

Research Proposal
Anthropology 112/326
Title: **Have a Seat: Classroom Dynamics and Seat Selection**

February 17, 2005

Researchers

AH, MG, RM, MC, LW, CA

Objectives

As university anthropology students actively engaged in classroom 'culture' we are interested in exploring the phenomenon of how students physically locate themselves in the classroom context. In addition to investigating the factors that influence seat selection, we will endeavor to gain insight into the question: "Does where you sit in a classroom determine how much you learn?"

Background

The student researchers in this project include two international students enrolled in an introductory anthropology course (Anthropology 112) and four upper level anthropology students enrolled in an ethnographic research methods class (Anthropology 326). The two courses are taught concurrently and the ethical considerations of conducting research with human subjects form a part of the syllabus for both classes. Therefore, all of the student researchers in this proposed project have reviewed the Malaspina University College's institutional and departmental Statements on Ethical Issues, Minimal Risk Checklist for Research Involving Human Subjects (Malaspina University College, n.d.) and the American Anthropological Association's (AAA) Code of Ethics (AAA, 2004).

Context

The topic of seat selection on performance, participation and personality in post-secondary instructional classrooms has been undertaken by a number of researchers in the social sciences and humanities (Burda, J.M, & Brooks, C. (1996); Kinarthy, E.L. (1976); Levine, D.W., McDonald, P.J., O'Neal, E.C., Garwood, S.G. (1982); Montello, D.R. (1988)). This topic has also been explored from the approach of territoriality and personal space in the educational setting (Guyot, G.W., Gary, R., Caudle, R. (1980); Kitagawa, T. (1998).; Totusek, P.F., & Staton-Spicer, A. (1982)).

We believe that the proposed research is relevant and will contribute to the existing body of literature on the topic of classroom dynamics in the social science and humanities. Furthermore, the ethnographic approaches proposed for this study will add anthropological dimension and insight into what has already been published in this area of inquiry.

Research Design- Methodology Data Collection

For ethical and logistical reasons, all research will be conducted on the Malaspina University College campus in Nanaimo B.C. Given that the proposed research involves students' selection of seats in the classroom, coupled with our goal to engage as participant observers in our own classes, this setting has been selected to facilitate the research methods of survey distribution and participant observation.

Specific sampling data will be captured through the distribution of surveys, participant observation, and comparison of field notes amongst researchers. The attached survey will be randomly distributed to 120 students (20 per researcher) throughout the MUC campus over a one week period. Qualitative and

quantitative data will be analyzed collaboratively by the researchers and collated for presentation to the larger class in early April 2005.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be respected and maintained throughout the research process and results will be made available to interested participants by contacting the departmental instructor after April 15th 2005.

References

- American Anthropological Association. *American anthropological Association's code of ethics*. Retrieved February 15, 2004, from <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm>.
- Burda, J.M., & Brooks, C.L. (1996). College classroom seating position and changes in achievement motivation over a semester. *Psychological Reports*, 78:1,331.
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- Kinarty, E.L. (1976). The effect of seating position on performance and personality in a college classroom. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 37(4-A), 2078. Retrieved February 17, 2005, from PsycINFO database.
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- Malaspina University-College Research Involving Human Subjects (n.d.) *Application for departmental ethical review of student projects- checklist*. Retrieved February 17, 2005 from Malaspina University College Web site: <http://research.mala.bc.ca>
- Montello, D.R. (1988). Classroom seating location and its effect on course achievement, participation, and attitudes. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 8:2, 149-157. Retrieved February 17, 2005 from PsycINFO database.
- Totusek, P.F., Staton-Spicer, A.Q. (1982). Classroom seating preference as a function of student personality. *Journal*, 50:3, 159-163.

Malaspina University-College
Department of Anthropology

Have a Seat: Classroom Dynamics and Seat Selection

We are Malaspina University-College students in a combined ANTH 112 (Introductory Anthropology) and ANTH 326 (Ethnographic Research Methods) class. This research project is designed to examine the variables influencing a student's choice of seats in instructional classrooms. The results of our research will be available after April 19 by contacting Dr. Imogene Lim: 753-3245, local 2840

Your participation is completely voluntary; you can terminate the survey at anytime without explanation. The survey will take about 15 minutes. By completing this survey, you are giving consent.

Please do NOT put your name on this survey. Your answers will be kept in total confidence.

1. How old are you?

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> < 20 | <input type="checkbox"/> 40-49 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 20-29 | <input type="checkbox"/> 50-59 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 30-39 | <input type="checkbox"/> 60 or over |

2. What is your gender?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Male |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|

3. How many classes are you taking?

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 4 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 | <input type="checkbox"/> more than 5 |

4. Do you have a major and/or minor? If so, which one/ones?

5. If you are permitted to select a seat in a classroom setting, what factors influence your choice (check all applicable variables)?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Size of classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Configuration or layout of desks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Number of students | <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to windows/doors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Proximity to instructor/board/projector, etc. | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expectation to participate from the instructor | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Familiarity with the instructor | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal factors such as eyeglasses/hearing aids | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowing someone in the class (and sitting with them where they chose to sit) | |

6. Do you sit in the same seat each class session?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, always | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Usually | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |

7. Do you sit in the same general area for each different course?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, always | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Usually | |

8. Do you have classes in: (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Classrooms | <input type="checkbox"/> Seminar Rooms |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Labs | <input type="checkbox"/> Theatres |

9. How close to the front of the room do you usually sit?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Front | <input type="checkbox"/> Middle | <input type="checkbox"/> Back |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|

10. Where do you usually sit in a class?
 Left Side Middle Right Side
11. What factors influence a change in seating arrangements?
 Can't see/hear properly People sitting near you talk to much
 Don't like the person sitting next to you
 Other: _____
12. Do you feel that where you sit in the classroom influences your performance in the class?
 Yes Unsure No
13. What grades do you usually achieve?
 Below 50% 70-79%
 50-59% 80-89%
 60-69% 90-100%
 I would rather not say.
14. Do you have any additional comments?
-

Thank you for you time and participation in completing this survey.