construction of subjectivity. It is not a new concept in human history. Electronically mediated experience, cyberspace experience in particular, is not the only experience that has altered humans' relationships to technology and subjectivity.

To Kendrick (1996), cyberspace is a cultural connection of fictions, projections, and anxiety. Through technology-mediated experiences, cyberspace allows greater flexibility in imagining a virtual self. For example, one can project the self in multiple ways onto multiple cyberactors he/she creates, and be able to become one of those virtual characters. One can create a wide variety of narratives about his/her identity for a virtual self. In this way, "becoming one" is like creating a fiction. The construction of this fiction or subjectivity is interrelated to the complex relations and interactions to technology, self and other social actors, narratives of identity, and various discursive practices. Subjectivity must be (re)defined in relationship to technology because technology mediates one's virtual self behind the computer screen; one's existence is sustained by technology; Yet, narratives of identity and social rules can be scripted by
interacting with other cyberactors, and the significance of "becoming one" derives from "becoming connected" (to technology and other actors). Technology constantly manipulates human subjectivity in both "material and semiotic ways" (Kendrick, 1996, p. 144), while humans constantly struggle to figure out how such a process works and affects the sense of self. It is these multiple interventions that analytically compose a technology-mediated subjectivity.

Examining issues of subjectivity sheds light on the production of the widespread anxiety that disrupts the notion of a coherent self. A discourse of cyberspace suggests that there is a user. He/she exists outside and prior to the technologies and is able to control the technological interventions that create cyberspace and cyberactors. Such a concept reinforces the traditional, Modern, Western, Enlightenment notion of a coherent self—as the integral mind and body in the physical world. Yet, imagining a bodiless, timeless, and spaceless presence of self in cyberspace simultaneously disrupts the integrity of mind and body. How can the self exist without the body? How is it possible for the body to not be grounded in local environments? In cyberspace. In this regard, virtual technology and cyberspace make the coherence of subjectivity sound like fiction, paradoxically "offering itself as the actualizing of that fiction" (Kendrick, 1996, p. 146). Not surprisingly, Kendrick (1996) believes that virtual technology is represented as intervening in our minds and bodies in a vaguely holistic fashion.

The desire to become a coherent one is still a great concern among human beings (Barglow, 1994; Guattari, 1995; Stone, 1995; Kendrick, 1996). Technology, among other things, accelerates this desire. It indicates humans' anxious desire to know
who they are, what they are capable of maintaining, and their complex relations to
technology. Cyberspace experience indicates humans' desire for holistic control over the
self, which is interrelated to body, mind, social, and technology interactions, yet,
paradoxically, treats the idealization of the disembodied self as a kind of fascinating
alternative. As Kendrick (1996) further puts it:

The repressed recognition that technologies do intervene in our bodies produces
the desire to distinguish ourselves from these interventions, to imagine a self
that is not subject to prosthetic assistance or its corollaries: disease, decay, and
death. (Kendrick, 1996, p. 146)

From the above ideas, I gather that the study of online subjectivity must include an
examination of human interactions with technology, social relations, narratives of
identity, cyberspace discourse, and embodied experiences.

Subjectivity in the Virtual World

Cyberspace researchers (Rheingold, 1993; 1998; Stone, 1995; Turkle, 1995;
Kornbluth, 1998; Markham, 1998; Donath, 1999; O'Brien, 1999) who have examined
subjectivity in a virtual reality have demonstrated how participants can disguise or
invent many different identities to achieve their goals—to be accepted as a member of a
virtual community. Technologies allow online participants to generate experiences,
narratives of identity, and social relationships. Manipulation of online identities and
online deception and violation can distort a traditional sense of mind, body, self, and
social relations with other human beings.
In virtual reality, a constructed "self" is not necessarily grounded in conventional physical and local conditions. Kornbluth (1998) and O'Brien (1999) have warned that in an on-line environment, the concept of gender as performance can be theoretically and empirically separated from corporeal sex markers. Online rules of social interaction are built, as participants define and/or negotiate the rules for themselves as needed. Because a text-based virtual environment is a specific form of collaboratively written literature, people constantly put themselves in the situation of imaging the self on the self/other's screen as an object to be examined by oneself as well as by others. Humans become the authors of both text and themselves. This can allow them to adjust themselves by (re)ascribing their online body and narratives of identity during ongoing social interaction.

Virtual technologies affect human subjectivity when one believes that he/she can be bodiless and free from physical reality. It thus enables a person to fictionalize a unique, unified, and seemingly coherent virtual character. Stone's (1995) study of Julie Graham illustrates this concept. Julie is an invented online character. Using virtual technology, the creator can work out her persona and create life stories to match her identity, as a disabled woman, a college teacher, a happily married wife, and frequent traveler. As Stone (1995) describes, "[the creator] needed someone who would be fully functioning on-line, but largely unavailable off-line in order to keep her real identity secret. For the most part, he developed an elaborate and complex history for Julie" (p. 71). For a long while, because of her compelling and attractive identity, Julie's online friends treated her as an existing person and believed "online Julie" is a coherent and
unified continuation of her off-line self. Cyberspace, by allowing bodiless presence of what, in fact, does not exist, paradoxically invokes "the unified and self-identical subject who is distinct from his or her body and from the technological context of culture" (Kendrick, 1996, p. 148).

Turkle's (1995) study also illustrates the construction and reconstruction of subjectivity in the virtual world. The MUDs or Multi-User Domains that she studied about rely entirely on plain text to communicate character, place, and action. In the MUDs, participants learned how to build their online characters and "home," a place to live, socialize, and have a private conversation, by using particular computer program, technical coding, and descriptive writing. To many participants, MUDs are a new kind of social virtual reality. They allow participants to anonymously play characters as close to or as far away from their real life selves. They allow those characters to engage in social, political, professional, and sexual activities. To many participants, these activities are real because they create a sense of belonging, have consequences, and cause pain and pleasure. MUDs allow participants a high degree of freedom to become someone/something else, someone/something that only exists in one's imagination and on the computer screen. One of Turkle's research participants, Stewart, claimed that because online life is so compelling, offline life is becoming more and more uneasy and disappointing to them. Some of them become addicted to online characters, home, and interaction because they feel that they, as subjects constructed by themselves and the machine, have more
control over their life online than offline where they are subjects constructed by other social and biological processes. This shift in feelings of belonging and the sense of self in two parallel lives indeed accelerates the process of what Turkle claims is the contemporary image of human identity. She states, "In terms of our views of the self, new images of multiplicity, heterogeneity, flexibility, and fragmentation dominant current thinking about human identity" (Turkle, 1995, p. 178).

Turkle (1995) points out, furthermore, that the invention of a "window" can strongly affect the way one imagines him/herself in both public (online) and private (home) spaces. A window provides a way for a computer to place a user in several contexts at the same time. A user can open several windows for different purposes. He/she can chat with several online friends using different characters and applications. With users "cycling through" (Turkle, 1995, p. 14) different applications between a series of virtual worlds and real life, windows have become a powerful metaphor for thinking about the self as a multiple, distributed system. Online stories have also shown how technology is bringing a set of ideas about the uncertainty of beings, meanings, and truth. The open-ended textual areas allow narratives to be written, edited, deleted, and read. This process apparently can reinforce a sense of instability of meanings and, hence, allow constant negotiation of subjectivity. Turkle writes of her own experiences:

"In my computer-mediated worlds, the self is multiple, fluid, and constituted in interaction with machine connections; it is made and
transformed by language; sexual congress is an exchange of signifiers; and understanding follows from navigation and tinkering rather than analysis. And in the machine-generated world of MUDs, I meet characters who put me in a new relationship with my own identity." (p. 15)

A Student's Sense of Self in the Virtual Class

What follows is a story about Student M's virtual education experience. Examining this student's interaction with technology provides me insights into the issue of subjectivity in the virtual world. Since the beginning of the course, Ethnic Arts Online, Student M had made an impression on the class that she was not accustomed to distance education. Often, she seemed to be agitated by not knowing what was going on in the virtual class. When other online classmates were all discussing some topics on the listserv, my impression was that she became disoriented. Early in the quarter, several of her messages showed her confusion about the online class activity, and this further presented her sense of self.

I didn't realize that we had to respond to questions until I got about 10 e-mails with the same questions in them...so, I hope it's okay that mine is a little late!? :( (Student M, 01/07/2001, listserv)

I'm soooo confused on what we have that is due...if you can...write back with details...I feel so lost and stupid!!! (Student M, 01/17/2001, listserv)

Unlike her other classmates who also had similar concerns but did not express them on the listserv, Student M explicitly stated her reactions to a number of things she did not find easy to deal with throughout the quarter. To overcome her problems, she constantly asked her peers and me questions about technology, web sites, and assignments.
Although early in the quarter, she had not revealed her interactions with and relation to technology, I must point out that the number of e-mails that showed up on her computer screen also caused her confusion. Technology such as e-mail have become an important part of students' academic life. Most of them use and live with it without noticing its impact on their understanding of the world around them.

Learning with distance education technology and virtualized class, time, and interaction seemed to increase her anxiety regarding keeping up with her online classmates and completing the course. Since the assignments were posted on the website, most of her classmates would just send to her the site's URL or paste the description of the assignment directly into the body of an e-mail so that she could receive the accurate information. However, this process still lacked human physical interaction. Perhaps the way Student M made sense of the world around her required some human verbal and bodily responses. Perhaps she needed to negotiate details in order to make sense out of the assignment. Reading text on her computer screen did not mean she understood the assignment. Rather, either by having the answer from the instructor or by observing that the majority of students did the same thing as her, she could be sure that she was on the right track. That she felt "lost and stupid," I believe, was a result of complex interactions with texts, other online students, and technology.

In a conversation with me, Student M apologized to me for not being able to be punctual, and she implicitly blamed her computer. She was worried that her computer might prevent her from completing the course. Her concerns about her achievement in the course and reactions to the technology reminded me the dialogical relationships that
construct human online subjectivity. As more virtual technologies became involved in her learning, this particular aspect of subjectivity construction came to light. She wrote to the entire class using the course listserv:

Hey group...I've been having some massive computer issues...I am trying to get as best caught up today as possible since my computer likes to mess up when I least need it to. I think it knows when my assignments are due and then just freezes...but anyway…Good luck on your papers. (Student M, 02/17/2001, listserv)

During mid-quarter, she decided to upgrade her computer and software, hoping it would be easier to handle, both for everyday use and in the distance education course. She asked me for my comments. I was not enthusiastic about her idea because I was not sure if she could learn to use upgraded software with ease. Moreover, during the same week, I had just realized that she did not know how to use "attachments," which is considered a basic skill among university students. She had an idea about how it should work, and she received and opened e-mail attachments regularly, but evidently she did not know exactly how to do it using her own communication program. Student M and I had intensive e-mail correspondence during that week. Mainly I walked her through word processing programs, saving files in the correct format, explaining how her e-mail carrier works, and attaching a file to an e-mail. In this regard, it seemed ironic to me that she wanted to make a major change on her computer and software. I assumed that as a novice computer user, she would go through all kinds of trouble to upgrade her computer and re-accustom herself to it. However, she was attracted by advertisements and partially frustrated by the existing service. Finally, she went for the change.
This example, indeed, reflects what I have discussed earlier in this chapter. Human understanding about their computers can be intangible. Yet, this was enough for Student M to feel capable, for example, to take an online course. Technology indeed is both a technological and cultural concept. It continuously shapes and reshapes human conceptual associations with their technocultural surroundings.

Upgrading the computer and software did not make her troubles go away, and she did not keep her struggle quiet to herself as she wrote to her group members using a group e-mail correspondence:

Hey [C and D], and Alice...I absolutely hate computers...but...I have to admit, I'm pretty decent with them (well, when they're nice and cooperate with me)!! :)
Yes, I have been having a lot of problems with the website...I will send you both a copy of my paper ASAP (I'm hoping to get this problem fixed within the next few hours)!! I really hope that I'm not messing our group up!! I promise, I'm really a diligent student...but, I, also am a little intimidated and confused...and frustrated with the computer at the moment... I have created a website before for an online, English class...not the easiest thing, however, once you start it...it's actually kinda fun...if either of you have Microsoft Publisher, that usually works the best, well for me...that's what I used!! (Student M, 02/24/2001, e-mail correspondence)

Later the same day she also sent me a message whose subject read: online class.

Alice...
Hey...I just notified my group members...I'm overwhelmed by this class...I apologize a million times for all of my assignments being so late...but, there is just no other way that I can get them in, unless they're late...I really think this computer has a mind of its own and breaks down every Saturday when our assignments are due...I pray to god, it works tomorrow, Sunday, so that I can get my week 8 work in... so, I need to get crackin!! Thanks for all your help!! Frustrated!! (Student M, 02/24/2001, e-mail correspondence)
In Student M's case, the technology's specific intervention in subjectivity is apparent. Her messages illustrate how subjectivity is always in the process of being (re)constructed by the technologies both in material and semiotic ways. She manipulated technology, technology frustrated her, and she used technology to create an image of her relationship to technology that allowed online members to interact with her. She saw technology as an important part of the virtual class and tried to "cooperate" with it. I also saw her (re)presentation of the sense of self as the process of her interacting with her machines. Her seemingly confident relationship to technology was exemplified when she stated that she was "hoping to get this problem fixed within the next few hours" and that creating a web site using particular software is not easy, but fun. This, however, seemed to contradict my understanding of her based on our previous interactions. I asked: Does Student M truly understand her abilities of using distance education technology? Why does Student M seem unpredictable and incoherent to me? Is she the one who is afraid of using complicated technology outside the virtual class, or the one who interacted with other online members to deal with problems inside of the virtual class? Does she see herself as a fragment self? If not, why do her messages on the one hand show herself as diligent student, while on the other hand, show herself as a "trouble maker" in the group? Are her messages simply rhetoric aimed at (re)presenting herself as a cooperative group member? Is it the virtualized setting of the class that affects how she constantly associates herself with a discourse of technology? Is it being in a distance education course that requires her to explicitly identify herself as "a diligent student?"
Tension and anxiety arise because of this complex relationship between humans and machines. Stone (1995) have noted: From mastering technology in order to use it to (re)shape the learning environment to rendering technology invisible in order to produce an environment where technology is a natural (harmless/innocent) landscape—existing everywhere, the sense of self becomes fluid, fragmented, and multiple. Seeing and experiencing the self in dealing with complex human interactions, up-and-down relations to the technology, and disembodied experience also forces one to recognize the complexity of subjectivity. I believe that only through examining such complexity can specific sites of self-construction be examined and understood.

This case, at the same time, raises another important aspect regarding the sense of self. Student M's sense of self is also constructed by her interactions and relations with other online members, her offline life experiences, other social groups, and the discourses of education and technology. In a chat room interview, she wrote to me:

I love writing, and I can do well under pressure...I always checked my mail like a maniac...I know people were trying to be nice, and I admit I did this, but there were some disagreements. And I was glad to see that people were not scared voice their opinions. (Student M, 04/17/2001, chat room interview)

Though a disembodied forum for communication, the virtual class does not preclude her from taking into consideration the manners and expectations of her fellow students. In writing about her problems with the computer, for example, she feels the need to offer disclaimers and apologies to the entire class as well as her fellow group members. Furthermore, in order to do so, she necessarily chooses particular idioms and linguistic registers ("Hey group...") in which to express herself. Her choice of language and style online is constituted not only by technology, but also by certain social identities and
expectations. Her informal apologies, for example, might be seen as consistent with reflecting—or trying to project—a (stereo)typical image of a young, non-confrontational "average" American university student who tries to do her work, but without becoming an overly ambitious "computer-geek." Thus, her changing subjectivity with respect to the computer affects, and may even make her more conscious of and textually explicit about, her relationship with other human beings. Following this case, I further investigate the issue of social identity.

The Sense of Social Identity

In my discussion of subjectivity thus far, I have focused on human relationships to technology and its impact on their sense of self. Now, I turn to a discussion of social identity in the discursive construction of the self. Barglow (1994) looks into the sense of social identity in relationship to the post-industrial revolution, while Stone (1995) discusses the concept of the discursive body in constructing one's sense of self.

Barglow (1994) maintains that different historical periods yield different ways for humans to form their images of self. In particular, since the early twentieth century, the post-industrial revolution has changed the ways humans project themselves within a larger cultural context. The post-industrial revolution accelerates the U.S. economy by promoting effective and efficient use of labor, resources, and technologies. Men and women in different age groups affected by it want to project themselves as effective citizens who are willing to handle multiple tasks in their everyday lives. Jobs have opened for men and women, young and old, and physically-challenged citizens. Moreover, increasing "capital enterprise" (Barglow, 1994, p. 15) looks to both domestic
and global markets for greater profit. This transforms humans' formation of self from the traditional family-, community-, gender-, and age-limited self to a professional-, economic-, and global-oriented self.

In a post-industrial society, gender equality becomes another important factor in producing efficient labor for various job needs. It has changed the way men and women think of their abilities and roles in the family, work place, society, and nation. Women now project themselves not only into the domestic roles of sister, daughter, girlfriend, mother, and/or wife, but also into the roles of decision-maker, fighter, and/or global citizen. Women imagine themselves not only in relation to family, laundry rooms, and grocery stores, but also to the work place, colleagues, and single parenting situations. Men's thinking of the self is no longer merely related to responsible employee, policy maker, protective father, and masculine behavior. Qualities such as caring, tenderness, and cooperative, are appreciated. Changing concepts of gender roles and responsibilities, however, also put the traditional sense of self into danger. As Barglow (1994) posits, "continuity of tradition, reliability of expectations, and consistency of values and commitments are essential supports of the self. When these are perceived as having come undone, the self falls prey to dissolution" (p. 27).

In referring to Stone's (1995) concept of the discursive body, I want to point out that a subject's sense of self is constructed by both physical and discursive elements. In the process of constructing a sense of self, one must recognize the existence of the body. The body is an essential part of the self. It exists as a biological form made up of DNA and occupying physical space, just as it is connected to and constituted by a range
of discourses. Discourses provide meanings to the body and ways for one to construct a social identity. For example, a sense of self can be formed by grounding the self/body in discourses of occupation and family. Occupation and family provide a particular body specific social meanings; the person exists (physically) but also has a specific social identity. In a sense, a person who exists only as a purely physical form without discursive links is not comprehensible and can not function in human groups. Thus, the body is not only a physical but also a discursive entity. Moreover, the surface of the body offers a set of discursive codes. Such codes organize the ways in which the body is recognized, and determine, moreover, the range of socially pertinent responses. In Stone's (1995) words:

The socially apprehensible citizen, then, consists of a collection of both physical and discursive elements. Although the physical elements possess a special and bounded order of reality on account of their particular relationship to the social disciplines of pain and pleasure, the remainder of the citizen—by far the greater part, the part which is also concerned with the production of meaning of the physical part—is discursive. (p. 41)

The concept of discursive self is consistent with post-structuralist and postmodernist conceptions of identity construction. A person must always position the self with respect to particular discursive ideas, values, and practices in order to understand knowledge properly and decide how he/she should act. In this regard, I shall also mention Michel Foucault's concept of discourse. According to Hall (1997),

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What interested [Michel Foucault] were the rules and practices that produced meaningful statements and regulated discourse in different historical periods. By 'discourse,' Foucault meant 'a group of statements which provide a language for talking about—a way of representing the knowledge about—a particular topic at a particular historical moment...Discourse is about the production of knowledge through language. But...since all social practices entail meaning, and meanings shape and influence what we do—our conduct—all practices have a discursive aspect'. (as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 44)

Take the virtual world as an example. On the one hand, discourses of the virtual suggest that one should have a greater degree of freedom to invent his/her own online character in multiple ways. A person's (character's) identity can be associated with several social groups that are not grounded in the offline self. However, a discourse of the virtual class often produces different effects. Because the discourse of virtual classes is still largely constructed by and within educational institutional practice, educational discourse still exercises a great deal of influence on students' online (re)presentations of self. Student C, for instance, assigned priority to educational discourse over the potentially greater freedom she had for presenting her self online. In an interview with Student C, I asked her if she ever thought about creating a fake story about herself in the context of the class. She responded:

No, because of the nature of education. I knew I was paying for this course, I didn't have to fake [my story]. I shouldn't fake it because this is my grade I'm paying for. No, I never thought about it. (Student C, 04/07/2001, personal communication)
I also asked her whether, if she disagreed with someone's idea, she would write back and forth to argue with that person? She responded:

   Yes, I did. But, I couldn't type what I really wanted to say because of the policy of the school...With my typing and communication, other people might take my ideas in wrong way, so I just kept it to myself. (Student C, 04/07/2001, personal communication)

She told me that before she took the online course, she had read the university policies on the university's online registration page. She realized that there was a school policy that prevented students from academic misconduct, such as attending class or doing assignments for other students. I asked the same question to my other four interviewees. Their responses were similar. None of them had ever considered making up fake stories about themselves because "in school, you just don't do that," as Student D said (personal communication, 04/09/2001). Clearly, students were aware of authority and the knowledge and rules produced by this authority. In contrast to the commercial virtual world, students came to the virtual class with preconceptions about proper educational practices, and thought and acted according to the knowledge and structures produced by educational discourse. Their association of the virtual class with educational discourse at large affected the construction of their sense of social identity as students who understand their position in relation to the educational world and other online classmates.

(Re)presenting the Self in the Virtual Class

   In a study of human social interaction, Dale Spender (1998) notes that physical attributes are extremely important. Physical attributes reveal information about the self,
such as gender, age, race, class, and certain interests. With this information, each is able to (re)present the self to others, who, in turn, are better enabled to know how to react. In cyberspace, however, such physical attributes are masked. Therefore, (written) language becomes extremely important in enabling effective online social interaction. (For the purposes of this study, I use language to refer to all online texts, including words and emoticons alike). Since communication and interaction in the virtual class are largely text-based, it is through language that students are able to virtually (re)present their sense of self through their expressions of social identity and reactions to others.

Through the process of writing, students in a virtual class can become highly aware of the methods for (re)presenting their social identity. Their words, manner, style, and other textual elements are their only means for expressing themselves, and can reflect and/or be utilized to (re)present a student's family, social, cultural, historical, and educational background. Students can situate themselves with respect to such backgrounds in (re)presenting their sense of self. Consequently, each act of writing is also an enactment of identity, and thereby contributes to the process of social identity construction and negotiation.

Students' online discussions often revealed their sense of self in association with various context-specific discourse, social actors, and social groups. I generally refer to these multiple associations and interactions with those groups and their ideology as the (re)presentation of a sense of social identity. The following list is a summary of a number of aspects often brought up by students in their discussions about themselves.
1. Ethnicity
2. Future career
3. Generational differences
4. Gender expectation
5. History of their home country (e.g. wars)
6. Lifestyles (e.g. family tradition, ethnic heritage, and personal ways of life)
7. Language
8. Places they live
9. Popular cultures (e.g. pop music and sports)
10. Religion
11. Subcultural experiences (e.g. underground music group and tattoos)
12. Travel experiences

Labeling oneself explicitly is another strategy for (re)presenting social identity. For instance, several students chose to use a personalized e-mail address. Student C put family and school information in her e-mail address to make it easier for her to remember it (personal communication, 04/07/2001) rather than to reveal personal information. Student J used his commercial e-mail address for the class because it told people about his profession as an artist. A personalized e-mail address also provided a way for others to imagine his/her social affiliation. For example, Student E combined his name with an animal. At least one student assumed that an e-mail address indicates his occupation, a childhood memory, or academic major. Another student made the comment that only a beginner would use an AOL e-mail server. Seeing himself as an
expert in computer technology, he would definitely avoid using that e-mail address.

Several students chose to use English names instead of their given names for the class. International students, in particular, often did so in order to indicate their gender.

The following examples from a listserv show detailed descriptions of several students' sense of self and social identity:

Hi, In response to G’s response. Yes I do believe it is appropriate for Takaki to call himself Asian American. In modern culture, he seems mostly American, but I think he feels that his ethnicity (which Webster defines as of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background) is Asian American. I also consider myself to be Asian American (ethnically) although physically I look like an average American white male and I am American in culture. My mother is Asian (born in Asia and left at age 16) and my father’s family tree has ancestors from England, Germany...etc. Its very interesting because I have grown up learning about cultural differences and what my mothers’ parents believe today and what they have now left behind in Asia. My father grew up in Dayton where he has more of an All-American story. I also hope that people will stop fighting over race or ethnicity. We are all Americans after all, no matter what our ethnic origins or stereotypes may be. I agree totally that older people seem to have more stereotypes when compared to younger people (Student E, 01/12/2001, listserv).

In this message, Student E explicitly describes his appearance, history, family, interests, attitudes, and thoughts about self. This, in turn, allows other classmates to react. For example, Student D responded:

I think it is up to the person, if they want to be labeled Asian American or American. As an American with English descend, I do not call my self Anglo American or English American. Even though in E’s response to your [Student G] question he said that if he didn't identify as Asian American he would be denying his past. I feel it is up to the person on what they decide to identify themselves as. But personal I really don't like labels, I think we use them to separate ourselves from each other. (Student D, 1/13/2001, listserv)
In stories about the self, students ascribed themselves as members of particular social groups. Such groups could include their own family, a larger ethnic community, a gender, or a generational group. Each group, considered as a discourse, produces knowledge, attitudes, and social rules according to which its member interact with each other. However, when students share these context-specific ideas with other online students, various interpretations and opinions emerge. Furthermore, each student's reflection of their own social identity reveals particular attitudes and assumptions. This may reinforce stereotypical images of their own as well as of other social groups. Nevertheless, this process also enables students to reveal and negotiate their own sense of social identity.

Personal stories sometimes just happen to be brought up by students or arise within the context of the class discussion (e.g. required by the assignment). For instance, after Student E's and Student D's conversation about ethnicity, family history, and critique of labeling, several students also elaborately described their own family history. The discussion branched off after Student G mentioned a story about her family traveling to the south. Several students, then, started to talk about how they were viewed by the people in different regions in America. Unlike a formally required writing style, these personal stories were told in an informal, personal, subjective, yet self-critical manner. And, because of these qualities, these narratives also created an impression of their relation to and interactions with other social groups. Student R wrote to the class about his "Southern" experience:

I think that dialects form from the surroundings and local culture more than anything else. The southern accent you speak of comes from a traditionally more
laid back lifestyle. Being as high strung as I am, when I visit the south (my mother moved to N. Carolina a few years ago) I have to make an overt attempt to slow down and becoming less frustrated with the lack of speed, even in speech. (Student R, 01/13/2001, listserv)

The above story is based on a personal observation. It also indicates implicitly that one positions the self within a social group in order to make sense of attitudes and beliefs towards other groups. When Student R revealed his thoughts about the South, it was from the perspective of a non Southerner. He did not simply state what he thinks the South is. Rather, he referred to his sense of self (e.g. "being as high strung as I am") as a means for explaining his understanding of the South's way of life as associated with a "laid back lifestyle" and "lack of speed." This message, perhaps because his opinions were based on first-hand experience, did not evoke discussions about stereotypes. Anyway, no one made any comments about the stereotype of the South from a Southern viewpoint. Perhaps, because the virtual class is disembodied and not verbal, Student R did not know if there was anyone from the South so that his message did not seem to be aware of that possibility.

In a disembodied virtual world, the (re)presentation of social identity presents certain challenges. As I discussed before, a person's sense of self is both physical and discursive. In the virtual class, as the students received Student E's, G's, and R's messages, what they saw in front of them was not a group of people with Asian American, English, male or female appearances talking to each other or to the class, but a cluster of texts. Without knowing (or imagining) other classmates' gender or social backgrounds, some students just did not feel comfortable and confident to interact with
each other. In an interview with Student B, he specifically pointed out this issue.

Student B liked to write back and forth with online classmates about the topics he found interesting. Once he wanted to respond to Student I, an international student, but he did not know Student I's gender because the name did not indicate to him gender. He then went through Student I's previous postings in order to learn the gender of the student to which he was responding. He said:

I went through I's biography and found out that she was a girl because I was trying to respond to it. I can't really tell if it's male or female, so I had to go back and look through it and make sure. (Student B, 04/09/2001, personal communication)

Student B also indicated that if he could not identify her gender with certainty, he probably would have just left her alone because he did not want to be rude. He also stated that he would write differently, depending on the gender of the recipient. This indicates that a student may be accustomed to certain social norms and feels the need to know the gender of his/her classmates in order to feel conformable about communicating with them.

Although the students interacted with texts, this does not mean that they did not need to have some sort of mental picture about the person to which they writing. I asked my five interviewees about this issue. Most of them agreed that they did try to picture the person to whom they were writing; and, to my surprise, they all said they would have liked to have their classmates' pictures on the web site so they knew what their classmates looked like. Student G told me:
I tried to picture people. I think they probably were doing the same thing. I am a German background, I think I'm like everyone else...light hair and normal kind of person. (Student G, 04/06/2001, personal communication)

However, no one in the class spontaneously indicated his or her gender or other physical attributes. It seems to me that these attributes may be taken for granted (so people do not elaborate on them) or become less important in (re)presenting their social identity online. In the above messages, Student E identified himself as Asian American, and Student D identified herself as Anglo/English American; however, neither of them mentioned anything about the color of their eyes, skin, and/or hair. Nor did they mention anything about their height, weight, age, and/or native language. These attributes can be important in constructing a holistic sense of self, and can be learned through visual (re)presentation. I assume that when students form a concept of, say, Asian Americans, perhaps such visual attributes are already present in their imaginations.

Perhaps many students assumed that their names already revealed their gender and so there was no need to explicitly state it. Nevertheless, gender was often made explicit when it empowered students in a particular situation. It was not until a discussion of tattooing that several people clearly indicated their gender in order to take a position on the issue of how females and males had been judged differently. This might indicate that students of Ethnic Arts Online took their biological appearance for granted and/or did not consciously identify with a particular gender group until they needed to make an argument about a particular social interests or belief.
Issues of indicating gender appeared differently in Spring 2001's online course. In the Spring quarter, since the majority of students were immigrants and/or originally from non-European countries, they could not easily identify each other's gender. Some students, therefore, indicated their gender to each other at the beginning of the quarter or asked their classmates to call them by an American name that was clearly gender specific.

Constructing a discursive self is a way to (re)present the self. I have already examined how Student M constantly presented her sense of self in relation to technology. Now, I would like to describe how students often situated themselves with respect to a discourse of education. This was particularly true in the Spring (2001) online course. Beginning in the first week, students often revealed their concerns about how well they were doing in the class. For example, after the quiz, they would post messages indicating their worry over the correct answers. When introducing each other to their classmates, they frequently shared their reasons for taking an online course. Sometimes, when the discussion became too personal, students would ask me to draw the discussion back to the course concepts. This, in fact, happened several times during the quarter. Several students went on elaborately about their religious beliefs and practices. At some point, the opinions expressed were becoming offensive to other students. Student T (personal communication, 05/2001) first sent me a message indicating her concerns. Then, she posted a message to the listserv asking people to "stay with the course concepts and leave person-to-person discussion to personal e-mail." Student W (personal communication, 05/2001), however, argued that Ethnic Arts Online should
allow the expression of different opinions and that personal beliefs and experiences should not be ignored. From this case, I believe that as far as education is concerned, students did not ignore their role as students and consciously associated their online images with educational expectations. By arguing with each other about what they thought the class was about, they positioned themselves with respect to educational discourse.

There are other examples from the Discussion Forum. Students posted their attitudes and beliefs regarding outsider art:

From this, I gather that the works of Outsider Artists are to be considered shoddily made, and because the maker is usually uneducated in the classical sense of the word as a trained artist. From this perspective, there seems to be an exploitative nature of these artists [...] Now that I have received formal training in art matters, my greatest fear, is that I will lose the spirituality of my work. I am afraid now, that when one views my work, they will see references to other artists and styles. When I was untrained, rarely did someone say my work reminded them of such and such artist. I may not have received the monies according to fair market value, but my work was of personal and spiritual nature (Student J, 05/25/2000, discussion forum).

I do consider the term 'Outsider Art' kind of condescending. There are different styles of art that we categorize such as: Abstract Expressionism, Cubism, Conceptual...etc [...] but to label a certain group of people whose works are completely different from one another's seems absurd. I think art should be accepted for whatever it is not by who is buying or dealing it. No one wants to be called an outsider or excluded from something [...] there is no legitimate reason as to why these artists should be excluded (Student K, 05/29/2000, discussion forum).

From the above example, one can see the different meanings that emerge when each individual relates the words to his or her own background. In a denotative sense, these students are discussing ideas associated with outsider artists based on their ideas. In a connotative sense, they are writing to the Discussion Forum in order to show their
learning progress in this course and their qualifications for criticizing art. In both cases, they present to their classmates in the Discussion Forums their social identity. Their association with social groups, including the Ethnic Arts Online group itself, is revealed by their understanding and practice of those social groups' knowledge, rules, and interests. They make a connection with the course, perform their duty as students of this online course, share common interests, and adapt themselves to this online environment by sending the messages to the Forums in a correct (or an acceptable) manner. All these acts indicate a sense of social identity being developed and shared by members of this online course. Throughout the observation and interviews, the self is discursive because it is culturally and socially related to diverse contexts of age, ethnic, gender, social, educational, and technological relationships. Relating the self to different discourses is one way to establish a position of power or to establish authority. On the other hand, avoiding relating the self to a certain discourse may be a way to protect the self from a position of weakness or marginality.

In a sense, online text-based communication can encourage each individual to develop a sense of self and social identity. Student J has explicitly represented himself as an artist and understands that the value of being J-the-artist is not in receiving money according to fair market values, but is of a personal and spiritual nature. Implicitly, he constructs himself as the image of the ideal, romantic, and brave individual because he sees uniqueness and creativity in art as more valuable than something that the majority of people would care about (i.e. money). Although Student K does not explicitly provide
any personal information about herself, when she writes: "there are different styles of art that we categorize such as: Abstract Expressionism, Cubism, Conceptual..." she presents herself as knowledgeable about terminology in art, perhaps suggesting a degree of identification with the fine art world. She (re)presents herself as a fair person. Judging by her tone, she does not appear hesitant about expressing her opinions. Her writing communicates confidence, without being offensive or loud. Student K reveals such information about her attitude and communication manner implicitly. She seems to be sensitive to the Discussion Forums because she knows how to discuss issues in a critical yet fair manner. It is evident that she and other members share common interests in art and justice issues. Building on each other's ideas, they form a network and communication takes place.

The virtual class is also an excellent site to analyze the negotiation of the sense of the self. The negotiation of one's social identity with oneself and others is readily apparent in text-based Ethnic Arts Online. As the learning contexts and discussion topics changed from one week to another, different aspects of social identity developed. In the beginning of the quarter, Student C did not elaborate on her ethnic and cultural background. She revealed little information about age, family history, ethnic background, and personal opinions. It was not until the week that she led a listserv discussion about African American hair traditions, she revealed herself to be a mother with two kids from Jamaica who has been practicing hair braiding all her life. I was not sure why she did not mention this to her classmates earlier. In the interview, she told me
that she only mentioned it when she needed to because Student M did not believe what she stated in a message about hair braiding helping hair grow healthier. She told the class more about her background in order to (re)present herself as more of an authority on the topic at hand. Moreover, in a discussion about tattoos, everyone made comments on generational, age, and gender issues. Once again, she situated herself as a "mother" and stated her opinion that she would not mind her kids having tattoos because her friend had her baby tattooed and she thought it looked pretty. This parenting experience, although did not evoke much feedback, did fall under the discourse of generation gap that other students were discussing about. She explained to me that she somehow did not feel that she fit into the class because of her age and working and marriage/mother experiences. She thought that most students in the class were probably young students with little "real world" (Student C, 04/07/2001, personal communication) experience. She did not find much similar working or parenting experiences among her classmates. Without support from students sharing similar experiences, she preferred to remain somewhat distant from certain discussions, such as gender issues in the work place and age.

In Student C's case, although she often took her physical life experience into consideration when she went online, the virtual (re)presentation of her self did not necessarily correspond to her actual self. In an interview, C described herself, in a campus classroom, as a shy and careful person. She would not likely to initiate a conversation. However, when online, she enjoyed being an active person. In another case, Student B described himself as a quiet and observant person, both in the physical
world and online. He was hesitant, therefore, and told me that he did not like to be the first one to respond to the class or to initiate an online discussion. It seems apparent that through their interactions with other classmates and comparisons between online and offline senses of self, these students were able to negotiate the self in order to behave certain ways online.

Interactive technology plays another important role in the process of negotiating the sense of self and social identity. Students read/write back and forth about who they are and what they believe. It allows them to make adjustment to their previous statements about self. The e-mail correspondence below from Spring 2000's *Ethnic Arts Online* illustrates how students (re)present and negotiate their sense of self publicly.

Student H: The term 'Outsider Artist' does have a negative connotation. I agree with Roger Manley on how it does 'convey that quality of not belonging that characterizes their relationship to the art world.' The word 'Outsider' used to describe the 'artist' is what is negative[...]The term makes me automatically discriminate the work before I even see it. I would feel that the work is not up to standards. (05/25/2000, listserv)

Student J: To H I pose this question. What is it that would make you discriminate a work of art being described as Outsider, before you had a chance to see it? I find this somewhat shocking of a statement. Are you saying that art created by those on the fringe of Artist Societies, are not worthy or capable of creating good art? I am assuming that because of the negative connotation of the term 'Outsider,' you therefore discriminate. You contradict yourself when you say the following: 'the work that an 'outsider artist' creates can be [...] (05/25/2000, listserv)

Student H: to J. I do not discriminate outsider art. I am just saying that the term 'outsider' would make a person think differently before viewing it. (05/26/2000, listserv)

Student H: to J, I am just saying that the term 'outsider' would make a person think differently before viewing it. The term 'outsider' just has a negative connotation for me, I am not the type of person to
discriminate in any aspect, and definitely not in art. I think that there needs to be a better word than 'outsider' to describe the type of art. I do not know which word would be best. Do you have any suggestions? (05/26/2000, listserv)

Student J: Real Art? (05/26/2000, listserv)

In this case, two students have continuously engaged in dynamic communication about how they respond to the ideas associated with "Outsider." In the discussion, they can not avoid revealing information about who they are and what they believe. In Student H's case, negotiation (as well as (re)presentation) of the self and social identity are apparent. She states early, "The term [outsider] makes me automatically discriminate the work before I even see it. I would feel that the work is not up to standards." This problematic message causes a debate between J and her. J replies to her: "to H I pose this question. What is it that would make you discriminate a work of art...I find this somewhat shocking of a statement [...] are not worthy or capable of creating good art? You contradict yourself [...]" Later, H defends herself: "to J, I am just saying that the term 'outsider' would make a person think differently before viewing it. The term 'outsider' just has a negative connotation for me, I am not the type of person to discriminate in any aspect, and definitely not in art." In this conversation, Student H is defending herself by correcting the meaning associated with her previous text. Here, the text has been used to describe both self and other. This recognition is taking place openly and interactively. Once ideas about the self are typed and sent to the Listserv, they can not be erased (by the sender). Thus, to correct the previous idea, Student H has to add more sentences and ideas and create a new message. This process starts with
describing herself, reflecting herself through J's gaze, and re-recognizing herself. I believe this reinforces H's idea about who she is and how she wants other members to see her.

In this chapter, I have discussed a range of issues related to subjectivity. Human relationships with technology and the construction of the sense of self and its relation to the sense of social identity are several major issues I have explored. I have employed empirical examples from students' online interactions with technology as well as with other online classmates. Widely examined by cultural theorists, the issue of subjectivity in the field of art education is still unfolding. Examining the sense of self and social identity is one way to understand how students conceive of and (re)present themselves, what social groups they belong to, and why they behave and believe in certain ways (online and offline). Online (re)presentation of the sense of self and social identity illustrates how students explore their subjectivity in virtual classes.
CHAPTER 6

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SPACES
AND VIRTUAL CLASS INTERACTIONS

My ultimate task in this dissertation is to explore, in the context of virtual distance education, two interrelated issues: technology and education. Also, since I taught the online course for two quarters, an equally important task for me during the period of this research was the examination—and, ideally, the improvement—of my own pedagogy and students' learning. In Chapter 3, I claimed that the virtual class creates new challenges and opportunities. I believe, on the one hand, that space-time flexibility and text-based communication provide new degrees of freedom. On the other hand, they generate new social and educational difficulties. In Chapter 5, by examining subjectivity, I analyzed some of the challenges regarding students' online interaction vis-à-vis distance education technologies with other classmates and the discourse of education. In this chapter, I continue to examine and interpret online interactions, paying particular attention to the multicultural and intercultural aspects of the Ethnic Arts course. I also interpret these education discourses in light of some potential implications for multicultural/intercultural and technology-enhanced learning.
Students' Intercultural Communication in the Virtual Class

Three major communication spaces were employed to foster different online social and learning dynamics. E-mail correspondence (including person-to-person correspondence and listserv) is used for enhancing person-person and person-class interactions. Discussion Forums and Chat Rooms are created for enhancing small group working experiences. The communication spaces are also created through inquiry-based, interactive learning processes. Students are encouraged to use three communication spaces to conduct inquiry about, reflect on, analyze, interpret, represent, and communicate ideas and critical issues associated with art and the lives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups (Krug, 1996; 2001).

Multicultural/intercultural approaches and the use of Internet technology are integrated in order to enable students not only to communicate with each other with time and space flexibility, but also to interactively share and recognize different viewpoints, and use their diverse cultural backgrounds as valuable resources to construct knowledge. Indeed, in multicultural art education, teachers should not simply introduce mainstream ideas associated with arts or aesthetics from Western societies. Rather, teachers, in both distance education and conventional education settings, should participate in "cultural translation" (Stuhr, Krug, & Scott, 1995) by introducing arts/things and artists/people (in a broader sense) from diverse social and cultural groups to facilitate students' inquiry about various art worlds. Self-reflexivity, intercultural communication, and critical socio-cultural inquiry are some of methods that need greater attention in art education (McFee & Degge, 1980; Wasson, Stuhr, &
Petrovich-Mwaniki, 1990; Stuhr, 1995; Stuhr, Krug, & Scott, 1995; Freedman & Liu, 1996; Krug, 1996; 2000). Learning about the arts according to such multicultural and intercultural principles can help students to recognize their own worldviews as well as those of others. Furthermore, it can help students to investigate and recognize unequal power structures and contemporary social conditions in relationship to diverse art worlds.

Here are several examples of art educational processes facilitated by intercultural communication. When students investigated ideas of how art is related to their cultural and ethnic identity, several of them understood it in different ways. Using e-mail, students expressed self-reflexively their ideas. To Student R, ethnic identity is not an easy topic to think about. He refers to himself as an American with no special cultural attributes. However, when inquired a specific question about his family's artistic practices, he told a story about a tradition of quilting in his family, and he realized that this tradition is no longer kept in the same way. His mother now records her own history in a fragmented way. He writes:

[...]so all of those stories and histories are left in the quilts. My mother has recently taken up the skill, seemingly in hopes of recording her own history, in its own fragmented way. (Student R, 01/13/2001, listserv)

In a sense, he seems to recognize that tradition is not static and that each generation interprets artistic practices based on its own time in history. In another example, Student I, a senior, music student, identified the relationship between music and her ethnic identity as illustrated in this e-mail message.

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Has anyone listened to traditional Chinese music? I have to admitted that when the first time I listened to it, I was like ‘what the hell is?’ Because this music was totally different then what I’d learned, in terms of styles, scale system, harmony, instrumentation, etc. On the other hand, for me, the first impression for listening the traditional Chinese music would be: ‘this is grandpa’s music, I’m not gonna listen to it.’ (agree with me, Alice?) Until couple years ago, I went to a wonderful concert performed by a group of awesome traditional Chinese musicians, I totally changed my attitude. Finally I followed in love with it, because I know the music represented my ethnic. It’s an unique voice that speaks for all the Chinese. Unfortunately, most of the youth in Taiwan don’t like traditional Chinese music at all; like what I said. They are more and more Americanized, and prefer to Pop, R&B, and hot rock. Where did the wonderful traditional Chinese music go? (Student I, 02/01/2001, listserv)

Because Student I is a music major, she often uses music terminology (e.g. scale system and harmony) in her message. Indeed, this forms an important pretext for making sense out of the role of music in her life. Clearly, she not only reveals her bias toward her own ethnic identity, but also critiques American influence in Taiwan. Several students found her critique about Americanization critical and eye opening, and further reflect on their own thoughts.

I think it would be cool to go to such a different concert. When people ask what kind of music I listen to, I always say ‘everything.’ Of course, this isn’t true because everything I listen to resides in the US. Anyway, wouldn’t it be a cool assignment for us to go to a traditional Chinese concert, or anything different from what we’re used to, and come back and describe the differences? (Student G, 02/01/2001, listserv)

What students learned from these messages goes beyond mere information or a personal story. Through text-based intercultural communication, they are able to read many stories and critiques about their own and others' life attitudes. Moreover, they are able to provide each other further ideas about how they might see their own life attitude in different ways. For example, when Student R indicates that his family tradition of
quilting is being lost, student G suggests to him to learn the skills and continue the tradition, or if he is concerned about his "male" image, he could just start his own new tradition and family story. I believe when students conduct inquiry about the ideas derived from diverse cultural groups, they become aware of their own worldview and they may start to see differences and similarities between them. Students might become more critical toward their own bias, or they might still insist on their own worldview. In either case, the knowledge they learn comes through inquiry, self-reflection, analysis, interpretation, and intercultural communication. This information is not passed down from a textbook or teacher. Rather, it is culturally related to their understanding of an American pluralist society. Learning occurs through consideration of their life experiences, mediated through shared meanings and values, knowledge, and the ways they make sense out of their world.

In *Ethnic Arts Online*, e-mail correspondence included person-to-person and listserv correspondence. Both are asynchronous and text-based. Thus, students could take time to read and write to other users. The course used these communication spaces for informal discussions about ideas related to the course materials. Therefore, students were encouraged to self-reflexively write about their personal ideas and experiences. Often, students started their messages with a short story that might not relate to the course content. For example, in the mid-quarter of Spring 2001's online course, a student's wife delivered a baby. This student started his e-mail message with a short story about how he became busy taking care of the family. Other students in the same course occasionally responded to him and shared with him some personal insights about
family care. In this case, the students treated e-mail correspondence as a personal conversation area. They used it to share with others some important and exciting things in their life.

Self-reflexive experiences can bring in positive stimulation to online learning. Student C from winter 2001's online course told me that "with my other classes, we would never talk about diversity...you would never get to know each other's background, race, religion. [In other classes,] you share your personal story, but it wasn't as deep as in this class. With [this] art class, they more or less spoke about themselves" (Student C, 04/07/2001). Student G from the same online course also indicated that reading and sharing personal stories in an informal way made discussions more interesting, and thus more people would participate in the listserv discussion. Examples like these also show that providing students with an informal conversation area could add another extra-curriculum dimension to the student educational process.

In the previous chapter, I have already indicated ways that students discussed their diverse backgrounds in (re)presenting and negotiating their sense of self and social identities. Here is another brief example from Winter, 2001's online course that suggests that the lack of face-to-face contact not only does not necessarily inhibit, but might even be conducive to generating such intercultural communication. In a weekly study unit on body adornment, the students engaged in an extended discussion of tattoos and body piercing and the issue of social injustice. The following excerpts are selected from a student discussion over the course of more than three weeks (Students of Ethnic Arts Online, February, 2001, listserv).
Student P: For so long I wanted one [Tattoo] on my ankle, but now I've decided to change my mind. I wouldn't want a tattoo to effect my chances of getting a job. If I found a job I wanted in which I would have to wear a skirt, I would be afraid that my boss would think it was unprofessional.

Student R: why would you HAVE to wear a skirt? And once you had the job I think that your work performance would far out weigh a tattoo.

Student M: I think that if I told my grandmother that my boyfriend had a tattoo (he doesn't by the way)...I don't necessarily think that she would flip out...however, a tattoo really isn't her choice of attractive...but she'd accept it.

Student G: I agree with P. I think it is also less acceptable for women to have tattoos, than man. I have heard people that I looked up to, say that guys with tattoos are 'stupid,' but women with tattoos are 'trashy.' But if you're afraid of people stereotyping you, you can always cover tattoos.

Student M: I think that your opinion really has a lot to do with the way that you were brought up For instance, if you were brought up in the slums of a big city...I think that it's more likely that you will accept it or have a tattoo than someone who was brought up in Idaho, or Iowa. Sorry if anyone's from there...I don't mean to offend anyone. I do believe that there will always be a negative image of EVERYTHING...not just tattoos. There will always be someone out there breaking the rules, or rough-housing...Likewise...I believe that racism and prejudice will never go away because of the ignorance in our society today...If someone wants a tattoo...then let them...It's not your concern. :)

Student N: I agree with C when she says that many of the negative attitudes of tattooing will fade as the older generation moves. This process will probably take a long time though, because each consecutive generation will be influenced by the previous one, and there will still be some opposition to tattooing.

Student D: I think that the reason there are (mis)conceptions about women having tattoos and being trashy, is because many of the women we see with tattoos are the ones who flaunt them, as well as other things. They do things to impress men and women. This can also include their style of dress. We will rarely see women who have tattoos for a more personal basis, and so therefore we assume that the trashy ones speak for the rest of the women.

Student G: I've had my tongue and my belly button pierced. It was a spur of the moment kind of thing. I was also embarrassed to talk to my sweet old grandma with that metal in my mouth. Even one more reason, is that I really didn't want to be associated with people who get pierced, just to flaunt it,
Student R: who are these people you speak of the... flaunty ones. I have had my tongue pierced for well over five years now and I remember when I first got it I showed it to people, friends & family mostly. Before that I had my lip pierced. I guess that it was around 1995 and at that point the only people you saw on TV with anything pierced, other than the navel, were dirty punk rockers with safety pins, or tribes people on discovery channel. Why were you so embarrassed to your sweet old grandmother and to the 7 year olds both?

Student R: why would you think that everyone who flaunts or shows off his or her tattoos is just to do something that everyone else is doing. Many people who are proud of what they believe in like to talk or show you their feelings.

Student M: Not to take sides or anything...or to put words in D's mouth. But sometimes I feel like people do it just for the attention...I mean...do biker dudes really have to ride their bikes without shirts on!? Not the kind of thing I like to see on a daily basis...Unfortunately because the majority of biker people have tattoos and usually wear cut off leather...tattoos and flaunting them have become a characteristic of them...

Student R: quite amusing, thanks I needed a laugh but in the bikers defense, I would rather see some nasty 'biker dude' blazin' ink than some girl wearing acid wash, denim pants with an extremely high waist, with matching puffy socks-sweat shirt-and ear rings...feel free to replace anything denim that has leather, mesh, or extra denim, applied.... for the look! iiiiiicckkkk!!

Student D: Besides a couple of my friends having tattoos and not being showy, I have yet to see a majority that doesn't flaunt it. It's just an opinion of what I see. I even said that my statement was due to my surroundings and opinion. :) 

Student R: I'm not disagreeing with you, entirely I feel that a lot of people are showy and a large portion of those people are in it for the attention it is unfortunate for those who have done it for other reasons and now have to live with the stigma.

The students raised many interesting points regarding gender, class, subcultural groups, and even geographical and generational preconceptions relating to tattoos and body piercing in contemporary American society. The students could not see each other,
and were therefore unable to know ahead of time if any of their classmates had any such body adornments in public view. Perhaps for this reason, a couple students felt comfortable enough to make claims that most women and certain other groups like "biker dudes" who engage in body adornment do so to "flaunt" it, "just for the attention" (Student D, 02/12/2001, listserv). This evoked reflexive responses like the ones from students G and R who, indeed, had engaged in body adornment.

As the conversation continued to unfold, the students clarified and refined their perspectives, and managed to relate it to issues regarding the "unfortunate" effects of stereotypes and social stigmas. In this case, the listserv facilitated just the type of intercultural inquiry and interaction the course tries to encourage.

The discussion forum is employed to foster small group learning dynamics. Each quarter, students were assigned group projects. A group from Spring 2001's quarter used the discussion forum to talk about and organize their group project. In the beginning, each member of this group posted their writings related to their project content to the discussion forum. Then, they started posting short comments about how to put everyone's work together. During this time, one member also requested other means of communication, such as chat rooms and face-to-face discussion, but other members did not seem to be interested in his suggestion. After the discussion of several possibilities for completing the group project, everyone in this group seemed to have an understanding about each other's ability. For example, one member was good at web-design, so he became responsible for producing a final web-based visual (re)presentation for the group project. One member politely recommended himself as
the "leader" of this group, and went on to assign duties and a schedule for everyone. As he wrote,

In any group there need to be a leader or else chaos ensues...how about we gone for Friday...U, if you can give me an intro...X, if you can find pictures...Does this sound good to every one. Please give me your yes by tomorrow" (Student S, 05/23/2001)

This suggestion was welcomed and accepted by all other members. After these two members volunteer their own roles for the project, another member volunteered himself as the editor for putting all the writing together. Then, this group concentrated their discussion on the content and organization of the project. The topic of their project was art and environment. Members had written individual studies related to architecture and graffiti art. In the beginning, they could not find common ground to tie their individual studies together. Therefore, they spent days figuring out what the main argument was and how different ideas could be related easily in their project. Finally, they agreed to discuss

the relationship that architecture has on lives, and how certain things can be improved (homes, ugly buildings, even highway overpasses, I think they should have paintings)...we could talk about new design possibilities, artistic expression side of architecture, careless planning of suburban developments, the integration of nature and architecture... (Student U, 05/24/2001)

Subsequently, four outlines and details were posted, critiqued, and edited. A draft visual presentation posted on a personal web site was also tested to ensure that all content, every link, and page were working properly.

As the leader of this group once wrote, "Guys, I think we can make the best presentation out of everyone in the class!!!" (Student S, 05/24/2001), I believe this
group of students was proud of their work. The online social and learning dynamics fostered through this communication space indicate students' ability to function as both independent thinkers and group learners. Throughout the entire group work, these students decided the content, individual duties, and the schedule on their own. These decisions were not made by one person, but as a collective decision. Through exchanging ideas about art and environment, students in this case were exposed to different knowledge and issues. They learned about architecture and suburban developments in different cities, the debates about the use of land and water resources, and the artistic side of design. Students also learned problem-solving skills. They had to find the ways to conduct the group discussion. They tried to find the common arguments among each individual's work. They also had to deal with technological difficulties related to web design. This last issue, for some other students in the same course, was not even considered as a necessary part of the online learning process so that they did not try to present their project using web-design.

Chat rooms provide another critical communication space that can foster small group learning dynamics, but in different ways. Chat rooms are synchronous and text-based. Every one has to log into the same chat room at the same time. One group of students used a chat room to conduct their discussions for the group project. They chose this communication space because they could have discussions done all together within several hours, although they did not select a leader and assign duty for everyone. It seemed apparent to me that one person dominated the conversation, while others went along with her decisions. This group's topic was recreation and leisure, and the
examples the group had were rather diverse. In the beginning, they did not see any connection between each other's work: American quilts, Korean martial arts, and body adornment. They started with telling each other about the country where they were practiced, the makers, and the audiences of those works. They became interested in different functions, cultural values, and the age and gender implications in each different society. Then, they talked about their own stereotypes regarding those works. For example, quilting is associated with woman and the lower-class; people in the U.S. practice martial arts for fun (as opposed to the military training in Korea); and tattoos are often associated with certain age and social groups. This group of students was from various countries and each one of them had profound knowledge about the social and cultural background information regarding the work studied; therefore, during the discussion they were able to provide first-hand information to clarify stereotypes and misconceptions about the works.

The learning dynamic fostered by chat rooms is similar to discussion forums; yet, because the group did not plan to spend days or weeks for group discussion, their chat room discussion was highly focused on the task in order to get the outline and main topics done within several hours. They did not spend time arguing, negotiating, and editing outlines and details back and forth. Rather, after they had a rough idea of the main topics for the project, they started fitting their own part of the study into the outline. Time-effectiveness seemed important for their educational process. They worked as a group but preferred developing details independently.
Because the chat room resembles real-time conversation, students often had to read and respond to other chat members in a short time. To some students, it was not easy because they did not have enough time to think about what the other members were writing before generating their own careful responses. Therefore, in the above case, students came up with a rough outline and each one was only responsible for his or her own part.

Most of my interviewees agree that a chat room is not easy to use because everyone has to log into the same room at the same time. It can take them a while to finally decide the date and time for a chat. Some students only have thirty minutes connecting time to the Internet, so it becomes "annoying" to keep logging in and asking where the conversation is. They also agree that it is difficult to keep up with the group conversation because the texts in chat rooms do not come out in order. Two students, however, enjoyed chat room discussions because, among the various communication spaces, a chat room provided a type of learning dynamic that most closely resembles that of conventional classes. These students posted their positive responses to the class.

I like our group chat very much. It seems that before we all just posted our responses and no one had any way of telling if anyone had even read their posting. But this time, we could talk to one another directly and have a dialogue in real time. We had to make time for it and for each other. We really became classmates finally. (Student Y, 02/2000, personal communication)

Chat room is easy for me, I like chatting and responding to people right away! (Student M, 03/2001, personal communication)

From the above examples, I gather that three communication spaces are particularly useful for facilitating intercultural communication. *Ethnic Arts Online* is
based on two interrelated aspects of interculturalism. First, the basic goal of the course is to help students recognize and to develop respect for the "things" people make that are of value in their everyday life (Krug, 1996). Second, the students in the class generally come from a diverse set of cultural backgrounds (with respect to age, class, gender, ethnicity, and geography). These two are interrelated because students are encouraged to develop their multicultural and intercultural inquiry in part through ethnographic investigation and discussions with each other about their own diverse backgrounds and experiences (Krug, 1996; 2001). With the implementation of various intercultural communication spaces, students are able to learn from each other the course materials and diverse backgrounds from inquiry-based online interactions. Therefore, even without the benefit of face-to-face contact, virtual art educational processes can be meaningfully enhanced.

The Emergence of Multicultural Education

In my teaching, I am highly aware of educational beliefs and practices. Educators (Apple, 1990; 1995; 1996; Banks, 1997a; Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Hernández, 2001) have identified some of these as the school-as-social-control theory, the mainstream-centric curriculum, and the hidden curriculum. These are derived from a traditional notion of American education. Yet, with the proliferation of the computer and Internet technologies in today's society and schools, and with increasing awareness of cultural diversity, educators should be constantly re-examining those traditional notions of education in order to generate attitudes and practices better suited to contemporary realities. Multicultural education is one such contemporary stance.
American society is multicultural and students' technosocial life is technology-mediated. Universities have been offering more classes aimed at enhancing students' multicultural and technology experiences. For example, an undergraduate General Education course, like Ethnic Arts, is specifically designed to enhance students' learning and experience of cultural and social diversity. Therefore, as an online instructor and distance education researcher, I also want to ask: How can multicultural and intercultural educational processes be facilitated—even strengthened—by virtual classes? How can the specific communications tools of a virtual class (with its emphasis on space-time flexibility and disembodied, text-based communication) structure different intercultural communicative dynamics?

As one of the most influential approaches of American education since the 1960s, multicultural education has undergone various phases of (re)conceptualization and (re)interpretation (Hernández, 2001). In what follows, I provide some discussions regarding the emergence of multicultural education. To understand the growth and significance of multicultural education, I start with examining some traditional beliefs and practices of American education. These traditional notions, while generally considered inadequate to prepare students for today's multicultural, democratic, and globalized nation, are still practiced in many academic disciplines and in many classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Hernández, 2001). In this respect, multicultural education, among many other educational beliefs and practices, is promoted so as to abolish those traditional notions and suggest more adequate (e.g. 171

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more democratic, learner-centered, culturally relevant) learning processes for today's
students.

Through examination of some purposes of education, teacher-student
interaction, and knowledge taught in classrooms from past to present, educators (Apple,
1990; 1995; 1996; Banks, 1997a; Hernández, 2001) have identified specifically three
major traditional approaches to education: social control theory, mainstream-centric,
and hidden curriculum.

Michael Apple's (1990) social control theory describes the purpose of education
and the design of the curriculum as echoing and preserving existing social privileges,
interests, and knowledge. Historically, what is taught—values, knowledge and
skills—in schools reflects the larger context of the institutions that surround them.
During the nineteenth century, the role of formal education in the U.S. tended to be
concerned with the standardization of educational environments, about teaching,
through day-to-day school interaction, moral, normative, and dispositional values.
Curriculum and classroom activities were designed to echo middle-class values, social
norms, national identity, and economic progress. In the early twentieth century, in order
to solve the economic and living problems of the city, the school curricula were
designed to teach people about the traditional values of community life, the norms and
dispositions required of industrious, thrifty, and efficient workers for an industrial base.
By teaching specific skills and behavior patterns, school curricula helped produce better
and more efficient workers and citizens according to the needs of the particular social
formation. From the colonial period, the language of social control and homogenization
had dominated educational rhetoric. Through the learning of selective knowledge, students understood their roles in the larger context of society, how to be good citizens, and the common values that were supposed to be shared by society (Apple, 1990).

Apple's (1990; 1995) research of school curricula indicates that education is influenced by various power relations, such as those implicated in the national economy, urban communities, and particular social classes. Knowledge, values, and skills taught in classrooms are constructed out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and reorganize these particular interests groups. In his view, school is not a neutral agent that embraces, (re)produces, and passes down the knowledge of people of all kinds. Knowledge is not locally generated; thus, it may appear to be irrelevant or contradictory to actual students' family or community life experiences (Hernández, 2001). In a traditional view, students are passive learners who sit in classrooms in order to learn only what their teachers pass down to them. Thus, for example, the kind of knowledge that has been included in traditional curricula, as well as in daily classroom events, reflect the values and attitudes of several dominant interests groups, such as white-Anglo-Saxon-Protestants, nationalists, parents, and business corporations (Banks, 1997a).

Several educators (Apple, 1990; 1995; Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Banks, 1997a) have studied the problems of school knowledge, or so-called "legitimate knowledge" (Apple, 1990). They argue that children are forced to conform to the values of certain interests groups on a national scale. For example, Banks (1997a) indicates that from a historical viewpoint, U.S. political and social institutions have developed from a
Western European tradition. The English language is the primary and official language brought in by immigrants from Great Britain. The American legal system is derived from English common law. The middle-class value system has been modified from a European system. Even the ways of thinking, reading, and writing are based on a Socratic linear system of logic. American formal institutions, including: government, schools, social welfare, banks, businesses, and laws, are guided by strong Anglo-Saxon influence and, therefore, embrace the particular traditions, values, and needs of this group (Williams, 1976). For instance, the early idea of using the school to assimilate people of different ethnic groups reveals discourses aimed at maintaining national culture.

Banks (1997a) further identifies the formation and problems of the mainstream-centric curriculum derived from the value system of mainstream interest groups. Western traditionalist Ravitch’s (as cited in Banks, 1997a) beliefs reflect the school curricula in the early twentieth century. In the mainstream-centric approach, events, themes, concepts, and issues were viewed primarily from the perspective of middle-class Anglo-Americans and Europeans. Ravitch argues that the West, as defined and conceptualized in the past, should be a focus in school and college curricula because of the major influence of Western civilization and culture in the United States and throughout the world. Thus, in traditional curricula, textbooks, and teaching materials about American history, America is perceived as having been "discovered" by European explorers such as Columbus and Cortes. The existence of “native” people in America is
ignored. The relation between native people and newcomers is distorted. In this way, school curricula may help establish distorted relation among various groups.

Educators (Apple, 1995; Hernández, 2001) are also concerned about the practice of hidden curriculum in classrooms. Hernández (2001) indicated that in a classroom, teacher and students often negotiate two interrelated curricula.

The first one is visible, transmitted through the formal structure of academic content, planned learning experiences, and instructional materials. The second, [...] is invisible, hidden in the interactional, social, management, and organizational aspects of classroom life. (p. 159)

This latter one is the so-called hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum often time reflects a teacher's values, beliefs, judgements, and expectations about student behavior. A teacher expects students to behave, interact with others, and participate in class activities in certain ways. These expectations are not written in the learning materials. Rather, they are passed down through teacher-student interaction in day-to-day classroom activities. For example, a teacher might interact with one group of students more frequently than another group depending on gender preference or academic achievement. A teacher might reveal certain biases in the classroom when facilitating classroom activities. For instance, a teacher might assign boys or high-achieving students the leadership roles in a group project while expect girls or timid students to be teachers' assistants.

These traditional perspectives of education have influenced teaching and learning strategies, teacher-student interaction, and knowledge construction. They
reinforce the idea that teachers are authoritarian figures and sole knowledge providers in the classroom. A traditional pedagogical strategy is to "transmit" knowledge to students. Students as passive learners accept knowledge, values, and skills from a dominant group's perspective. In such settings, students participate little in the process of learning. Their role, instead, is to receive and recall factual information about which they will subsequently be tested. Moreover, social, cultural, ethnic, political, and racial contexts are not applied and valued as legitimate knowledge. Thus, this kind of education generally lacks social interaction as an instructional strategy. It also ignores the cultural and social impact of students' construction of knowledge.

The emergence of multicultural education has challenged such traditional notions regarding school knowledge, teacher- and student-student interaction, and curricular contents. Since the civil rights movement of the 1960s, the rethinking of U.S. cultures based on diverse races, genders, classes, ethnic groups, and many other aspects has affected curricular workers, teachers, students, business corporations, and politicians to construct different approaches to knowledge, curricula, and classroom activities. Multicultural education promoted during the middle of the twentieth century provided solutions for social problems and the improvement of educational quality. The serious conflicts between different groups in school and society challenged what had been believed to be legitimate knowledge. The common core of culture and its values as opposite to subcultural groups were deconstructed and reinterpreted in order to give a new understanding of American national culture. As the nation recognized the contribution of each major subgroup, gender, and class from historical, political, and
economic points of view, the school curriculum underwent reform. The diverse groups' history and contributions were mentioned in textbooks, teaching materials, and classroom events. However, at that time period and even now, the concept and practice of multicultural education continues to be the subject of debate as it constantly challenges existing power relations. As educators have asserted (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Banks, 1997b), multicultural education seeks to legitimize and promote social change and social reconstruction. It is this belief that threatens conservative groups who seek to maintain the nation's Anglo-Saxon heritage, cultural privilege, and existing social structure (Banks, 1997b).

Although some debates still center around what values and whose knowledge should be passed down, most educators agree that knowledge should not be presented merely from a dominant cultural group's point of view. Multicultural education is a means for positively using cultural diversity in the total learning process. A critical element is the incorporation of issues and strategies related to membership in different social allegiances based on race and gender (Krug 2000). Educators (Banks, 1997b; Gollnick & Chinn, 1998) have noted that if school teachers continuously address only one dominant group and its value system without referring to its interrelationships with the others, students will begin to think that they are totally separate elements of multicultural education. Students will feel that they are observing utterly "other" cultural activities. Teachers will have difficulties breaking the boundaries between the members of different groups. Intercultural communication, therefore, is an important aspect of approaches to multicultural education. Through intercultural communication,
students of diverse social groups are encouraged to explore and share their cultural differences and similarities. Students should be encouraged to participate in intercultural communication. Perspectives of a single dominant group are not only valid source of values and knowledge to which students are exposed.

The multicultural curriculum is still in its developing stages in many educational institutions (Banks, 1997b). Because of political resistance and the lack of in-depth knowledge about ethnic groups among school teachers, many teachers base their work on curriculum guidelines/standards and personal experiences through contact with their students of different race, culture, religion, and class, and develop their own teaching strategies through interacting with students. Gollnick and Chinn (1998) state:

Multicultural education is the educational strategy in which students' cultural backgrounds are viewed as positive and essential in developing classroom instruction and school environments. It is designed to support and extend the concepts of culture, cultural pluralism, and equality into the formal school setting. (p. 5)

Students have individual differences even though they may appear to be from the same cultural group. These differences extend beyond intellectual, physical abilities, and appearances. Students bring to a class different historical backgrounds, learning styles, and day-to-day living experiences. These experiences influence the way the students interact in the classroom and the way they cooperate with each other. The differences between home and school environments may cause confusion between teacher and students, classroom disharmony, disorientation of classroom settings,
emotional stress, and communication problems. In applying intercultural teaching strategies, teachers should encourage communication among students and to develop a supportive environment. McFee (in Grigsby, 1977) indicates that any barrier to interaction between students and other classroom members may be due to

[....] cultural differences in values, attitudes and belief systems which must be bridged for the teacher to understand the student's background in order to created a learning situation that will have meaning. (McFee cited in Grigsby, 1977, p. x)

Teachers can encourage students to show their acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity to motivate students' positive and active participation in classroom activities. In this way, they can also encourage students to negotiate ideas derived from their own cultural backgrounds. Knowledge, therefore, can be constructed collectively and collaboratively among students.

The Implications of Technology

With the proliferation of the computer and Internet technology in today's society and schools, multicultural educational approaches may face different challenges. As I mentioned earlier, an important concept of multicultural education is to critically engage in inquiry about processes, and not merely from the mainstream interest group's viewpoint. In this regard, the implications of technology seem contradictory. After all, the implementation itself of computer and Internet technology in the classroom reflects mainstream values and may further establish economic class or gender differences among students (DeVillar & Faltis, 1991; Huber & Schofield, 1998). On the other hand, as I have discussed in Chapter 5 and in this chapter, technologies (e.g. communication
spaces) can also enable social and educational interaction among students and teacher in order that diverse cultural experiences be shared. Pros and cons of integrating technologies to a classroom are indeed critical and should be taken into consideration when developing a multicultural and intercultural learning environment for the virtual class (Krug 2000).

Several ideas associated with the use of computer technology and the Internet reveal mainstream values at the national scale. When the military, the government, manufacturers, and medical corporations demand cost-effective, skillful laborers to operate high-tech equipment, schools respond to their needs. As Bromley (1996) points out, hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent on hardware and software in the hopes of “equipping” students with skills that are said to be needed in today’s world of intense economic competition. Pressures also come from some local community members, such as middle-class parents with jobs centered on manipulating information, whose own upward mobility appears to have depended on values and skills connected to technical knowledge, and who consequently place such a sensibility at the forefront of what they expect schools to do for their children. For such parents, a technology-integrated curriculum appears to guarantee that these particular students will be ready for the demands of the best universities and the increasingly competitive paid labor markets later on (Bromley, 1996, p. 2).

Bromley (1996) also explains some beliefs behind the use of computer technology in education. The computer functions as a symbol of the equality of education children are receiving. It enables various interest groups to attach to it distinct
meanings and to use it as a shared vision for the future. The power of this symbol is increased due to several assumptions associated with the technology. For example, computing technology ostensibly benefits all students equally. It is seen as a neutral instrument with no connection to the unequal distribution of power along lines of race, gender, class, and religion. Access to such technology guarantees upward social mobility. Wider use of high technology will elevate the United States economically. Among other assumptions about the use of technology are that in the business world, it enables manufacturing companies to produce more products with fewer employees; that in the educational world, it enables more learning to happen without hiring more teachers. Just as Roger C. Schank, director of the Institute for the Learning Sciences at Northwestern University, said, "we need a way to economically provide individualized instruction, and computers provide that economy" ("Business Week," 1994, p.82).

Though some of these beliefs around computing technologies may seem too idealistic and require further research for their long-term effects, technology advocates still hold strong beliefs about their educational potential in schools. A different way of applying economic logic to schools is to treat them as a potential market or a customer base. With several million microcomputers already in U.S. schools alone, educational institutions are a significant source of sales for both hardware and software manufacturers.

While computer technology may give hope for the future, the prevalent use of computer technologies in schools also implies the issue of unequal power in the classroom. Teachers and students operating under such controversial conditions face
new challenges. Historically, in classrooms, some groups and individuals have more power than others due to better access to "legitimate knowledge" and their status in society, as I have already discussed. Accordingly, the presence of new technology in the classroom may actually generate greater differences in knowledge, skills, and access. As Bromley (1996) asserted:

Understanding the effect of adding a potent artifact like the computer to the classroom, hence, requires perceiving whatever aspects of the social structure involve power differentials. Controlling the effects of new technologies may well necessitate altering social relationships rooted in unequal power. (p. 5)

No matter how paradoxical the implications of technology are, it is most likely that such technology has become part of students' everyday life. Therefore, an equally important issue that teachers have to deal with in their day-to-day teaching is how they can effectively integrate the computer and Internet technology in order to strengthen multicultural and intercultural educational processes.

A number of researchers have examined issues regarding multiculturalism and intercultural communication in technology-integrated working and educational environments (DeVillar & Faltis, 1991; Freedman & Liu, 1996; Clinch, 1997; Duchastel, 1997; Huber & Schofield, 1998; Starkey, 1998; Fabos & Young, 1999; Hakken, 1999, Krug 2000). Some educational researchers (DeVillar & Faltis, 1991; Freedman & Liu, 1996; Starkey, 1998) claim that distance education has enhanced cultural awareness. A common understanding among this research is that through various technological means (e.g. the Internet, electronic mail, multimedia, etc.),
students are able to explore locally and internationally different artifacts, languages, places, and people. Therefore, Freeman and Liu (1996) and DeVillar and Faltis (1991) argue that knowledge about people, artifacts, and the life of other cultural groups can be brought to light in a larger cultural context. Schofield (1995) and Lai (1996) assert that because of the lack of social cues in an on-line learning environment, students most likely will pay more attention to the content of the message. They believe that distance education can provide students with a non-threatening climate. It helps to create a comfortable atmosphere for students to ask questions and interact with others. It can also help to build an environment of equal learning opportunities in which everyone can have a voice and voices can be heard.

On the other hand, researchers (Fabos & Young, 1999; Stankiewicz & Garber, 2000) have also addressed critically the problematic implementation of multiculturalism in distance education. Fabos and Young (1999) call attention to questionable phenomena such as on-line learners fashioning themselves as electronic tourists from the safety of their computer screen and a dominant American perspective. They have noticed that when students compare and contrast arts of diverse cultural groups and conduct cross-cultural communication, American students' understandings about others are often based on American cultural and Western views. This may privilege notions of Western imperialism. Fabos and Young (1999) indicate: "The value of community is emphasized, but it is not yet clear whether a high level of community, and thus a high level of learning, can be achieved with the distance and invisibility of e-mail interaction" (p. 227).
Jonassen (1996) and Jonassen, Peck, and Wilson (1999) argue that learning with technology requires different pedagogical strategies based on the type of technology teachers want to implement into their class. The behaviorists' notions of "stimulus" and "reinforcement" are not appropriate in a technology-integrated classroom and distance education. Traditionally, teaching strategies are based on ideas of training, memorization, and practice in order for teachers to successfully transmit knowledge. Today, new computer technologies, such as the Internet, satellite broadcasting, and electronic mail, allow teachers to conduct lessons in various ways. Information can be given from many different agents. Instead of having students memorize facts, teachers are capable of giving rich contextual information and guidance. Students are also capable of making meaning out of facts in relation to a larger context.

Jonassen, Peck, and Wilson (1999) point out that teaching is a process of helping learners to construct their own meaning from the experiences they have by providing those experiences and guiding the meaning-making process. Their constructivist belief in using technology has strongly emphasized that the teacher's job is not simply to provide knowledge but also to guide students building up their own learning strategies so they can find their own ways to grasp, generate, and apply knowledge. With distance education, students need to see interactions with technology as part of the knowledge construction process. For example, they need to understand how and why they select certain information from the Internet. To Jonassen, Peck, and Wilson (1999), using the Internet can stimulate students' cognitive development when their learning processes constantly require them to make decisions or solve problems.
based on their own thinking. In this sense, students do not merely learn knowledge from their teachers, but also from multiple agents, including themselves. Moreover, technology should be integrated into the curriculum not merely as a tool for completing assignments. The computer and Internet technology should be used to strengthen communication among students so they are able to exchange their ideas, work collaboratively, and generate new knowledge.

An on-line project, *A World Community of Old Trees*, created by Julian (1997) attempts to provide insight for teachers about implementing various computer technologies in their classroom. Julian believes in the interactive nature of networks and their lack of hierarchy as a metaphor for the technological culture and teaching strategies which involves the concepts of non-linearity, linking, interactivity, interconnectedness, cross-culture, openness, non-hierarchy, decentering, and a web model. (Julian, 1997). In her project, teachers around the world with access to the Internet are able to view artworks of their own students as well as of other teachers'. In this way, they are able to talk and show visuals of the artwork created by the people that they can interact with, ostensibly providing teachers a way to motivate their students to practice a purposeful social interaction with people outside of school. At the same time, knowledge about trees, in this case, is intended to be explored within a large cultural context. Teachers, therefore, facilitate students' construction of knowledge based on their sense of and interaction with the world.

Starkey (1998) conducted research to investigate the use of computers in classrooms, The International Communication of Negotiation Simulation (ICONS), at
the University of Maryland. New technology, ICONS, was seen as a tool. It allowed students to send and receive electronic mail. It also allowed an on-line, real-time conference for discussion. It was designed to enhance cultural awareness and promote a collaborative learning model. Facilitated by ICONS, students were able to use the computer to achieve an authentic and purposeful cross-cultural learning, locally and internationally. Starkey (1998) concluded that this distance element of the ICONS model, therefore, enhanced the building of a new kind of classroom culture. While the on-line discussions focused attention on the computer, the operation of local-teams was dependent on traditional interpersonal interaction and cooperation. An active, collaborative learning strategy became evident among students.

Starkey's (1998) research identified three levels of interaction enhanced by ICONS as central to the learning process: (1) between-team interaction among peers representing different countries and sending messages via the computer network, (2) within-team interaction and co-construction of messages in oral discourse resulting in message entry, and (3) individual processing and cognitive restructuring. Learning with computers affects student interaction and knowledge construction. In the above case, in order for students to gain essential knowledge to achieve their goals, they need teachers' supports, both technological and intellectual. In addition, students also need to learn collaboratively so that they are able to make a decision for the team. As a team, students understand things through negotiation; therefore, knowledge is generated among students, not simply from teachers or textbooks. The active interaction among teachers,
students, and computers is intense and becomes a vital element in such a computer technology-integrated learning environment.

The Changing Dynamics in the Virtual Class

The implementation of communications spaces like chatrooms, discussion forums, and listservs, I believe, can serve to challenge many traditional classroom practices by promoting not teacher-centered but students-centered interaction. Students as a whole group used these communication spaces and were able to conduct inquiry, discuss ideas and construct knowledge collectively. Although there were required readings and there was an "instructor" who laid out the curriculum for them, students' analyses of issues related to ethnic arts were not merely from those pre-determined learning materials. Nor were they encouraged/allowed to simply repeat what they read from the course readings or other people's e-mail messages. Students learned to negotiate ideas, solve personal conflicts, be critical and self-reflective, and build online social skills. These experiences and skills indeed help students construct knowledge based on diverse cultural contexts and become active learners.

A shift in the teachers' role and behavior is apparent in an online class. Specifically, the teacher functions less as an authoritative expert and more as a collaborator. In these online courses, rather than address the entire class in a relatively formal manner, as an instructor, I could work on an individual basis with students through person-to-person e-mail correspondence. I was often kept busy responding to student requests for assistance, either regarding technical advice or assignment problems. Students realized that the instructor is not always available in timely manner,
and they sometimes initiated discussion and interaction with other members. They even set up their own preference for the amount of discussion and certain discussion topics. This indicates shifting control for initiating class interaction more into the hands of the students'. I also believe that in an online class, an instructor can facilitate more teacher-student and student-student interaction than conventional classes. Teacher and students are able to understand each other's working habits and negotiate with each other working progress.

When students work with the computer, they often show varying degrees of working progress, but an instructor is still able to understand their pace and give individuals help. Some students progressed much faster than others. Yet, the faster students were not held back by an instructor's desire or need to teach the class as a whole. Neither could the slower students skip over the problems that gave them difficulty in accomplishing a task and hope to do better in another. In this way, an online instructor did not merely focus on a whole group's learning outcome but also on individuals' learning.

Another aspect of students' learning strategies fostered by active social interaction includes students becoming self-motivated, self-reflective, and active learners. As the examples analyzed throughout this dissertation indicate, students were motivated by the sense of flexibility in discussion topics and the ability to link assignments to their own interests. Several students reminded each other about the deadline of the assignments and asked each other for feedback on their assignment. Moreover, students' involvement with learning with online technology might imply a
decreased fear of embarrassment. Interacting with teachers and other students through a
computer was likely to lessen the emphasis on learning as a public performance in
which one's values are either affirmed or undermined. Such a learning environment
provided students with a non-threatening climate and created a comfortable atmosphere
for them to conduct inquiry and interact with others.

The students' relations with the teacher changed as they moved from whole class
instruction to the virtual class. In the virtual class, students' attention was not typically
directed toward a teacher standing at the front of the room supplying them with
information they were expected to learn. Rather, the students' task was to complete an
assignment using whatever resources were available, including their own, their peers',
and their teacher's knowledge. Students worked on their projects as individuals,
requesting the teacher's assistance when they felt they needed it. In this setting, teacher-
student interactions were less likely to be authority-initiated demands for attention or
information and more likely to be student-initiated requests for assistance.

It seems apparent to me that students were able to build social interaction using
communications spaces and to discuss issues of cultural diversity using personal
experience and information from the learning materials. This at least indicates that
technology can bridge learners together and help them to overcome time and space
limitations. This also indicates that multicultural and intercultural learning processes
can be effectively achieved.

In the virtual class, students can also conduct inquiry about art and cultural
diversity, but with its own set of processes and dynamics. First of all, because the online
A virtual class is time and space flexible, it allows prolonged discussions, for example, over a listserv. I believe a lecture kind of introduction on course contents, such as concepts of culture should be avoided. Instead, by taking advantage of time and space flexibly, students should be encouraged to explore course concepts and issues by asking questions, challenging each other about stereotypes, and sharing personal cultural stories.

Art education should allow diverse voices and diverse investigation and interpretation of arts from a wide variety of cultural groups. Investigation of such issues as artists' race, gender, class, and education should also be included in an online arts curriculum. In the virtual class, these issues can be investigated critically through text-centered communication that can reinforce students' awareness of diverse values, arts, artists, and artworlds. Intercultural communication is a vital pedagogical consideration in both conventional and online Ethnic Arts classes. Students' multicultural and intercultural learning has to rely on their day-to-day class social interaction, not merely on textbooks or the instructor's lecture. This allows students to negotiate with the teacher, as a social control agent, and other peers' biased values and expectations constituted by other social control agents. As a result, students' learning becomes relevant to their lives, and intellectual development can be meaningfully fostered.

The Implications of Virtual Art Education

Welcome to the world where students never have to come to class and where they can turn in homework assignments at three o'clock in the morning. Welcome to a class in which the instructor and students can neither see nor hear each other, but in
which class participation is a crucial component of the learning experience and student assessment. Welcome to the world of virtual classes.

As computer technologies, in particular those that employ the Internet, continue to become an important aspect of students' life, and as universities seek to promote distance education, virtual classes are becoming increasingly widespread. Yet, the implementation of virtual classes is not simple. Faculty who teach virtual classes require training in technology and technology staff support. In addition, not only do technologies constantly change, so do the policies regarding how to support faculty. Visually-rich classes like *Ethnic Arts*, moreover, require extra careful planning regarding the design, layout, and presentation of course websites. Finally, consideration of students' access to, familiarity with, and skills in using the necessary technologies for participating in a course must be taken seriously in its planning.

The virtualization of classes is not a matter of apocalyptic science fiction or de-realization, but a way to reconfigure conventional classes in order to respond to educational needs in a more generalized manner. Internet-based virtual classes, specifically, do so by providing greater flexibility in space and time through text-based communication spaces that do not require (but are also unable to facilitate) face-to-face discussion. Thus, they operate according to an educational problematic which has its own spatio-temporal and communicative dynamics and logic. This implies the need to come to terms with virtual classes not merely as more flexible versions or technological extensions of conventional classes, but as classes with many of their own distinctive problems and opportunities. In particular, it requires focusing on virtual classes'
construction of space and time not only as a matter of increased flexibility, but also as a continuously renewed problem that comprises an important aspect of the educational process. In addition, it entails exploring the implications of largely text-based student interaction—its particular strengths and weaknesses, its possibilities and constraints—and how it relates to particular educational goals.

Reflexive educational ethnographic case research methods, therefore, have provided a means for exploring the virtual classes of Ethnic Arts Online in such a way as not to simply impose a priori various categories and assumptions derived from research on conventional education. Ethnographic case research methods and culturalist theories of technology and virtualization have enabled me to experience, observe, and examine critically the communicative dynamics and spatio-temporal logic of virtual classes in relation to the university requirements and pedagogical goals of an intercultural undergraduate course. My research has not been a merely theoretical educational inquiry, nor simply a matter of recounting virtual educational experiences. Rather, combining ethnographic observation, documentation and analysis with theoretical tools of cultural analysis, I have provided an analytical account necessary for art educators to improve existing online courses, as well as a more adequate theoretical framework for researchers in art education to continue investigating technology-integrated culture's impact on the educational process.

The new degrees of freedom entailed by the space-time flexibility of the Internet suggest the possibility of greater interest and motivation for active student participation and interaction in virtual art education courses. Moreover, my experiences have shown
that the virtual class has provided the motivation for many students to seek out further means of interaction with fellow students, virtual (telephone, e-mail, instant messenger), as well as face-to-face (group meetings). On the whole, virtual classes with such communication spaces as chatrooms, discussion forums, and listservs appear to possess the potential for implementing courses promoting student-centered interaction. The virtual class often seems well-equipped for encouraging our technosocial students to take their own initiative regarding their education. Furthermore, because it is largely text-based, it also possesses the potential, not only for helping students improve their writing skills, but also for getting them to understand the importance of writing about the subject of art.

At the same time, however, the text-based virtual classes also entail the lack of many of the features of face-to-face discussion that might be considered integral to the (re)presentation of a sense of self and social identity. In this respect, virtual classes might initially appear to be ill-equipped for providing a sufficient means for multicultural and intercultural educational experiences. Yet, as I have demonstrated in this dissertation, virtual classes do not actually lack the ability to foster intercultural student interaction, but merely provide a different, text-based, means for such interaction. Moreover, such a text-centered experience actually encourages students to reflect on many aspects of their sense of self and social identity because they can only communicate them through use of language. Thus, there are many ways that virtual classes can be employed to facilitate student-centered interaction that is intercultural. In
other words, virtual classes can be used to address and respond to many of the key assumptions and goals of the paradigm of multicultural education.

In short, in this dissertation, employing ethnographic and cultural theoretical research methods, I have examined four major topics regarding online distance education. First, I have theorized the process of virtualization in the case of an Internet-based distance education course and have explored the opportunities and challenges implied by this process and its consequences. Second, I have discussed the formation of the online version of the art education course *Ethnic Arts*. Third, I have examined the students' sense and (re)presentation of social identity through the text-based communication spaces of chatrooms, listservs, and discussion forums. Finally, I have analyzed student interaction in these communication spaces, paying particular attention to its intercultural and educational dynamics, and considering the implications for the assumptions and goals of multicultural education.

As new Internet technologies continue to be developed and improved, and as such technologies are increasingly available to (and encouraged by) universities, the importance of understanding the problems and opportunities of virtual art education critically will continue to grow. Methodologically, this dissertation has attempted to illustrate the benefits of approaching virtual classes, now and in the future, not simply as technology-enhanced conventional educational settings, but as an educational dynamic grounded in space and time flexibility. Furthermore, it has demonstrated the importance of investigating its operation from a reflexive ethnographic perspective, especially in the context of education that is cultural in its content and pedagogical
goals (as is Ethnic Arts). We seem to be entering an age of digital culture. Thus, I have attempted to suggest a research direction for art educators in the future.

Finally, although this dissertation involved the teaching of a university-level art education course, one can readily imagine ways in which virtual class technologies could be usefully incorporated in other forums (like high schools) with the available technology as well. It also suggests the need for educators to consider how best to prepare such students for the virtual classes they will encounter upon entering the university. In short, this dissertation has attempted to prepare the way for improving the implementation and the critical study of virtual art education.
APPENDIX A

Pre-enrollment Test

Questionnaire 1: Personal Information

This series of questions gathers basic information about a student and his/her familiarity with various components needed in a variety of distance education courses.

P1 Please provide the following contact information:
   First name
   Last name
   City & State
   E-mail address
   Work Phone
   Home Phone

P2 If needed, what is the preferred method of contacting you?
   E-mail
   Phone (home)
   Phone (work)

P3 If you checked phone, what times/days are best to contact you?

P4 Class Rank?
   Graduate
   Senior| Junior
   Sophomore
   Freshman
   Continuing Education
   Project 60 Other

P6 What is your previous experience with on-line courses:
   No previous experience with online courses.
   I have taken one previous online course.
   I have taken several previous online courses.

P7 How would you describe your experience level in computer use?
   I use my computer daily.
   I use a computer at least 5 times a week.
   I only use it 1 to 4 times a week.
   I use it only when I need to.
   I avoid it if at all possible.

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P8 How would you describe your experience level in the use of the World Wide Web?

I access the web at least daily.
I access the web at least 5 times per week.
I access the web 1 to 4 times per week.
I access the web only when I need to.
I avoid the web if at all possible.

P9 If you have a personal web page, please enter the location here:
http://

P10 How would you describe your experience level with e-mail?

I am very familiar with e-mail and utilize some advanced features, like message filtering and nicknames files.
I am familiar with e-mail and can do most of the basic features including replying, forwarding, and sending attachments.
I can send and receive mail but don't go much beyond that.
I don't use e-mail much at all.
I don't have an e-mail address, so I don't use e-mail.

P11 During the course, you will be required to access the network during high demand times. For this reason, the use of the OSU modem pool (722-9800 or 722-9900) is not advisable. Do you have an alternative method of accessing the Internet for class work?

From OSU dorm with direct Internet connection.
From OSU office with direct Internet connection.
From home using AOL.
From home using OSUWEB.net.
From home using RoadRunner.

P12 If none of the above, who provides your Internet access (Internet Service Provider - ISP)?

P13 Do you have experience with chat rooms?

I have used a chat service.
I have used a chat service a few/many times to see what it was like.
I have not used a chat service.

P14 Do you have experience with newsgroups?

I read and post to newsgroups regularly.
I utilize them occasionally.
I have heard of them, but I do not use newsgroups.
I don't know what they are.

P15 When attending a new class or meeting, I:

Sit back and observe to see things progress.
Listen for a while then offer my opinion when I have something to contribute.
Actively participate in class discussions.
Frequently start a conversation with the person next to me before class.

P16 The last time I worked in a group setting:

I took a leadership role to get the group started.
I did the part I was assigned, and the group accomplished the task on time.
I worked with the group OK, but I prefer to work independently.
It was a waste of time.

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When installing a new computer program, I:

- Read the instructions carefully, then follow them step by step.
- Glance at the instructions and install the program. If I have a problem, I read more carefully.
- Seldom read the instructions, I just install the program.

I would like to take a distance education course because:

- I am out of the Columbus area.
- I am interested in the subject matter.
- I need it for continuing education/certification credit.
- I work full time, and the course is not offered during a time I could take it.
- I could not fit it into my regular class schedule.
- I am just interested in taking a course using computers.

Considering my schedule, I would have the following amount of time to spend on a 5 credit hour on-line course:

- 10-13 hours per week.
- 7-9 hours per week.
- 4-6 hours per week.
- 1-3 hours per week.

When given a task to do, I prefer:

- Specific step-by-step instructions.
- General directions, but freedom to determine how to accomplish the task.
- Overall objectives, then allowed to be creative.
- No directions; I already know the tasks to accomplish the goal.

My work and personal schedule:

- Is predictable; I have a fairly fixed schedule.
- Is mostly predictable; I sometimes have last minute things that need to be done immediately.
- Is unpredictable; I rarely know what I will be doing next week.
- Requires frequent travel where I may not have access to computers.
- Requires travel, but I have a laptop or easy access to the Internet while away.

The last time I wrote a research paper for class:

- I finished early and turned it in before the due date.
- I did an outline, worked at a steady pace, and turned it in on time.
- I pulled an all nighter and turned it in on time.
- I turned it in a little late.
- It has been a long time since I have written a research paper.
- I have never written a research paper.
Questionnaire 2: System Requirements

Q1 What type of computer system will you be using to complete this course?
   No Selection
   PC 486
   Pentium
   Pentium II
   Pentium III
   Pentium IV
   PC - Other
   Macintosh G3
   Macintosh G4
   Macintosh Power PC
   Macintosh - Other

Q2 What operating system are you using?
   No Selection
   Windows 95/98
   Windows Me
   Windows XP
   Windows 2000
   Windows NT
   Windows 3.1
   Linux
   Mac X
   Mac 9.x
   Mac 8.x
   Mac 7.x
   Other

Q3 How much memory (RAM) does your computer have?
   No Selection
   4 Megabytes or less
   5-32 Megabytes
   33-64 Megabytes
   65-128 Megabytes
   129 or more Meg

Q4 Does your computer have a CD ROM drive?
   Yes
   No
   Don't Know
   No Selection

Q5 Does your computer have a sound card?
   Yes
   No
   Don't Know
   No Selection

Q6 What wordprocessor do you use?
   Word for Office 2000
   Word for Office XP
Word for Office 95-97  
Word (Version 6)  
Word Ver. 2.0-5.0  
WordPerfect  
Word 2001 (Macintosh)  
Word 98 (Macintosh)  
Works  
Other  
No Selection

Q7 What web browser do you use?  
Netscape 6.x  
Netscape 5.x  
Netscape 4.x  
Netscape 3.x  
Internet Explorer 5.x  
Internet Explorer 4.x  
Internet Explorer 3.x  
AOL 6.x  
AOL 5.x  
AOL 4.x  
AOL 3.x  
Other  
No Selection

Q8 If you use a modem, at what speed does it typically connect?  
56Kbs  
33.6Kbs  
28.8Kbs  
14.4Kbs  
9600bps or lower  
Other  
No Selection

Q9 What e-mail program do you use?  
Eudora 5.x  
Eudora 4.x  
Eudora 3.x  
Eudora (older)  
Outlook Express  
Web based  
Other  
Selection

Q10 What virus checker do you have installed?  
McAfee  
Norton  
Don't use virus scanner  
Other  
No Selection

Q11 What is the screen resolution of your computer?  
1600x1200
Questionnaire 3: Tools Set

These questions can be used to ensure your students have the software necessary to complete your course, as well as the knowledge to use the software. Place a check mark to the left of each question you would like to include.
The following tests check the web browser's ability to:

(T2) E-mail: Launch the default e-mail application.
(T3) PDF: Launch Adobe Acrobat reader to view any file with a file type of .pdf. This file type is used by many companies for their documentation. This format is also used at Ohio State and other state and federal government systems to enable typeset documents to display on any computer.
(T4 & T5) Picture size: Determine what size picture displays on the student's screen. This test helps determine what size graphics you should use so pictures leave enough of the screen for the student to read.
(T7, T8, & T9) Real Player G2: To play audio (T7), audio and video (T8), and audio with synchronized PowerPoint slides.
(T9) The test file has been encoded with the latest version G2 of Real Audio.
(T10) To play a common audio format (.wav) on Windows.
(T20) To play Shockwave files, used for animation.
(T21) To play QuickTime files, a popular format for audio and video.

T2 (E-mail) When you click on the link below, does a window for your e-mail open? Please click on Test 2 to perform the test. You do not need to send any mail; this is just to check if your mail program opened a window for a new message.
   Yes
   No
   An error occurred
   No Selection
   (ANSWER: Yes)

T3 (PDF) Open a document file by clicking on the word Eudora. If asked, check the "Open this file from its current location item". What is the first word of the title?
   Eudora
   Electronic
   Document
   An error occurred
   No Selection
   (ANSWER: Electronic)

T4 (Graphics) Click on the word Picture. What is the picture size of this link?
   Full Screen
   Half Screen
   Quarter Screen
   Other
   No Selection
   An error occurred (ANSWER: Quarter Screen)
T7 (Real Player Audio)  Go to National Public Radio to test for streaming audio. To listen to the audio, click on the appropriate speed for your modem in the "Audio" box (Listen to NPR hourly news with RealAudio) on the lower-left side of the screen. Do you hear the NPR broadcast clearly?
   No Selection
   Yes
   No
   An error occurred
   (ANSWER: Yes)

T8 (RealPlayer)  Audio & Video. What is the first word in this clip? You do not need to listen to the entire clip. Be patient as this may take a while before you first hear the audio.
   Hello
   Greetings
   Good Morning
   Boarding
   An error occurred
   No Selection
   (ANSWER: Boarding)

T9 (RealPlayer)  Audio & PowerPoint synchronized slides. What is the smallest line of text you can read comfortably?
   (ANSWER: Depends on student)

T10 (.wav)  What is the first word of this Test 10 file?
   No Selection
   Hello
   Greetings
   Welcome
   An error occurred
   (ANSWER: Welcome)

T20 (Shockwave)  In this test, click on the link below. What do you see when the new window opens? Please click Test 20 to perform test.
   No Selection
   A text screen with blank windows
   Letters dropping down
   An error occurred
   (ANSWER: Letters dropping down)

T21 (QuickTime .mov)  What does the first and last frame of this Test 21 look like?
   No Selection
   Black Screen
   Letter Q with clock hand
   An error occurred
   (ANSWER: Letter Q with clock hand)
Questionnaire 4: Learning Style

L1: This question tests students' learning style and their ability to copy and paste.
L2-L6: These questions test years experience with computers. It is suggested you select all questions from L2-L6 for valid results.
L10-19: These questions test a student's Self Efficacy or how comfortable they are with technology. It is suggested you select all questions from L10-L19 for valid results.
Select the question you want to add by clicking the checkbox to the left of it. Questions previously selected will appear as checked. Once done, click on Submit at the bottom of this page.

L1  What is your learning style? Individuals typically have a preferred learning style. Some learn best by doing a task (kinesthetic or physical style), others by seeing a task done (visual), and still others by hearing it described (auditory). When taking a course using computers, it is important to know personal learning styles of the students, to best meet their needs. For example, since you normally will not hear a professor lecture, a person who is an auditory learner may have more difficulty than one who is a visual learner and who likes to read. To find out what your learning style is, take this quiz (you will need to enter an e-mail address), and copy and paste the results into the box below.
Please copy the results you received and paste them here:

L2  How many years (round to nearest half year) have you owned a personal computer?
   No Selection
   10 or over
   9
   8
   7
   6
   5
   4
   3
   2
   1
   Less than 1

L3  How many years have you been using computers?
   No Selection
   10 or over
   9
   8
   7
   6
   5
   4
   3
   2
   1
   Less than 1
L4  How many college computer courses have you completed?
   No Selection
   10 or over
   9
   8
   7
   6
   5
   4
   3
   2
   1
   Less than 1

L6  How many hours a day (average) do you use your computer, including e-mail and any
    other on-line services?
   No Selection
   10 or over
   9
   8
   7
   6
   5
   4
   3
   2
   1
   Less than 1

L10 I feel more competent with computers than my friends do.
   No Selection
   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

L11 I am afraid of computers.
   No Selection
   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree

L12 I can use a computer without significant difficulty.
   No Selection
   Strongly Agree
   Agree
   Neutral
   Disagree
   Strongly Disagree
L13  I avoid computers as much as possible.
No Selection
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
L14  I easily learn to use new computer programs.
No Selection
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
L15  Using the Internet seems very difficult to me.
No Selection
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
L16  I can accomplish very technical tasks on a computer.
No Selection
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
L17  I feel incompetent when I try to use a computer.
No Selection
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
L18  Learning features available through the Internet is easy for me.
No Selection
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree
L19  E-mail is difficult to use.
Strongly Agree
Agree
Neutral
Disagree
Strongly Disagree

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APPENDIX B

How to Learn Anything...Fast: What is Your Personal Learning Style?

The first secret to making learning easier and faster is understanding your personal learning style. The second secret is to know the most efficient learning style of the task you have chosen to learn. When these two styles match, you will have virtually effortless learning and recall. In order to find out the learning style or styles you prefer, take the following short inventory of 36 questions. Click on the statements you agree with:

1. I prefer to hear a book on tape rather than reading it.
2. When I put something together, I always read the directions first.
3. I prefer reading to hearing a lecture.
4. When I am alone, I usually have music playing or hum or sing.
5. I like playing sports more than reading books.
6. I can always tell directions like north and south no matter where I am.
7. I love to write letters or in a journal.
8. When I talk, I like to say things like, "I hear ya, that sounds good or that rings a bell."
9. My room, desk, car or house is usually disorganized.
10. I love working with my hands and building or making things.
11. I know most of the words to the songs I listen to.
12. When others are talking, I usually am creating images in my mind of what they are saying.
13. I like sports and think I am a pretty good athlete.
14. It's easy to talk for long periods of time on the phone with my friends.
15. Without music, life isn't any fun.
16. I am very comfortable in social groups and can usually strike up a conversation with most anyone.
17. When looking at objects on paper, I can easily tell whether they are the same no matter which way they are turned.
18. I usually say things like, "I feel, I need to get a handle on it, or get a grip."
19. When I recall an experience, I mostly see a picture of it in my mind.
20. When I recall an experience, I mostly hear the sounds and talk to myself about it.
21. When I recall an experience, I mostly remember how I felt about it.
22. I like music more than art.
23. I often doodle when I am on the phone or in a meeting.
24. I prefer to act things out rather than write a report on them.
25. I like reading stories more than listening to stories.
26. I usually speak slowly.
27. I like talking better than writing.
28. My handwriting is not usually neat.
29. I generally use my finger to point when I read.
30. I can multiply and add quickly in my head.
31. I like spelling and think I am a good speller.
32. I get very distracted if someone talks to me when the TV is on.
33. I like to write down instructions that people give me.
34. I can easily remember what people say.
35. I learn best by doing.
36. It is hard for me to sit still for very long.

Your scores are as follows:
Learning Style  Score (Percentage)
  Visual (Picture Style):
  Kinesthetic (Physical Style):
  Auditory (Hearing Style):

The higher the score, the more strongly you prefer that learning style.
Similar or matching scores in two categories simply means that you prefer to learn in more than one style.
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