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### Title

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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3qj8s1f6>

### Journal

Teaching and Learning Anthropology, 4(1)

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### Publication Date

2021

### DOI

10.5070/T34151992

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Peer reviewed

## ARTICLE

# Challenges and Opportunities for Non-Tenure-Track Faculty during the Time of COVID-19

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### *Abstract*

*In Spring 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic forced university instructors across the United States to confront the daunting task of quickly changing their courses from face-to-face to remote instruction. Nationally, universities relied on virtual platforms as they adjusted educational spaces in response to the pandemic. While there have been many anecdotes of how individual faculty responded to this transition, social scientists have yet to study systematically how instructors handled this transition. This article presents and analyzes data from semi-structured interviews with non-tenure-track social science faculty to understand how they handled the change to remote teaching after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It analyzes these interviews by drawing on intersecting perspectives from the anthropology of disaster, anthropology of education, and digital anthropology. We argue the transition to online teaching presented new challenges and opportunities to instructors as people coping with novel health concerns, family obligations, and space-time changes. Simultaneously, this change created pedagogical issues related to continuity of instruction, classroom presence, and emotional labor. We conclude with recommendations and directions for future research.*

**Keywords:** Digital Anthropology; Anthropology of Disaster; Educational Studies; University Instructors

### Introduction

When warning of an impending pandemic reached the world in early 2020, little information existed regarding how to protect against this new virus. The deadly virus could be spread through airborne particles produced by speaking, coughing, or sneezing. This realization led all levels of educational institutions to consider how to balance academic continuity with the health of faculty, staff, and students. The Centers for Disease Control

provided guidelines for institutions of higher education that stipulated “social distancing” of six feet, flexible work hours, and consideration of “whether flexible learning platforms or worksites (e.g., distance-based learning, telework) can meet students’ learning needs” (CDC 2020). In response, school administrations across the U.S. declared a move to remote instruction in March 2020. The institution where this research took place was no exception.

On March 11, 2020, the university president announced via e-mail that the institution: will begin transitioning all of our classes to remote instruction for two weeks following Spring Break, March 23 through at least April 5. ... All classes and necessary support functions will continue remotely. [The university] has developed a myriad of tools, technologies, training, and other resources to assist in this transition.

This declaration shifted over 5,000 classes from face-to-face to remote instruction. The university produced a “toolkit” meant to serve as a support mechanism for faculty who were being directed to adapt their courses for online instruction, which included links to training sessions and information on the university’s learning management system. Academic departments primarily passed along university directives, clarified specific implications for the department, and provided whatever support possible to the faculty, including the provision of hardware and software to facilitate online instruction. At the instructional level, months of pedagogical preparation were substituted with immediate conversion to a fully remote experience wherein “[f]aculty might feel like instructional MacGyvers, having to improvise quick solutions in less-than-ideal circumstances” (Hodges et al. 2020). Additionally, instructors received almost daily e-mails with emerging resources and additional information.

## **Theoretical Framework**

Though classic publications on the teaching of anthropology (Kottak et al. 1997; Mandelbaum et al. 1963) considered conceptual and practical issues primarily within a university setting, they offer no insight into education during disasters. Understanding the COVID-19 pandemic as a disaster, the conceptual contribution of this article emerges at the nexus of the anthropology of disaster, digital anthropology, and educational studies.

### *Anthropology of Disaster*

Generally, disaster studies speak to how quotidian processes facilitate catastrophic effects on a population by a potentially destructive agent from the global ecosystem (Hoffman and Oliver-Smith 2020). The results may highlight or exacerbate existing systemic inequalities of race, class, and gender (Jackson 2011; Schuller 2015), among other vectors, often due to pressures of so-called neoliberalism and disaster capitalism (Klein 2007). In their insightful, timely contribution, Faas et al. (2020) propose a research agenda that sees the COVID-19 pandemic as “the product of connections between people, with their social

systems, nonhumans, and the material world more broadly” (333). Among salient topics for research, they identify the politics of knowledge, mutual aid, and the process of recovery from the pandemic. The first involves the idea that a person’s positionality affects their experiences and interpretation of disaster. The second, paradoxically given Klein’s work, is the observation of communal support that allowed many people to mitigate fear of the viral threat. The third topic concerns the process of recovery and how larger power systems affect appropriate existing local practices.

Within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic as a disaster, our research seeks to reveal aspects of cultural systems as life’s material conditions are rearranged.

### *Digital Anthropology*

In this work, we use the terms “digital” and “virtual” interchangeably, in line with Boellstorff (2016). The increased prevalence of the internet, computers, and so-called smart devices has led to the rise of digital anthropology. Yet rather than considering whether such technologies temper humanity, we follow scholars who point out how digitally-mediated interactions between people are as varied and rooted in human experience as face-to-face exchanges (Horst and Miller 2012; Tufekci 2013; Tufekci and Brashears 2014). Relatedly, Markham (2013) points out that digital media shape the construction of one’s *presence* online, which is performed and distinct from a physicality. Cairns et al. (2020) showed how digital technologies were used by university students to connect with others and alleviate loneliness during the pandemic.

Engaging with the above topics, our work addresses digital instructional experiences during a pandemic-as-disaster.

### *Educational Studies*

Often, studies of schooling during disasters focus on teaching for preparation and risk management (Torani et al. 2019). Universities are often overlooked in research on education in emergencies, despite assertions that all people should be able to study during disasters because it can relieve suffering and provide a sense of normalcy (Burde 2017; INEE 2004; Sinclair 2001). In both disasters and education studies, the role of digital technologies has been ignored in favor of material conditions, which is not completely surprising in cases of hurricanes or earthquakes<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, much of the educational scholarship related to digital learning has focused on practices and pitfalls but has ignored disasters. This scholarship includes a discussion of how successful online learning requires the proper implementation of technology, learner types, and context (Means, Bakia, and Murphy 2014) as well as how inclusive pedagogy requires instructors to make changes to course materials (Gannon 2020).

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<sup>1</sup> For a notable exception from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, see McLennan 2006.

At the core, this research's examination of instructors builds upon Jewett and Shultz (2011), who "seek to make teachers and teaching visible, while contextualizing teaching in the larger sociocultural, economic, political and historical context in which it occurs" (439). As hooks (2003) points out, teachers experience fatigue and frustration due to bureaucratic and material impositions placed upon them. Additionally, educators often have to incorporate emotional labor, or "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild 2012, 7), which Bellas (1999) shows to be devalued in higher education. Such labor requires instructors to sincerely care about their students' lives rather than solely impart knowledge and execute rules (Valenzuela 1999).

## Methods

This article constitutes the first part of a larger project on understanding cultural aspects of teaching and learning during a pandemic<sup>2</sup>. Research took place within a social science department within a large public research university in the southern United States. Due to the limitations of COVID-19, in-person interviews were not possible. Instead, we conducted semi-structured interviews in Fall 2020 using Microsoft Teams with sixteen of the twenty-two non-tenure-track faculty (NTTF)<sup>3</sup> in the department. This population includes: four full-time instructors who hold PhDs, ten graduate students as instructors-of-record, a post-doctoral scholar, and a visiting research fellow. Six of the NTTF are parents, five of whom had children in school at the beginning of the pandemic. Two of the NTTF are in the United States on a visa. We excluded the department's nineteen tenured and tenure-track professors because NTTF experiences are distinct due to their contingent position and working conditions within the university (Kezar and Sam 2010; Purcell 2007; Reevy and Deason 2014). Moreover, given the casualization of higher education labor and the precarity of such populations (Giroux 2014), we believe that emphasizing their condition is as important for understanding the human condition, if not more so, than that of their tenured or tenure-track colleagues. To inform our interview questions, we used digital archival research on Facebook, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and internet news stories. These sources provided real-time insight into issues instructors across the U.S. faced with the switch to remote instruction, both as teachers and as people living through a pandemic. After the online interviews, we used voice recognition software to create transcripts, checking and correcting the output as needed. These texts were coded using a grounded-theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1967) based upon themes identified through archival research.

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<sup>2</sup> The Co-PIs submitted the research protocol to the relevant IRB, which designated it Exempt from further IRB review. Subsequent research will incorporate data from the current research with findings from interviews with tenured or tenure-track faculty and will expand to interview faculty from other U.S. and Caribbean universities. Mr. Garcia's doctoral research considers similar questions about university students.

<sup>3</sup> See the Appendix for research participants' titles, pseudonyms, and online training.

One notable aspect of this project is the manner in which it takes seriously Laura Nader's (1972) argument to "study up." Yet this does not accurately fit the current work. Pajunen and Nuñez are doctoral students in Anthropology, Garcia is a doctoral student in Education with a disciplinary emphasis on Anthropology, and Jayaram is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology. Some PhD-holding instructors were interviewed by the doctoral students, and some graduate student instructors were interviewed by the professor. As such, this is more accurately understood as an example of "studying through" (Wright and Reinhold 2011).

## Results

Interviews with the NTTF revealed specific issues for teachers as both workers who must deal with biocultural aspects of life and as instructors. The first of these deals with challenges to instructors' health issues after to the transition to online teaching. Secondly, we discuss how family obligations affected instructors. This includes examining how teachers negotiated space with family members while instruction occurred at home. Thirdly, consideration is given to the ramifications for instructors' work due to teaching from home. Next, we show a (partial) opportunity created by the pandemic-inspired move to online instruction, namely, a more flexible working day. Turning to more pedagogical matters, we discuss the topics of infrastructural problems, the continuity of instruction, an ambiguous classroom presence, and the emotional work of teachers.

### *Health Issues*

While pandemics bring health issues to the fore, instructors commented on how this new teaching environment affected them. For Cara, a full-time instructor teaching four classes, the experience of online instruction took its toll. She confessed that,

honestly, being on Zoom for classes really wore me out, like having to be in three classes or four classes. That was four classes [in Spring 2020] on Zoom, looking at the screen for three hours, four times a week. I felt really drained after every session. I wanted to really be tuned in. So, I think there are times where I just really, I tried to be there the best I could.

Yet the stress affected her in other ways as well. Candidly, she revealed that she "was losing my shit just about as much as students were," and that she "felt like everybody was [in] like this weird suspended animation. As I recall it, you were doing things but it didn't feel very purposeful because you didn't know when the next shoe was going to drop." For Guy, a graduate student instructor for a cultural diversity course, the move to online teaching combined with his regular viewing of the mounting numbers of deaths on the CDC's COVID-19 dashboard wreaked havoc on his mind and body. He admitted that "there are maybe one or two days when I would get online with my students and I say, 'look, I'm not doing so well today, I'm, I'm feeling really depressed about this.' And having that lack of human interaction really did not help. It made me feel obviously much more

isolated.” He added that his diet suffered because he was eating frozen meals instead of cooking, and his sleep scheduled changed<sup>4</sup>.

### *Familial Obligations*

During the interview with Adele, a full-time instructor of two introductory-level courses, her youngest child came into the room where she was seated and announced that the child’s school just added a two-hour break and that it was time for lunch. While Adele tried to quickly address the issue and send her away, the child continued the conversation, further adding to the parent’s frustration. Such perceived interruptions also happened during interviews with other instructor-mothers, and it points to another important dilemma facing instructors during Spring 2020.

Like many people facing the pandemic, instructors faced challenges related to their kinship ties. While several of them lamented the inability to tend to sick members of their extended families, many instructors with children noted the need to balance their work with their parenting, as the pandemic rendered impossible the face-to-face attendance of school for their children. Such was the case of Marie, a graduate student instructor teaching a cultural diversity course. Both her parents are over 65 years of age, and her father suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and requires constant oxygen therapy. She describes how those major risk factors add “a different amount of stress to [my] life. Because whether I stay in or choose not to stay in, I have to be available for [him] if he needs care at any time because he may not be able to do it for himself.” Yet at the same time, as a single mom, she has other immediate concerns. She worries about her child contracting COVID-19, but if Marie were to catch it, she would still be responsible for taking care of her child. Fortunately, the child’s school had more infrastructure in place for digital instruction than others, including giving all the students Chromebooks.

In addition to the worries expressed by Marie, other instructors faced the task of having to balance their continuing yet fundamentally altered work with their responsibilities of caring for children who were no longer at school. Carol, a graduate student instructor of an introductory-level course, bluntly stated, “the most challenging [aspect] is trying to balance family and work. Especially with remote instruction, makes it really difficult.” Jerry, an international graduate student instructor, found that he could no longer be as productive with his teaching and research as he was before the pandemic. He told us:

we have a child whose school was closed for six months. So for that six months, I did not work full days. I worked about approximately three to four hours a day. So that’s a huge difference, right? And there was no other solution for it because schoolwork, ... schools were closed. We’re locked down. And there’re two people, both doing PhDs, and a child who needs care. But you get to be with your child

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<sup>4</sup> The issue of time will be examined more fully below.

and hang out ... a lot more ... watch them grow and all these things and you know. So, I'm sure looking back at it – even now, looking back at it already – even though [the child]'s been in school only for like three weeks. It's like "man, should we just do home school now?" Because it was kinda awesome.

Jerry's story points to both the challenge of familial responsibilities leading to a temporal compression and also the opportunity to spend more time with his child. Yet, another challenge is implicit in what he described.

### *Space*

During the time of the lockdown and the "safer at home" period, not only instructors who were parents but those who lived with spouses or partners faced an interpersonal spatial compression. One instructor mentioned having to share the only computer at home, and another mentioned having to vie for a place to work in the family's apartment. Leena, a postdoctoral fellow, faced a similar challenge with her husband.

Well, he started working from home. Um, and that was a transition in itself. Like our apartment is not very big, so us both trying to manage working from home, we figured it out more now. But if we're both on phone calls, like one of us pretty much, I mean not always, but pretty much one of us has to go outside. So just trying to figure out when he had meetings, or when I had meetings, that kind of thing. So that was a transition because he was going to the office Monday through Friday and then we were both in the apartment all of the time.

For Leena, the transition to remote instruction led to moments of disruption regarding use of home space for professional purposes. Carol found herself in a similar situation:

One of the challenges for me was actually being able to do my work with another person around because I had been very used to working from home over the past couple of years of my PhD. But he had always worked in some other setting. And so having him there wasn't, um, exciting for me because, just inherently having another person in only a 1,000 square foot apartment, it's very difficult to separate yourself and not get distracted by what they're doing and all of that sort of stuff. I don't know necessarily that it affected him, that my work affected him too much. Other than that, there would be some times when he would just go into another room while I was teaching.

Carol's account shows how the COVID-19-related imperative to share home space with her husband led at least to distraction and possibly a need to change location. Without another person in the home, Leena and Carol could have maintained a higher level of professional productivity.



### *Time*

Even with the spatial disruptions, many instructors in Spring 2020, now working from home, faced a more open schedule for their work. Almost all of them mentioned how they gained time from not having to drive to work and find parking. Guy's change in schedule provides such an example:

You know, admittedly, I was sleeping in more. I don't even remember what time of day my classes were at this point, to be honest. I think I might have had an 11:00 am in the spring or like a 10:30 or something like that. So obviously, you know, if you don't get to campus by like 9:30, there's no parking most of the time. So even though I was teaching at 11, I would have to get up earlier and make sure that I got to campus by like 9:00 am so that I could get parking and whatnot. Obviously, once the pandemic started, I no longer had to do that, and so it was no longer. I take a very long time to get ready in the morning just because I am very slow-moving. So for me to leave my house at 9, I have to get up at 6 every day. And because I no longer had to leave my house at 9, I could sleep until 7, 7:30, which was not much more, but a little bit more comfortable maybe. How else did it change my routine? I mean, really the commute was the big thing. I found more time to exercise which was, which was a net positive.

Guy's testimony highlights two important opportunities, both of which were repeated by many other instructors. First, no longer having to commute, he could use that time to sleep more, an important aspect of good health. Second, he used his new-found time to improve his physical fitness, another aspect of salubrity.

Similar to Guy, Leena spent time exercising, but she found another way to use the extra hours in her day to benefit her health. She would "eat better, because I'm at home, more often and stuff like that. I don't go out as much to eat and stuff and like exercise more because I can take a break in the middle of the day." Like most of the instructors, Leena and Guy found ways to reallocate time toward activities that would keep them well.

### *Continuity of Instruction*

In the remaining data sections, we shift from the broader context in which the instructors found themselves to the specific context of pedagogical practice. Inherent in the move to remote instruction is the notion of continuity, or the consistency with which the remote form of instruction follows from face-to-face delivery. From the onset, George, a graduate student instructor, recognized that how he was being asked to teach did not exactly follow the traditional approach to online learning.

It wasn't teaching an online class. It necessarily, it was just moving to that kind of instruction, moving to remote instruction rather than teaching an online class. So, I think, I think ultimately what I experienced and what a lot of people experienced in

the spring was just a transition rather than like formatting an online class. Now, you know, there were challenges in that for sure.

Yet no matter how they understood the change, some instructors like Guy easily transitioned to remote instruction. He explained:

I have always used [online assessment] for the [introductory] class. I've always used online quizzes. All of my assignments are online as well. In all of my classes, they don't turn in any paper. To me, everything is digital. You know, that makes it a little bit easier for me and the TAs to grade it because we don't have to pass papers back and forth. And also, it, you know, just makes it a lot less messy, you know. Trying to keep track of documents and doing all that sort of stuff. There's everything already put into the grade sheet and so forth.

Guy's preparation for courses before the pandemic already integrated the existing learning management system: assignments were turned in through the system, readings distributed, announcements made, and even some lectures were already digitized. Maureen, a graduate student instructor of a cultural diversity course, was in a similar position:

It didn't, it didn't feel like a lot of work just because a lot of things were fairly easy to put together, like the assignments were already there. I already had the PowerPoints from teaching and past semesters, so I just updated them and uploaded them. And yeah, the main thing that was added to my plate was grading discussion, which wasn't too much more work.

What George, Guy, and Maureen's comments suggest is that instructors who had already integrated their courses in to the learning management system prior to the pandemic faced a much easier task than those who had not. This apparent opportunity may also represent a challenge due to not having adequate time to transition the course to the standards of most online courses. Best practices became suggestions, as the need for getting something online was predominant. At the same time, it bears mentioning that two full-time instructors who significantly participated in digital platforms before the pandemic spent much more time retooling their courses for remote instruction, suggesting that their full-time employment may allow for more pedagogical engagement than among graduate student instructors.

The rush to remote instruction also challenged continuity in content, grading standards, and deadlines within courses. Planned activities which required group work, collaboration, or hands-on learning experiences were altered to be easier for students to complete. Multiple instructors reported changing a fieldwork exercise that was fundamental to an upper-division course to watching a film or studying ethnographic texts. Grading and deadlines were either maintained or relaxed. Several instructors created alternate assignments to meet the needs of individual students given the limits of their pandemic life.

### *Presence in the Classroom*

Within the interviews, the idea of digital presence emerged as the most prominent theme related to digital anthropology. Digital presence could be described as the ability for instructors and students to “be there” and actively participate in an online classroom environment. Markham (2013) raised presence as a core issue of communication between herself and her husband as they communicated remotely, distinct from being physically there. In such a way, students in classes were often not present or less present due to the digital mediation of communication. According to Marie, “some of [my students] struggled and some of them flourished in the midst of the change. So, it was really interesting to see those differences.”

Instructors consistently reported challenges around student engagement. They indicated there was a lack of enthusiasm, interest, and stamina to continue and to interact once courses transitioned to an online space. Guy articulated this feeling of dissonance of presence by likening the experience to a sort of multiplied tunnel vision when interacting on a screen rather than in a classroom.

the biggest thing is the lack of human interaction. It is really challenging to read an online chat room. Particularly when people don't have their webcams on or when they're muted. And just, you know, even when they do, I find it a lot more challenging because there's simply more to look at. There's more that you have to try to be perceptive of at all times. Like if you're all together in a classroom, it's a little bit easier to kinda synthesize everything as one sort of cognitive perceptive unit. That might not make any sense at all. But when I feel like I'm looking at the screen, I feel like it's isolated. Like I have to see each student and sort of piece things together. So, I just find my brain working very differently when I interact with people online.

The shift to remote instruction clearly demonstrates how pedagogical interactions are rendered more difficult with the removal of classroom presence.

An extreme example of this was experienced by Victor, a graduate student instructor for an introductory-level course, who lamented about “teaching to the void.” This phenomenon occurs when students collectively turn off their cameras during an online class, changing a screen tiled with camera streams into a continuous black wall. As such, visual feedback from students becomes impossible. Moreover, any student who turned their camera on would be spotlighted for the entire group, creating a pressure to maintain the murky status quo. Instructors were torn on the topic of requiring students to keep cameras on to counter this. Some felt they would mandate cameras on going forward, while others, concerned about student privacy and mindful of student self-consciousness regarding their physical appearance and living spaces, would leave the decision up to their students going forward.

Yet other instructors commented on helpful aspects of the transition to remote instruction. Several noted that having taught half the semester face-to-face helped foster an emotional connection that extended into the digital space. Jerry shared a positive experience of how he was able to work with students online:

Teaching, teaching-wise because I knew that I can use the Blackboard proficiently to open a share screen thing. That was kind of like, that's it. If I can share my screen and talk, because I knew all the students already, it's not going to be a problem and it wasn't. It went great. Student feedback, there were many people who said that the odd switch to online went great.

In this example, presence was supplemented by having met in-person earlier in the semester. Presence, in Jerry's example, was a continuation of a physical relationship in a digital space.

### *Emotional Labor*

Though a full examination of students' experiences falls beyond the scope of this project, an examination of how people taught requires some treatment of the challenges that students faced and the subsequent toll on their instructors. As a regular part of all the interviews, instructors explained some of the issues that their students experienced during the first stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. As instructors became aware of these issues, they were situated in a space of balancing their role as instructors, their own emotional well-being, and that of their students. To be clear, not all students faced major problems, and even those who faced difficulties did not have to deal with all of these issues.

Uniformly, instructors noted that students were stressed beyond what they had seen in previous semesters. The causes ranged from the stress of staying indoors to the unrest after the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. Additionally, those students who either worked in the health care industry or who had family members who did expressed anxiety about contracting COVID-19. Materially, some students faced residency issues, including eviction from dorms, forced return to their country of origin, or homelessness. Relatedly, these changes in domicile led to limited internet access, and at least one student had to join class sessions by driving to a public internet hotspot. Lastly, other students lost their jobs or simply had to prioritize working (to keep their jobs) over classwork. The severity of these difficult situations was not lost on the instructors.

In response to such a stressful moment, instructors were moved to interact with students in a manner that extended beyond simple pedagogy to include emotional labor. Guy recounted the case of a student from an earlier semester who reached out to him after the onset of the pandemic. The student was:

on the verge of actually, of potentially being evicted from his apartment and losing a car. Because he had lost his job through COVID[-19]. I guess he had applied for some of the CARES Act funding through [the university] but had not received any

of it. And I just, I just felt very heartbroken when I read that email. I knew that there was not really anything that I could do, but I responded to him and I tried to give him a very, as thoughtful a response I could. And tried to give him some pointers for which types of offices at [the university] to pressure and reach out to for help. I didn't hear back from him.

While instructors regularly have to consider whether to allow students' personal circumstances to alter their teaching, Guy's story shows how the pandemic reveals the precarity of many people in a market-dominated economy.

This emotional work involved a range of actions to provide support for students as people in the world, no matter how the instructors were feeling. Jerry's approach stood apart from the other instructors, as he did not bring up COVID-19 or Black Lives Matter demonstrations during class because he did not want "to enforce or like replicate and reproduce that trauma every single class." Yet most instructors would check on their students, either through an individual e-mail or by dedicating portions of class time for students to vent and discuss their feelings. Instructors expressed how the situation allowed for a temporary condition of unity. For Alexander, a postdoctoral fellow, "eventually we created this sense of a community as I was saying and that we are in this altogether, not as a slogan, but really, you know, I share this sometimes," and shared some of the issues he was facing. Maureen made a point of stating, "you know, don't worry about the class. I will figure out how to make it as streamlined as possible. And we're just going to get through this. Like, my main concern is that you guys are all okay and this class isn't one of your main stressors in life." Carol was so deeply moved by the strife her students faced that she tried to facilitate an exchange of information through social media about possible support:

So, that was one of the most difficult things, just not, I mean, I want to help them with resources when they're telling me they're under extreme duress. And so yeah, I ended, that was what I ended up trying to make that – I don't know if you remember that thing that went around on Facebook a while back, and I tried to make that little support group. That was my effort. Because y'all, you don't have to, I didn't, I didn't have to be friends with my students on Facebook to add them to a community support group. So, I invited a lot of different people to that.

These examples show how the workload of instructors incorporated more emotional labor after the onset of the pandemic. At the same time, remote instruction allowed an opportunity to think of new ways of connecting with others.

## **Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion**

The above findings demonstrate how the transition to remote instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic created opportunities and challenges for NTTF. Some instructors appreciated how remote instruction allowed them more time for themselves or their families, showing their geographic and interpersonal positionality. In relation to the

anthropology of disaster, the data suggest that existing cultural systems of labor (i.e., class) and gender created differential challenging experiences of the pedagogical shift. First, given that graduate students were neither permitted to teach online nor required to have online certification before COVID-19, some of them faced an additional burden when having to transition their course materials. Full-time instructors, on the other hand, seemed more prepared to handle such an event. More broadly, though NTTF do not have the same job security that tenure-track or tenured faculty members have, an inviolable employment contract provided them all with a dependable income that removed some anxiety from their lives. Note that the university mandated that they arrange to work remotely. Therefore, the same contract required them to continue teaching no matter how they were affected by COVID-19, or else face the consequences from loss of employment at the university and loss of income in a capitalist system. On top of this newly-compelled digitized pedagogical practice, NTTF provided emotional labor for their students. While good teachers regularly perform this, doing so while facing health issues (personal or familial) or space and time compression adds another level to the work. Second, women instructors, no matter their rank, faced additional challenges to their space and time management due to child care responsibilities, echoing Deryugina et al. (2021).

Turning to digital anthropology, our research shows that the transition to remote instruction necessarily changed everyone's experience but did not produce uniformity or dehumanization. Instructors were able to use the existing digital infrastructure at the institution to facilitate a sense of academic continuity as their classes shifted to the online environment. Without these tools, classes would have had to be postponed or canceled outright. There was a greater opportunity for flexibility in online instruction. Having interacted with students face-to-face for two months and using performative actions online to make their presence felt, some instructors were able to keep or build ties with students. Digital platforms also allowed for in-class authentic expressions of compassion (see Valenzuela 1999); an opportunity to think about topics in addition to the pandemic and ongoing racial injustices; and extracurricular communication between instructors and students to offer different types of communal support.

In contributing to educational studies, we find it compelling to go beyond the K-12 focus that is typical in scholarship on education in emergencies and to consider how digital instruction can contribute to continuity and recovery during disasters. At the same time, our data show that materiality still matters. People still exist in home spaces, with demands on their time, and access to computer hardware and high-speed internet infrastructure cannot be taken for granted. The stress of disasters affects instructors, who are deemed essential workers, even if policy makers and market movers do not act in ways that recognize this fact. The context for teaching matters, as instructors' humanity does not stop at the limits of their job description.

To some extent, the transition to online teaching we experienced has opened a window to the future. The Lyceum shall give way – at least in part – to the app, as it has already<sup>5</sup>. From here, we make the following recommendations. First, university administrations should incentivize and support all instructors, regardless of rank, to learn online teaching strategies. As instructors and students develop confidence in the digital learning environment, instructors can utilize their time more efficiently, develop new strategies for engaging students, and interact with students to do the emotional work of teaching. Moreover, beyond the circumstances of disaster, remote instruction could be used while instructors are traveling to conferences rather than cancelling class or having a substitute show a movie. Second, in addition to technical training in learning management systems, universities need to ensure that faculty have the support they need as people during disasters as well as training in practices that promote compassion for their students in those moments. Third, universities, colleges, and academic units should work separately and jointly to discuss how best to support their students' learning through digital platforms, whether the course meets face-to-face or otherwise. Context matters, so broad prescriptions should be cautiously considered.

In closing, several questions for future research immediately reveal themselves. First, how have Black, Indigenous, and other NTTF of color navigated the stressors of the pandemic combined with greater public and digitized attention to the racial injustices that impact communities of color? Second, how do the findings reported here compare with the experiences of tenured and tenure-track faculty in the department, across the university, and at institutions throughout the U.S. and across the world? Third, how does this move toward digital instruction compound existing inequalities, and what new social fissures are being created? Fourth, given that earlier research has almost exclusively focused on asynchronous online learning, how relevant are earlier conceptualizations and best practices in this age of synchronous instruction?

Lastly, we need to remember that anthropologists “should care about teaching – with the understanding of course that all teachings will fail” (Varenne 2019), and as such, those interested in instruction need to turn our attention to what and how students are learning. The pandemic is an unfortunate episode, the effects of which may not become clear for some time. As students' lives become more internet-based, we must take the lessons learned from this experience if we want any hope for a robust system of university training.

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<sup>5</sup> It is noteworthy that rather than shutting down, the university immediately moved all in-person summer courses to remote instruction when Tropical Storm Elsa struck in July 2021, even though they recognized that student (not faculty) internet access could be affected due to power outages.

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## Appendix A: Interviewee Title, Pseudonym, and Online Training

Title	Pseudonym	Formal Training for Teaching Online?
Full-time Instructor	Adele	Yes
Full-time Instructor	Cara	Yes
Full-time Instructor	Henry	Yes
Full-time Instructor	Rick	No
Graduate Student Instructor	Carol	Yes
Graduate Student Instructor	George	No
Graduate Student Instructor	Guy	No
Graduate Student Instructor	Jerry	Yes
Graduate Student Instructor	Kelly	No
Graduate Student Instructor	Marie	Yes
Graduate Student Instructor	Mark	Yes
Graduate Student Instructor	Maureen	Yes
Graduate Student Instructor	Tucker	Yes
Graduate Student Instructor	Victor	No
Postdoctoral Research Scholar	Leena	Yes
Visiting Research Fellow	Alexander	No