The Art of Anthropology at a College in Crisis: Exploring Some Effects of Neoliberalism on Higher Education

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Abstract
This chapter addresses the increasing pervasiveness of neoliberal ideologies in our culture and focuses on the implications of these ideologies for the future of anthropology in higher education. More specifically, the chapter considers how these ideologies pose a particular challenge to anthropology’s more humanistic dimensions, which include both the art of anthropology and an anthropology of art. Throughout the chapter, the author tells the story of how reductions were made recently to the anthropology program at his institution in response to converging economic crises. He analyzes the context of these changes and the process by which they were made in order to raise questions about the broader implications of neoliberalism for the discipline of anthropology. The chapter closes by suggesting measures anthropologists could take to resist and survive the threats brought by an increasingly neoliberal higher education environment.
Introduction: Anthropology, Art, and the Humanities, Under Attack

Anthropologists generally agree that one of the most distinctive traits and unique strengths of our discipline is its integrative and in-between relationship to the sciences and the humanities (Feinberg 2009). While the broad field of anthropology has most consistently been positioned as a science, many cultural anthropologists in particular have considered their practice as closer to the humanities and as more of an art. Although this perspective has roots in the work of Boas and his students from early in the twentieth century, it has become much more prevalent since the Geertzian (1973) interpretive and then postmodern turn in anthropology toward the end of the twentieth century. These later theoretical shifts first encouraged anthropologists to look at cultures as texts and then encouraged us to look more critically at the texts that we produce and at ourselves as producers of those texts (Clifford and Marcus 1986). As a result, many cultural anthropologists have come to see ethnography as a socially and politically situated form of expression. Even more relevant to the focus of this volume, the ways ethnographers express their knowledge have become more experimental and artistic (Marcus and Fischer 1986), and artistic expressions themselves have become more accepted objects of ethnographic inquiry (Morphy and Perkins 2006).

This relationship between anthropology and the arts and humanities, an important one worth preserving, ties the issues raised in the rest of this chapter to the other chapters in this volume. This chapter draws from the specific example of the anthropology program at my university to explore what might happen to anthropology broadly and to the art of anthropology and an anthropology of art more specifically as the existence of the liberal arts and the humanities are increasingly called into question. It is not hyperbole to say that the
liberal arts, humanities, and more specifically anthropology, have been under attack in recent years. The discipline of anthropology has recently made headlines in a way that it rarely does, but for the most unfortunate of reasons. The most visible of these attacks have come from several governors of large states who questioned the logic of supporting specific programs in the liberal arts, including anthropology, in their public universities (Z. Anderson 2011; Stancill and Frank 2013) and from a leading business magazine that announced anthropology as number one in its list of “The 10 Worst College Majors” (Goudreau 2012). This chapter argues that these attacks on the liberal arts, the humanities, and on anthropology nationally are linked to the specific example of changes made to the anthropology program at my university by a neoliberal logic increasingly prevalent in higher education and in our society more broadly.

Tying in with the volume’s focus on the art of anthropology, this chapter is intended to be a kind of storytelling. Like most anthropological storytelling, I try to ground the story in context and theory and thus try to give the story a purpose (Clifford 1986, 98). The story is in the end intended to be a cautionary tale, representing a kind of reflexive public anthropology that encourages us to consider more critically our place as anthropologists and agents in an American society and culture. The focus of the story is the anthropology program at William Peace University (formerly Peace College), where I teach, and the trials and tribulations we encountered in the 2010-2011 academic year.¹

In sum, in early January 2011, the college’s administration decided that a relatively new and promising anthropology major would be reduced to a minor with the loss of 25 percent of the full-time faculty, or one half of two full-time positions.² The news was devastating to the anthropology faculty and students and a surprise to many in the college. In this chapter, I discuss my experience and
understanding of the process by which this happened. I try to tie this story into other issues in higher education and in our culture at large. In the closing, I reflect and ask the reader to reflect with me, on the possible implications of this story to the discipline, perspective, and body of knowledge that we love.

Neoliberalism, Higher Education and the Economic Crisis of 2008

The news of the decision to reduce the program forced me to face the difficult problem of how to explain why this had happened. I needed to be able to provide an answer for my own understanding but also to respond to the various others both inside and outside of academe who would inevitably ask. The possible reasons for the reduction of the program are various. Perhaps the most obvious explanation could be that we did not have a successful program by many measures or that we failed to represent the major and discipline effectively to the administration. While this is of course possible, as I explain further below, I believe strongly that this is not the case, and colleagues inside and outside of our discipline and our institution thought our program and the program review documentation that we produced was very good. Another possible reason for the reduction of the program is that we were subjected to an arbitrary decision made by an imperious administration blindly cutting expenses in many areas. This is an explanation popular with some at our university, but I do not think it is a sufficient one. As cultural anthropologists know, even seemingly arbitrary decisions by those in power typically reflect unspoken cultural values and perspectives not unique to those exercising their power. As Ortner (2006, 130) states, social actors, even those in relative positions of power, “are always involved in, and can never act outside of, the multiplicity of social relations in which they are enmeshed.” The third possible
explanation for the cuts, the one that I seek to explore further in this chapter, is that the decisions made about the anthropology program at Peace were to a significant degree the result of the cultural logic of neoliberalism.

As discussed by Richland (2009, 170), cultural anthropologists studying a wide variety of topics have in recent years increasingly brought attention to “what they see as the creeping expansion of neoliberal logics.” Scholars in other disciplines have also written much in the past decade about neoliberalism as an ideology that has shaped higher education in particular in significant and dramatic ways (Archer 2008; Davies and Petersen 2005; Olssen and Peters 2005). This chapter is yet another then echoing this concern, but it is different by offering a firsthand reflection on how this reality may be shaping our own discipline of anthropology and, at least in some institutions, even threatening its existence. In this chapter, I explore how neoliberalism was a key force in shaping the context and events of our story and consider how neoliberalism provides an explanation that has implications for anthropology and the art of anthropology beyond William Peace University.

Neoliberalism is a concept that has been defined with varying degrees of specificity. The concept is most closely associated with economic globalization and particularly with the imposition of free market policies on “developing” nations. Neoliberalism emphasizes a laissez-faire role for governments with regard to regulating markets but at the same time requires of governments an active role in encouraging business and market concerns. The term is also sometimes used more generally, as I intend to use it here, as a kind of shorthand for a way of thinking about the place of economic and business concerns in a society. In my broad use of the term, I am thinking of neoliberalism as the ideology and rhetoric justifying the increasing primacy of market concerns in all areas of life—from governments
to health care to education. Neoliberalism, at an extreme perhaps, is the idea that the economic sphere should not be constrained to serve social needs but that argues that all other areas of society and culture should be brought in line with economic concerns and that the market and the rationalities of business best govern institutions of all kinds. As Olssen and Peters (2005) discuss, neoliberalism has significantly affected higher education in numerous ways, in terms of educational purpose, organizational structures, social relations, and professional identities. They write, “The ascendancy of neoliberalism . . . has produced a fundamental shift in the way universities and other institutions of higher education have defined and justified their institutional existence. The traditional professional culture of open intellectual enquiry and debate has been replaced with an institutional stress on performance, as evidenced by the emergence of an emphasis on measured outputs: on strategic planning, performance indicators, quality assurance measures and academic audits” (Olssen and Peters 2005, 313, emphasis mine). Performance as defined by neoliberalism, thus bears little resemblance to the creative, aesthetic, and affective dimensions of performance as the term is used in an artistic context but has more to do with the “performance” of a financial investment, or a machine. Neoliberalism as a dominant cultural logic thus shapes the higher educational environment in a variety of ways, and as I discuss further, it also shapes the specific processes and decisions that reduced the anthropology program at Peace.

Before outlining the specific institutional factors that shaped the reductions at Peace, it is important to first address the broader cultural and political context in which these reductions occurred. To do so, it is necessary to address the role of neoliberalism in the immediate economic crisis and the responses to it. The economic crisis of 2008, now several years old, was undoubtedly the product of numerous and diverse factors. However, at least when it began, there was
a clear consensus that it was to a significant degree because of the failure of governmental regulatory oversight in the financial industry (Bardhan 2012; Milanovic 2012). This failure of regulatory mechanisms can be generally attributed to the dominance of neoliberal policies in the United States, endorsed by both Republican and Democratic administrations over the past several decades. These policies privileged the financial markets, their freedoms and flexibility, and achieved this through a deemphasis on regulation and enforcement. This privileging of the financial sector, as time has shown, was arguably done at the expense of other areas of society.

Years after the downturn occurred, the news was still filled with stories of the effects of and responses to the economic turmoil that followed. These responses most typically emphasized cutting budgets and cutting services to virtually all institutions that serve the public in some fashion, both public and private—cuts to workforces, cuts to pensions, cuts to health care services, cuts to athletic programs, and most relevant to this volume, cuts to the arts and cuts to education. As we all have learned, even chancellors and presidents of higher educational institutions have responded by cutting their budgets and services out of claims of necessity. To use the dominant locational metaphors of the discourse about the economic crisis, the uncontrolled fiscal policies of “Wall Street,” a product of neoliberalism, have trickled down in dubious ways to affect “Main Streets” across America. What seems the most strange and sad paradox of our current context is that it often seems that the loudest political voice and the conventional wisdom that has emerged from this crisis brought on by neoliberalism is a call for more neoliberalism. As seen throughout the 2012 election cycle and as outlined in their party platforms on their respective websites, the Republican Party and the emergent Tea Party in particular have exploited the unhappiness and insecurity created by this crisis to paradoxically continue to argue
for less government regulation and more support of “free markets.” However, in addition to these specific groups engaging in such policy rhetoric, many public leaders and administrators of all political stripes have, by proclaimed necessity, embraced a politics of austerity that has in effect furthered neoliberal perspectives and policies.

What is most relevant to the story of anthropology at Peace is how these calls for a more business- and market-based approach have shaped so many of our institutions, not just those areas more conventionally thought of as “businesses.” To put it perhaps too simplistically, but to the point, the response to the problem of our society’s having given too much privilege to market ideas and business concerns has been to try to further enforce market ideas and a business mentality on even more areas of society and culture, particularly in education. How this is relevant to a story about anthropology at William Peace University and to the volume’s focus on art and anthropology is what I hope to clarify. While a much more expanded discussion of the broader political and policy landscape and the rhetoric, values, and money that shape it is warranted, I will now return to the story of the college in crisis and address the more immediate role that neoliberal ideas played in shaping our anthropology program.

A College’s Response to Converging Crises
William Peace University is a private, coeducational university located in the heart of Raleigh, the capital city of North Carolina. Although the university has traditionally and still does emphasize the liberal arts, it has in recent years placed increasing emphasis on developing its professional programs, and the liberal arts have been in decline. William Peace University, like many institutions in higher education, has been in a crisis mode for several years. This crisis very significantly results from the economic downturn that

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/southernanthro_proceedings/vol42/iss1/16
DOI: 10.56702/MPMC7908/saspro4201.15
began in 2008 and the pressures that it has put on institutions, governments, endowments, families, and students across the country. However, in addition to the challenges posed by the economic downturn, Peace’s crisis has also resulted from struggles with enrollment. Until the summer of 2011, William Peace University was a women’s college, Peace College. The college was very small, with a full-time enrollment of around seven hundred students in 2011. Like many women’s colleges over the past several decades, the university struggled to grow its enrollment. While Peace transitioned from a two-year to a four-year college in the late nineties and grew its number of majors from six to seventeen, the college was not able to consistently meet its enrollment goals. Though Peace’s endowment was healthy, as a small, tuition-driven college, it was particularly vulnerable to changing market conditions in higher education. Low enrollments meant high stress, and when the economic collapse of 2008 hit, a difficult situation was made much worse.

The crisis reached a head in the second half of 2010 under the direction of a new college president. In the summer of 2010, a new president was hired with an apparent mandate to “right size” the college and make it more “responsive” and “flexible,” to use the all-too-familiar neoliberal euphemisms. When we returned to campus in the fall of 2010, we were met with significant staff layoffs, a gloomy state-of-the-college address, and a call for all academic programs in the college to undergo an internal review. Essentially, every program (and by extension, the few faculty within them) was asked to argue for its own existence. The already scheduled rotation of academic program audits was disregarded, signaling the dramatic changes to come. For this program review process, each program coordinator was asked to produce a document providing basic data about such things as class enrollments, numbers of students majoring and minoring, and program cost, and to respond to a number of
questions addressing the strengths and significance of the programs for the present and future. In line with neoliberal concerns, the specificity of the data requested and the questions posed provided little room for the artful construction of a persuasive narrative. As I will discuss further, the art of anthropology simply seemed to be irrelevant to the process.

While the call for the program review was most unwelcome, I was reasonably optimistic that our program would survive. It was just in 2006 that Anthropology at Peace had gone from a concentration in the liberal studies major to a stand-alone major. The program was still one of the newest majors on campus, and although it had grown slowly at first, it had grown steadily in the prior two years (from eight to sixteen students majoring in 2009-2010, to approximately twenty-five students majoring in the 2010-2011 academic year). These numbers, while unimpressive for a larger school, made us the seventh-largest major on campus, out of seventeen. Our courses were generally well enrolled, satisfied many of the college’s liberal education requirements, and were listed as electives in several of the other college’s majors. We were also one of the most visible majors on campus because of the activity of our faculty and students, and particularly because of the success of our engaged learning opportunities. Specifically, one faculty member led a long-running and very popular summer program in Mexico and another ran a well-publicized and self-funded archaeological field school at a historic site in North Carolina. These summer programs were regularly used in promotional materials, and the anthropology faculty were even often asked to represent the college to outside groups. We were also an especially efficient major, offering four concentrations with only two full-time faculty and a few adjuncts. We did this by having a two-year rotation for many upper-level courses, by counting courses from other disciplines toward our concentrations, and through our
summer programs. To use the rhetoric of neoliberalism, we tried to be as “flexible” and “responsive” as possible in order to help recruit and retain students; one of our concentrations—forensics—was specifically created to increase our marketability to today’s students. Unlike some majors, we even brought in extra moneys to the college, particularly by drawing students from other colleges and universities to enroll in our summer programs. After outlining all of this in our program review document, I thought we were safe.

However, just before the start of the spring 2011 semester, we were notified of the outcome of the review process in individual meetings with the provost and president. I was initially most relieved to learn that I still had a job and that I would remain employed as a full-time faculty member in anthropology. However, I was then very surprised to learn that my senior colleague was asked to continue as a half-time faculty member, and I was even more disheartened, and increasingly so with time, to learn that starting in the fall of 2011, an anthropology major would no longer be offered for incoming students at Peace. In sum, we had been reduced to where we had been five years earlier. An anthropology major that we had worked on for years to birth and help grow would again only be a minor and concentration within a liberal studies major. We were confident that even in this incarnation, we could and would still serve our students well, but the turn of events made us disheartened for ourselves, for our students, for the college, and for the discipline.

Critical Reflections on Neoliberalism and Anthropology

So, how does this story of anthropology at William Peace University relate to neoliberalism, and what does this have to do with anthropology and art? In the program review document that was submitted to the administration, I discussed anthropology in ways that would be familiar to any dedicated student and practitioner of anthropology.
I argued that anthropology offers a unique understanding of human biological and cultural diversity and offers an important historical, contextual, and holistic perspective on the human experience. These are some of the most basic, noble, and humanistic tenets of the discipline. However, when reviewing the document and reflecting on the process for this volume, it became sadly clear to me how both the process itself and the arguments that I offered in response were shaped by neoliberal concerns. In the end, throughout most of the program review document, I found that I was justifying the discipline less in terms of any intrinsic philosophical or humanistic value, less for its value in helping to promote a more civil society or global understanding, and even less for its value in promoting a deep awareness of self and other. While these concerns were not entirely absent, the document seemed to all come back to a kind of “dollars and cents.” How much did our major cost, and how many students/customers did it serve? How would our major contribute to recruiting and retaining students who could pay for college? How could our discipline help students get jobs? How efficient were we?

I came to understand that the program review process was based on the neoliberal perspective that the college is a business, the business has a market, and since the college is doing poorly as a business, it needs to reshape its product to best capitalize on its share of the market. The key academic piece relevant to gaining market share is to have majors that draw students/consumers and to have majors that parents/consumers know will lead to a job so that they can economically rationalize their investment. Recognizing the need to appeal to the neoliberal logic governing this process, I argued that anthropology can indeed do such things as attract students and help students get jobs and do these tasks pretty well. I consulted the Bureau of Labor Statistics website on projected job growth for anthropologists; I drew from the career materials on the American Anthropological
Association’s website; and I heralded the ways in which our major could help anthropology students get most any kind of job and how any student in most any job would benefit from having had at least some anthropology. I offered specific examples from the few majors we had already graduated—students working in education and government and in graduate school, and I offered specific examples of students we had successfully recruited and retained. I even cited Harvard business review articles that argued for training more anthropologists (Anderson 2009; Davenport 2007; Radjou 2009).

Again, what I felt I was asked to do and what I was sincerely trying to do with my program review was to sell the discipline and to sell ourselves through our work within it. I felt compelled to market anthropology to our administration, to turn it into an attractive product they should want to buy, to make it seem like a good investment with strong returns. I was positioning students and parents as the consumers, the college as the business, and our program as the vehicle that would bring them together. I was doing neoliberalism, and I thought I was doing it well.

However, I am writing this chapter because I want to highlight that although my serving this neoliberal logic was obviously necessary, in the end it is also by some measure problematic that I did so. Even more importantly, I want to bring attention to the fact that it did not work anyway. Why precisely this was the case I cannot know, as the operations of those in relative positions of power are typically kept secret from those who are subject to such power. As Cohen (1974, 110) asserts, “The more privileged a group is in society, the more secretive and mystifying it tends to be about its organization and strategies.” However, based on the general direction of the university and the decisions made, it seems that in the end, numbers beyond our immediate control may have sealed our fate. The simple most important fact that likely shaped our viability as a major at
our college is that very few high school students know enough about anthropology to choose it as a major that they would seek out in applying to colleges. Because our major was not one of those that are highly ranked by high school students in such surveys, from our administration’s perspective, our major could not effectively recruit new student-consumers to boost enrollment, despite some of the recent success we had had at doing so. And also importantly, because a degree in anthropology does not explicitly and necessarily translate into a career in the areas of greatest projected job growth, the parent-consumers of potential students would not likely seek out anthropology for their children. And finally, our chief administrator was likely not sufficiently aware of and invested in the value of the discipline of anthropology herself for it to matter. In the end, my interpretation of our story is that the survival of anthropology at Peace was not just a matter of how well anthropology fit into the neoliberal logic of the institution but of how well others perceived the discipline of anthropology to satisfy the neoliberal logic of our society and culture.

Of course, it was not just anthropology that was affected by these changes at our college, and anthropology in fact was affected much less than some other disciplines. Perhaps predictably, the humanities suffered most, with reductions in history, music, art, and Spanish. Relevant to this volume’s theme, the major in art, which had already been paired with the more marketable “graphic design,” was phased out. Another significant response to these pressures was the revision of the existing liberal education curriculum. What emerged was a curriculum that was intended to place greater emphasis on marketable skills rather than areas of disciplinary knowledge. Most significantly, mirroring the neoliberal emphasis on constructing social agents primarily as consumers, the new liberal education curriculum clearly emphasizes that students are consumers of higher
education almost exclusively to gain access to professional opportunities. In the revised curriculum, students are required to take four years of preprofessional classes, with limited explicit emphasis on making them more globally conscious or more critically self-aware human beings.

What follows from these market-driven, neoliberal shifts, is that there is less opportunity for institutions of higher education, and for those who teach in them, to be independent agents shaping society and culture. Such institutions and the people within them will to a significant degree be and teach what “the market demands.” The potential role that anthropology in particular can have in transforming people, society, and culture is lessened if anthropology is done only in service to the economy or, taken to the extreme, if anthropology does not exist in such institutions at all.

Throughout the crisis of the fall semester, while I was struggling with how to explain and defend the discipline to the college administration, coincidentally, another episode occurred in anthropology’s perpetual struggle to define itself. The age-old question of whether anthropology is or should be considered more of a science or art was revisited again in response to the revision of the American Anthropological Association’s (AAA) long-range plan. The discussion was overblown in the press, and the AAA in the end disavowed neither science nor art, and as it always does, instead embraced both. However, the issue made me think further about my own characterization of anthropology in relation to this volume’s theme and made me consider further how the discipline represents itself and is understood by a broader public.

In looking back at the final program review document I produced, I realized that I did not give much consideration to the art of anthropology. While I definitely do conceptualize the broad discipline of anthropology as a practice of both art and science, and I
have a general interest in and respect for the anthropology of art, this was not easily apparent in my writing. I placed a clear emphasis on the more “scientific” aspects of the discipline, and I emphasized specific skills and perspectives in the discipline that can be construed as having a particular use value for those interested in business (e.g., having a global perspective and the combination of quantitative and qualitative skills). The necessity of arguing for the value of anthropology according to a neoliberal logic seemed to leave less room for the aesthetic, the interpretive, and the creative. If my task was to sell anthropology, in retrospect it seems I thought I would do that best primarily by highlighting its affiliation with the more scientific approaches to understanding humans and by highlighting its more practical and utilitarian dimensions.

Though this topic needs much further consideration, what I am suggesting is that neoliberal pressures, while challenging to anthropology generally, may have harsher implications for the art of anthropology (and even an anthropology of art). As it is the humanities that most consistently suffer under the logic of neoliberalism, it is the more humanistic side of anthropology that is perhaps likely to suffer as well. As a field that is most simply defined as the study of humans, an anthropology without a humanistic emphasis is very hard to imagine. It has been clear to anthropologists for decades now that a “practical” anthropology, best seen in its applied forms, is necessary and should be promoted. However, a less “practical” anthropology, one that sees value in continuing to tell stories of the variety of human expression and experience, and in continuing to seek to address the eternal question of what it is to be human, is no less needed. As this chapter has intended to convey, it is most unfortunately getting easier though to imagine a society that does not see the value of encouraging a humanistic anthropological perspective in its higher educational institutions.
Concluding Thoughts on Resisting and Surviving

In concluding this chapter, I want to prompt discussion of two important questions that were raised for me through this process and to offer some ideas about how to respond to our current situation. The first question is the one more relevant to this volume’s theme, and that is, What is the place of an art of anthropology in a higher education environment shaped by neoliberalism? And, the second question, which was more of the chapter’s focus is, What is the place of anthropology in higher education and in our society in this same environment? In answering these questions, we are forced to consider how we will define our discipline and to define ourselves in the future—engaging in an ongoing social construction of valuation.

My own reflection on these recent events at my institution and on their implications for anthropology generally has led me to offer three broad suggestions for how we anthropologists might direct our energies going forward.

The first suggestion is that as a discipline, and as individual professionals, we perhaps need to respond better to the demands of neoliberalism and find better ways to publicize and market ourselves. While we are all quite cognizant of what anthropology is, what anthropologists do, and the relevance of the discipline, we need to do a better job of educating others about us—from schoolchildren to parents, politicians to college presidents. More than a decade after his call for a more public anthropology, Borofsky may find even more reason to “cry” today about the place of the discipline in the public sphere (2000; see also Vine 2011). Anthropologists need to embrace the spirit of Borofsky’s public anthropology and take it further by positioning ourselves and thus the discipline to have a larger role in shaping popular discourse and public policy. In doing this, anthropology would become more visible and better regarded by the larger
population that is increasingly instrumental in shaping our survival. Anthropologists should seek to have roles that are more active on school boards, in the media, in politics, and in leadership positions in our own institutions and across society. Unless more people see anthropologists, hear from anthropologists, and read about the work of anthropologists, we will always be engaged in the Sisyphean task of declaring our own relevance.5

The second suggestion, which speaks to a related issue that I did not discuss further, is that in response to the neoliberal pressures of assessment and accountability, we need to collectively better define what are the goals of our teaching (and research), what learning outcomes we expect, and perhaps necessarily, how these goals and outcomes serve economic or practical concerns. How do we better define and measure how such things as awareness, understanding, and sensitivity are increased through courses in anthropology? If we are to respond to the pressures of neoliberalism, these goals and outcomes need to be expressed in ways that are clear and accessible, and most importantly in the language of assessment, they need to be “measurable.”

My third suggestion for responding to our current context is that we need to sharpen our critical tools and rhetorical weapons and wage war. We need to offer a clear, strong, rational, and passionate voice critiquing the rhetoric and logic of neoliberalism and how it is shaping our society, culture, and our selves. This third response is related to the first in that we need to do a good job of making this argument not just among fellow anthropologists and academics, but we also need to be speaking from positions of authority and leadership so that we can call upon a broad audience to listen. We should strive to do what anthropologists perhaps do best, and that is to remind people that there are other ways of thinking and being and that they are sometimes better.
Whether the reader is persuaded to consider choosing at least one of the above, or what I think is my course of action, all of the above, it has recently become more clear to me at least that we have to do some things differently if we are going to thrive or even survive in the current environment. In a humanistic spirit, we should recognize our kinship with others in our contemporary world who are also struggling to maintain their agency. As Ortner (2006, 147) describes, we must do this “by resisting domination in a range of ways, but also by trying to sustain . . . a certain kind of cultural (or for that matter, personal) authenticity ‘on the margins of power.’”

The unfortunate alternative is to continue to become academics who are “divided, disillusioned and distressed individuals whose ability to carry out the work they ‘love’ is constrained and subverted by the infiltration of neoliberalism” (Archer [2008, 268], drawing on Davies and Petersen [2005]).

Notes

1. Since the writing of the first draft of this paper for the Southern Anthropological Society meetings of 2011, “Peace College” became “William Peace University.” The name change occurred in the summer of 2011, as part of larger changes to the college, the most significant of which was the transition from being a college for women to being coeducational.

2. The reductions to the anthropology program at William Peace University were not unique, though I was not aware of what was happening at other institutions while initially working on this project in March 2011. I later learned that during the same period discussed in this chapter, the anthropology program at Howard University was threatened with reductions that had much more significant implications for our society as a whole, given the historical significance and ongoing important work of their department (Bugarin et al. 2010).
3. For a thorough discussion of the political philosophy and economic theory that has shaped the role of neoliberalism in higher education, see Olssen and Peters (2005). For a discussion of how neoliberalism in higher education is affecting the identities and subjectivities of academics, see Archer (2008).


5. The response by anthropologists to the Governor of Florida’s attack on anthropology (Z. Anderson 2011) offers a very positive example in this direction. The prompt response by the AAA leadership (Dominguez and Davis 2011) to challenge his statement is exactly what was needed, but his comment should provoke a broader, more organized, and sustained effort. Along these lines, Charlotte Noble and the students at the University of South Florida responded to Governor Scott by creating a wonderful online resource that highlights the variety of important research projects they are conducting in his state (http://prezi.com/vmvomt3sj3fd/this-is-anthropology/, accessed June 26, 2013). Writing for the Huffington Post, Paul Stoller (2011) and Rachel Newcomb (2011) also quickly took issue with Governor Scott, with Stoller discussing the politics surrounding a liberal arts education today and Newcomb arguing that anthropology does have great economic value, as is recognized by China and India. Finally, the new AAA President Leith Mullings (2012) offered
an overview of some of the important ways anthropologists have responded to Governor Scott’s statement and also noted that anthropologists have provided unique critical analyses of the economic crisis.

References


