

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

A Publication of the Empire State College Mentoring Institute



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From the Editor

Alan Mandell, Metropolitan Center

Many models of mentoring that have sprung up over the last decade have presumed a clear hierarchy. That is, mentoring has meant that some expert or importantly experienced person is made available to lend a hand, to show someone the ropes, to offer necessary skills to a newcomer. Taken in this way, mentoring is about offering guidance in the nuances of a culture (be it a corporation or a university). It is about making the typical informalities of collegiality and friendship into explicit training. One needs a knowing mentor to adjust and to succeed.

In educational institutions and in industry, mentoring has been linked to advising. In the latter, this mentoring-as-advising has often meant the identification of role models who can positively influence one's career track and also help boost corporate morale. And, recently, more and more colleges have called upon faculty mentors to advise students in a range of areas, from time management to course choice; from problems of personal adjustment and cultural acclimatization to those of simply keeping up with one's academic work. Just as corporate mentoring has become part of a strategic plan to strengthen employee loyalty and to smooth the edges of a harshly competitive work environment, so educational mentoring has become part of the university's effort to respond to the anonymity of what many consumers know to be rather impersonal and uncaring institutions. Indeed, educational mentoring has entered the strange world of marketing individual attention. In both contexts, such models of mentoring-as-advising have probably been a salve to particular employees/students, but in neither case does the model question the institutional hierarchy upon which it is based. Mentoring becomes a one-way street.

What remains fascinating to me is that from its inception, Empire State College has tried to understand mentoring in a fuller and more complex way. Mentoring-as-advising leaves the expert with his/her expertise intact (or even bolstered). Mentoring at ESC has involved the student and faculty person in a relationship in which the answer to the question: "Who knows what about what and based on what?" is not immediately known. In fact, the contract model provides ample room for this question to become the very heart of the process of teaching and learning. Mentoring at ESC has thus offered the promise of a kind of dialogue between teacher and student that mentoring-as-advising, with its claims to authority, rightly fears. Thus, advising, as part of ESC mentoring, should mean that student and mentor are together creating a common path.

Have our current practices of mentoring become more akin to the model of mentoring-as-advising? Have the complexities of our systems, our desires to respond to our students' expressed needs, frustrations with our identities as academic generalists, our focus on the creation of certain kinds of learning resources, and our efforts to respond to the demands of our worklives, made mentoring-as-advising a more palatable solution for us as faculty members? Posed in another way, has mentoring-as-advising become the practice we have embraced in order to stay close to our students, when in fact we have lost touch with the connections we most cherish? As some of the pieces in this issue of *All About Mentoring* make clear, advising is immensely important to our mentoring work. Yet once mentoring becomes subsumed by advising, we will have lost part of the essence of the mentoring relationship at ESC — the part that is most difficult, because it puts in doubt not our desire to help, but rather what we know.

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Experiments in Inquiry: A Conversation with Keith Elkins **Alan Mandell, Metropolitan Center**

Keith Elkins retired from full-time mentoring at the Niagara Frontier Center in 1997. He has been mentoring in Buffalo since 1975. Alan Mandell's (A) conversation with Keith Elkins (K) is included here.

A: How did you get to ESC?

K: I learned about Empire State College while I was at Washington University in St. Louis in 1971 and applied for a position right away. But the College couldn't respond quickly enough for me to make definite plans. So, in 1972, I took a job at what is now called Pittsburg State University in Kansas. Three years later, in 1975, I applied to ESC again and that time it worked out.

A: What attracted you to the College?

K: I came here not only because I wanted to get out of where I was, but also because I was strongly attracted to what I understood to be the purpose of ESC and its approach to higher education. Even then, as I recall, the College was talking about learning contracts. I'd experimented with learning contracts when I was teaching at Washington University between 1967 and 1972. And I liked the whole idea.

A: Hadn't you taught in high school before Washington University and Pittsburg State?

K: Yes. I began my teaching career — my adult working career, you might say — rather late. I was 27 or 28 before I got my first real job as a teacher of freshman and sophomore English at Maine Township High School East in an upscale suburb outside of Chicago. I was there from 1958 to 1962. I later learned that Hillary Rodham Clinton was a student there at the time. So was Harrison Ford. I didn't know either of them. But Carrie Snodgrass was in one of my classes.

A: Had you begun your graduate studies at that time?

K: While at Maine Township, I went to a year-long NDEA institute on counseling at the University of Illinois in Champaign and got a master's degree in connection with it. In about 1962, having been emboldened by my degree, I wrote to Robert Havighurst at the University of Chicago and said that I was interested in getting a doctorate there. I don't know where I got the chutzpah, but I did it, and Havighurst passed my letter on to a man named Herbert Thelen, who became my major professor. Thelen encouraged me to apply for admission to the Ph.D. program in educational psychology as a staff associate. That was in 1963. In 1967, I got a job as assistant (later associate) director of the Graduate Institute of Education at Washington University in St. Louis.

A: So we're back to that point when you began trying out learning contracts.

K: Not right away. I was teaching educational psychology. And it was really a turbulent time. I can remember patrolling

the campus with another faculty member. We were paired up by the administration, which didn't want the municipal police to move in and take control of the campus from the university police. I remember seeing what can only be described as a riot. I watched student burn down the ROTC building and drive off fire engines with rocks.

A: It's so important to see how the political and cultural context of the time influenced the "experimenting" with teaching and learning itself. I think we often forget this key connection.

K: I think you're right. There was much skepticism about the authority of institutions of higher education generally. And I recall thinking, partly in response to what was going on around me, that one way to change what I was doing as a classroom teacher, to give it more legitimacy in the students' eyes, was to enter into individual agreements with them about what they were going to do (within the limits of the discipline) and how they were going to do it (from among the options I gave them). I took a chance. I encouraged them to come to class. But I told them that attendance was optional. Most came. Most of the time.

A: How would you judge the outcome of your effort?

K: I still remember one young man who was very much involved in the protests of the time. He came up to me after class one day and, almost against his inclination, told me that he really respected what I was trying to do with these learning contracts, or whatever it was I called them at the time. I thought that what I did there worked out very well. I was pleased with the effort. And I wanted to do more with it.

A: So this was, at least, some kind of preparation for ESC.

K: I really had no difficulties making the transition from Pittsburgh State University to the Niagara Frontier Center three years later. The only difficulty I had was that I'd always thought of myself as a classroom performer. And "performer" is the right word. I liked it. And after a while at ESC I missed it. I recall thinking at some point in the process of getting used to working one-to-one with students: "Well, OK, so I don't perform in front of a classroom; I still do many things with individual students that are very satisfying to me. It's good enough trade-off."

A: And then you became an actor!

K: Well, looking back this way, it's not so surprising that in response to one of my several mid-life crises around the time I came to Buffalo, I took an acting class at the local regional theater and have been acting on stage ever since. As a performer, I guess, I moved from the classroom to the stage.

A: In a slightly more general sense, perhaps this also presents us with one of the many tensions of our dealing with students as mentors. What is our relationship to the individual student? How do we interact? In what way do we perform?

K: I have a hunch that some of us — maybe only a few of us — have never been able to make the shift from the classroom to the tutorial mode. I don't know if it's increasing or decreasing. But I do recall passing by an office once and thinking: Omigod, that person is lecturing! There are two people sitting in an office, one sitting behind a desk, one on the other side — the whole setup looking like a loan office — and one person is lecturing the other. I have also seen a mentor in an office writing on a flip chart as if he were working with a chalkboard! That's an example of what I call classroom performing. They're doing the same thing they'd do in a classroom full of 100 or 200 people — except maybe speaking a bit more softly. But they're doing it in front of a single person. It struck me as a bit odd.

A: So you have tried to work with the differences between mentoring and performing.

K: It seems to me that what we do in our offices as mentors ought not to be about performing. It's very different. It's a conversation. In the most ideal terms, it's a Socratic conversation. Here's a possible parallel. When my daughter was very young and came home from school, I would ask her: "What did you learn in school today?" She was no more interested in answering such a question than any other kind, of course, so I tried other questions. I'd ask: "What's the most interesting thing that happened in class today?" Or "What was the funniest thing that happened?" But there's a risk in asking such open-ended questions. They work. One day she told me that the funniest thing that had happened was that so-and-so had

vomited all over someone else. Anyway, I'm still using those same questions 30 years later! When a student comes in, that is, having read significant portions of the text we'd agreed he or she would read, I ask one or more of the several versions of this question I still use. It's based on the assumption that the students are going to carry away from the experience of reading this book what is important to them, rather than what is important to me. And it's my job to help them articulate, to elaborate on, what is important to them.

A: In your early years of being in the College, what kinds of conversations did mentors have with each other about this work? It's a fairly isolated experience, isn't it? Were there broader discussions about how to do this kind of work? How did people learn this way of teaching?

K: Ever since I've been with ESC, we've talked about our common desire to share our experiences with each other, to learn from each other, and it seems to me that the only time it's happened is when it's happened casually. I've often wondered whether this impulse ESC folks have to talk about ESC, even in social situations, is in part because we haven't found — or until recently hadn't found — the means for talking about what we do and how we do it. The problems with most of our casual conversations over the years, about what we do and how we do it, is that they weren't disciplined; they weren't focused. We didn't often get at the deeper questions.

A: Has your practice changed over these 24 years?

K: It has, and it has in ways that I'm not sure I'm altogether proud of. It's in part the result of what we have all observed about ESC — that because of external pressures of one kind or another over the years, as well as because of simple organizational aging, we have become more constricted, constrained, controlled, limited, in how we relate to students for educational purposes. We've all had to do more with less. We've all lost support staff, Saratoga Springs too, and we've all had to take on more and more of the responsibility for work such as paper production and processing. We were told again and again that we needed to be more "efficient." Like everyone else, I've had to make accommodations. I made a decision at one point that I could not take out of my own hide what ESC or SUNY or NYS was taking away from the operation. So, I got "more efficient."

A: Can you give an example of this kind of "efficiency"?

K: I have not composed a contract evaluation from scratch in years. I now employ what I think of as a syntactical template for CEs. Similar sentences move along in the same general order in my CEs. What the sentences are about, of course, and the words I use in evaluating the quality of the students' work, differ from CE to CE. But that syntactical template, as I call it, has saved me an enormous amount of time over the years. That's one example among several I could give. This increase in efficiency did not arise out of a desire to do the job better, but to do the job as well as I could with fewer resources without burning out.

A: How has this model influenced the kinds of contracts you develop with students?

K: I don't think there was a backwash effect. I don't think the syntactical template I developed for my CEs influenced the contracts I developed. I based my contracts on what I think are the stages a student goes through in pursuing an inquiry in an orderly way. I studied inquiry-oriented approaches to teaching and learning at the University of Chicago. And out of that study came contract language that also is almost standard syntactically. But in this case, it's not that way because it's efficient, but because it describes a process that is the same from contract to contract. The "stuff" of my contracts is as various as the students who take them up.

A: So what might be thought of as standardization allows for variety.

K: I usually ask students to begin a contract by writing an informal paper on why they want to take up this study and what they hope it will answer. Once they've written that paper, they're to go out and find their own text. I suggest explicitly that they find one that is responsive to their interests. I give them even more latitude in choosing their follow-up readings on a sub-topic of special interest. That used to generate more variety than it does now. And it's a result of our move as a college toward contract studies that correspond more and more closely to courses listed in traditional college catalogs. So what used to be "explorations in psychology," say, has become "introduction to psychology." That forced us to deal with

“truth-in-packaging” issues. And that, in turn, set limits on the latitude I gave students in the books they chose to read and the subtopics they wanted to pursue.

A: Have our students changed? Your model works if the student is willing to enter into a rather reflective process. Are your students eager to do this with you?

K: I don't think our students have changed all that much — except for what I sense is a very troubling increase in the incidence of plagiarism owing to the easy availability on the Internet of what I suppose their defenders would call “model papers.” I think we've always had students who've said to us in one way or another: “Here's what I want to learn; now help me learn it.” And we've always had others who've said: “Tell me what to do and I will do it.” I think what's happened is that in our increasing drive for efficiency we may have pushed some from the lower end of the first group down into the second. In any case, when it's in the student's interest, I am more “directive.”

A: I've been concerned about how some mentors feel regarding the overall academic quality of the work we are doing with our students.

K: There is a long-standing tension between “excellence” and “production.” And here I go back to my comments on efficiency and the message we get regarding production. There were times in the past when I asked myself if I could continue to be proud of what I did at ESC. I finally decided that I could. Maybe I couldn't take as much unbounded pride or satisfaction or joy in my work as I had in my earliest days with the College — once I got past the experience in the first several months of being drowned! — but I could continue to find some satisfaction in doing the best damn job I could under the constraints imposed on me.

A: I wonder about how it is for those who are just coming to ESC now, particularly about their sense of participating in the actual building of an institution.

K: Even when I got to Buffalo in 1975, although the center had been in operation a year, we were still making stuff up. We were still trying to figure out what we were doing individually and collectively, and we met regularly to talk. Not only in formal meetings, either. I remember up to six or eight of us eating together in the restaurant of the Buffalo State Campus, where the center was located at that time, just sitting around talking. In one way, you could say it was a more inchoate time. And we were imposing a pattern on an undefined situation. Here's another example that's connected with my own interest in governance. In the beginning, the center's faculty meeting agenda was, in effect, collaboratively created. There was a portable chalkboard in the meeting room and anybody with an item for the agenda could write it on the board. The final agenda would come right off that board, and that's how we'd run our meetings. Agendas on both the center and college-wide levels have now become standard. And I confess with very mixed feelings that, as an acting administrator at the center level and as both senator and senate chair at the college-wide level, I am as responsible for that as anyone else in the College.

A: Throughout the years, you have been very involved in various levels of governance.

K: It's a terrible confession to make. But I loved my work with the Senate. And then I got discouraged. Five minutes before the end of my last meeting as senate chair, after all the work of the day had been done, I resigned. Admittedly as a theatrical gesture, I resigned to protest what I had come to see as the ineffectiveness of the Senate. One of my big concerns at the time was that the Senate — along with the union chapter where I served as president later on and the faculty caucus where I served as chair after that — was not helping the faculty find its own voice and to raise it. I sometimes feel that we as a faculty may have been complicit in our gradual loss of effectiveness in our own behalf. The administration may do things on its own we don't like, for example because it is legally required to. And we feel powerless. But if we can't take a formal action expressing our position in time for it to be taken into account, the administration has to decide what will be done without us. If we can't speak clearly and effectively, it's not the administration's problem. It's our problem.

A: There are certainly many instances today where individuals or groups of faculty are still building programs or developing from the “inchoateness” you earlier mentioned earlier.

K: I'm sure that's true. But there is a difference. Several years ago the question was put this way: "Is Empire State College one big continuing experiment? Or is it a place for continuing experimentation?" I think that ESC was, and may still be, the former. And that we have refined that original conception in the direction of greater orderliness and reliability, which is not a bad thing. It does not seem to me at least that ESC is very much involved in identifying, designing and carrying out further educational experiments of one kind or another.

A: And what could those experiments be?

K: I don't have any terrific ideas. I'm retired! Certainly much has been said and done in the area of web-based instruction. But I worry that ESC's reach in that area so far exceeds its grasp. But I want to get back to what we were speaking about earlier. I think that it would not hurt the College if all of it were to engage in a systematic exploration of the question not of how to expand its web-based instructional capability, which is what it may be focusing on now, but of how to use that capability in a way that teaches students how to pursue an inquiry on the web in an academically respectable way. Design a web-based instructional program around an inquiry-oriented process, for example, and let the stuff of instruction follow. ESC could explore how we might use the web in the service of several well-defined approaches to learning and teaching. That's what we know.

A: Simple access has certainly been another goal of nontraditional adult programs, hasn't it?

K: Web-based programs may be defended on the grounds that they're a way to get the material out to more people. But what is it they're getting out to more people? It's too often information unfocused by questions having to do with what one can do with it. I don't know if that has happened with the web courses ESC faculty members have developed so far. But under the pressures I talked about earlier, it certainly could. And if it did, it would miss what to me is the heart of the ESC experiment.

A: So what has kept you engaged in this experiment — involved in this mentoring process with your students, after all of these years, and even now in your semi-retirement?

K: I don't know. I really don't. New students come to me as strangers. I'm skeptical. Then I get involved with them, and somehow I get interested. It's not the subject matter; it's not even the discipline that I've referred to so often. It's the student and his or her efforts to make sense of that discipline, and then to use it to his or her own advantage. What moves me are human beings, I guess, who are making idiosyncratic attempts to understand what in the world is going on around them. I like helping them to articulate their questions and to figure out how to answer them. And I've felt at home here where I've been able to do that.

A: Do you ever think about what your professional life would have been if you hadn't come to ESC?

K: I like Empire State College. I always have. It's hard for me to imagine myself where I was before. I don't think I'd have enjoyed my work nearly as much if I'd stayed at any one of those places. In fact, I'm not sure I'd have survived in higher education if I'd done that. But I know for sure that going to work at ESC every day for almost 24 years has been a pain in the neck often enough, but never a chore. And never boring. It's still not, even in my semi-retirement!

A: And then there are your questions about the College's future.

K: Yes, is ESC one big 29-year-old educational experiment? Or is it a setting for many new educational experiments? My own question is whether, and if so how, ESC can either retrieve or sustain the relatively humane way in which we still usually relate to each other. I think we may sometimes lose sight of the fact that we are still quite different from traditional institutions of higher education. As that we probably need to stay different to survive — despite the pressures pushing us in the opposite direction — even though we see our inadequacies and wish that we had more time with our students. And more time to engage in the kind of conversation about our work that you and I had today.

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Most applications deadlines are August 1, 1999.

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'Only Connect' : The Goals of a Liberal Education

William Cronon

Editor's Note: William Cronon is Frederick Jackson Turner Professor of History, Geography, and Environmental Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is the author of many books including Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England, Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature and Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West. Cronon's article was published in The Key Reporter (Volume 64, Number Two, Winter 1998-99) and is printed here with permission of Phi Beta Kappa. A longer version of this piece can be found in the American Scholar (Autumn, 1998). As a part of our "general education" discussion, All About Mentoring invites responses to Cronon's thoughts.

What does it mean to be a liberally educated person? It seems such a simple question especially given the frequency with which colleges and universities genuflect toward this well-worn phrase as the central icon of their institutional missions. Mantra-like, the words are endlessly repeated, starting in the glossy admissions brochures that high school students receive by the hundreds in their mailboxes and continuing right down to the last tired invocations they hear on commencement day.

It would be surprising indeed if the phrase did not begin to sound at least a little empty after so much repetition, and surely undergraduates can be forgiven if they eventually regard liberal education as either a marketing ploy or a shibboleth. Yet many of us continue to place great stock in these words, believing them to describe one of the ultimate goods that a college or university should serve. So what exactly do we mean by liberal education, and why do we care so much about it?

In speaking of "liberal" education, we certainly do *not* mean an education that indoctrinates students in the values of political liberalism, at least not in the most obvious sense of the latter phrase. Rather, we use these words to describe an educational tradition that celebrates and nurtures human freedom. These days *liberal* and *liberty* have become words so mired in controversy, embraced and reviled as they have been by the far ends of the political spectrum, that we scarcely know how to use them without turning them into slogans — but they can hardly be separated from this educational tradition.

Liberal derives from the Latin *liberalis*, meaning "of or relating to the liberal arts," which in turn derives from the Latin word *liber*, meaning "free." But the word actually has much deeper roots, being akin to the Old English word *leodan*, meaning "to grow," and *leod*, meaning "people." It is also related to the Greek word *eleutheros*, meaning "free," and goes all the way back to the Sanskrit word *rodhati*, meaning "one climbs," "one grows." *Freedom* and *growth*: Here, surely, are values that lie at the very core of what we mean when we speak of a liberal education.

Liberal education is built on these values: It aspires to nurture the growth of human talent in the service of human freedom. So one very simple answer to my question is that liberally educated people have been liberated by their education to explore and fulfill the promise of their own highest talents. But what might an education for human freedom actually look like? There's the rub.

Our current culture wars, our struggles over educational standards, are all ultimately about the concrete embodiment of abstract values like “freedom” and “growth” in actual courses and textbooks and curricular requirements. Should students be forced to take courses in American history, and if so, what should those courses contain? Should students be forced to learn a foreign language, encounter a laboratory science, master calculus, study grammar at the expense of creative writing (or the reverse), read Plato or Shakespeare or Marx or Darwin? Should they be required to take courses that foster ethnic and racial tolerance?

Even if we agree about the importance of freedom and growth, we can still disagree quite a lot about which curriculum will best promote these values. That is why, when we argue about education, we usually spend less time talking about core values than about formal standards: What are the subjects that all young people should take to help them become educated adults?

Lists of Courses

This is not an easy question. Maybe that is why — in the spirit of E.D. Hirsch’s *Cultural Literacy* and a thousand college course catalogs — our answers to it often take the form of *lists*: lists of mandatory courses, lists of required readings, lists of essential facts, lists of the hundred best novels written in English in the 20th century, and so on. The impulse toward list making has, in fact, been part of liberal education for a very long time. In their original medieval incarnation, the “liberal arts” were required courses, more or less, that every student was supposed to learn before attaining the status of a “free man.”

There was nothing vague about the *artes liberales*. They were a concrete list of seven subjects: the *trivium*, which consisted of grammar, logic, and rhetoric; and the *quadrivium*, which consisted of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music. Together, these were the forms of knowledge worthy of a free man. We should remember the powerful class and gender biases that were built into this vision of freedom. The “free men” who studied the liberal arts were male aristocrats; these specialized bodies of knowledge were status markers that set them apart from the “unfree” serfs and peasants, as well as from the members of other vulgar and ignoble classes.

Our modern sense of liberal education has expanded from this medieval foundation to include a greater range of human talents and a much more inclusive number of human beings, holding out at least the dream that *everyone* might someday be liberated by an education that stands in the service of human freedom.

And yet when we try to figure out what this education for human freedom might look like, we still make lists. We no longer hold up as a required curriculum the seven *artes liberales* of the medieval university; we no longer expect that the classical 19th-century college curriculum in Greek and Latin is enough to make a person learned. But we *do* offer plenty of other complicated lists with which we try to identify the courses and distribution requirements that constitute a liberal education. Such requirements vary somewhat from institution to institution, but certain elements crop up predictably. However complex the curricular tables and credit formulas may become — and they can get pretty baroque! — more often than not, they include a certain number of total credit hours, a basic composition course, at least precalculus mathematics, some credits in a foreign language, some credits in the humanities, some credits in the social sciences, some credits in the natural sciences, and concentrated study in at least one major discipline.

We have obviously come a long way from the *artes liberales* — and yet I worry that amid all these requirements we may be tempted to forget the ultimate purpose of this thing we call a liberal education. No matter how deliberately they may have been hammered out in committee meetings, it’s not clear what these carefully articulated and finely tuned requirements have to do with *human freedom*.

And when we try to state the purpose of such requirements, we often flounder. Here, for instance, is what one institution I know well states as the “Objects of a Liberal Education”: “(1) competency in communication; (2) competency in using the modes of thought characteristic of the major areas of knowledge; (3) a knowledge of our basic cultural heritage; (4) a thorough understanding of at least one subject area.” This is the kind of language one expects from an academic committee, I guess, but it is hardly a statement that stirs the heart or inspires the soul.

One problem is that it is much easier to itemize requirements of a curriculum than to describe the qualities of the human beings we would like that curriculum to produce. All the required courses in the world will fail to give us a liberal education if, in the act of requiring them, we forget that their purpose is to nurture human freedom and growth.

A List of Qualities

I would therefore like to return to my opening question and try to answer it (since I, too, find lists irresistible) with a list of my own. My list consists not of required courses but of personal qualities: the 10 qualities I most admire in the people I know who seem to embody the values of a liberal education. How does one recognize liberally educated people?

1. They listen and they hear. This is so simple that it may not be worth saying, but in our distracted and over-busy age, I think it's worth declaring that educated people know how to pay attention — to others and to the world around them. They work hard to hear what other people say. They can follow an argument, track logical reasoning, detect illogic, hear the emotions that lie behind both the logic and the illogic, and ultimately empathize with the person who is feeling these emotions.

2. They read and they understand. This, too, is ridiculously simple to say but very difficult to achieve, since there are many ways of reading in our world. Educated people can appreciate not only the front page of *The New York Times* but also the arts section, the sports section, the business section, the science section, and the editorials. They can gain insight from not only the *American Scholar* and the *New York Review of Books* but also from *Scientific American*, *the Economist*, *the National Enquirer*, *Vogue*, and *Reader's Digest*. They can enjoy John Milton and John Grisham. But skilled readers know how to read far more than just words. They are moved by what they see in a great art museum and what they hear in a concert hall. They recognize extraordinary athletic achievements; they are engaged by classic and contemporary works of theater and cinema; they find in television a valuable window of popular culture. When they wander through a forest or through a wetland or a desert, they can identify the wildlife and interpret the lay of the land. They can glance at a farmer's field and tell the difference between soy beans and alfalfa. They recognize fine craftsmanship whether by a cabinetmaker or an auto mechanic. And they can surf the World Wide Web.

3. They can talk with anyone. Educated people know how to talk. They can give a speech, ask thoughtful questions, and make people laugh. They can hold a conversation with a high school dropout or a Nobel laureate, a child or a nursing-home resident, a factory worker or a corporate president. Moreover, they participate in such conversations not because they like to talk about themselves but because they are genuinely interested in others.

4. They can write clearly and persuasively and movingly. What goes for talking goes for writing as well: Educated people know the craft of putting words on paper. I'm not talking about parsing a sentence or composing a paragraph, but about expressing what is in their minds and hearts so as to teach, persuade, and move the person who reads their words. I am talking about writing as a form of touching, akin to the touching that happens in an exhilarating conversation.

5. They can solve a wide variety of puzzles and problems. The ability to solve puzzles requires many skills, including a basic comfort with numbers, a familiarity with computers, and the recognition that many problems that appear to turn on questions of quality can in fact be reinterpreted as subtle problems of quantity. These are the skills of the analyst, the manager, the engineer, the critic: the ability to look at a complicated reality, break it into pieces, and figure out how it works in order to do practical things in the real world. Part of the challenge in this, of course, is the ability to put reality back together again after having broken it into pieces — for only by so doing can we accomplish practical goals without violating the integrity of the world we are trying to change.

6. They respect rigor not so much for its own sake but as a way of seeking truth. Truly educated people love learning, but they love wisdom more. They can appreciate a closely reasoned argument without being unduly impressed by mere logic. They understand that knowledge serves values, and they strive to put knowledge and values into constant dialogue with each other. The ability to recognize true rigor is one of the most important achievements in any education, but it is worthless, even dangerous, if it is not placed in the service of some larger vision that also renders it humane.

7. They practice humility, tolerance, and self-criticism. This is another way of saying that they can understand the power of other people's dreams and nightmares as well as their own. They have the intellectual range and emotional generosity

to step outside their own experiences and prejudices, thereby opening themselves to perspectives different from their own. From this commitment to tolerance flow all those aspects of a liberal education that oppose parochialism and celebrate the wider world: studying foreign languages, learning about the cultures of distant people, exploring the history of long-ago time, discovering the many ways in which men and women have known the sacred and given names to their gods. Without such encounters, we cannot learn how much people differ — and how much they have in common.

8. They understand how to get things done in the world. In describing the goal of his Rhodes Scholarship, Cecil Rhodes spoke of trying to identify young people who would spend their lives engaged in what he called “the world’s fight,” by which he meant the struggle to leave the world a better place than they had found it. Learning how to get things done in the world to leave it a better place is surely one of the most practical and important lessons we can take from our education. It is fraught with peril because the power to act in the world can so easily be abused — but we fool ourselves if we think we can avoid acting, avoid exercising power, avoid joining the world’s fight. And so we study power and struggle to use it wisely and well.

9. They nurture and empower the people around them. Nothing is more important in tempering the exercise of power and shaping right action than the recognition that no one ever acts alone. Liberally educated people understand that they belong to a community whose prosperity and well-being are crucial to their own, and they help that community flourish by making the success of others possible. If we speak of education for freedom, then one of the crucial insights of a liberal education must be that the freedom of the individual is possible only in a free community, and vice versa. It is the community that empowers the free individual, just as it is free individuals who lead and empower the community. The fulfillment of high talent, the just exercise of power, the celebration of human diversity: Nothing so redeems these things as the recognition that what seem like personal triumphs are, in fact, the achievements of our common humanity.

10. They follow E.M. Forster’s injunction from *Howards End*: “Only Connect.” More than anything else, being an educated person means being able to see connections that allow one to make sense of the world and act within it in creative ways. Every one of the qualities I have described here — listening, reading, talking, writing, puzzle solving, truth seeking, seeing through other people’s eyes, leading, working in a community — is finally about connecting. A liberal education is about gaining the power and the wisdom, the generosity and the freedom to connect.

Two Caveats

I believe we should measure our educational system — whether we speak of grade schools or universities — by how well we succeed in training children and young adults to aspire to these 10 qualities. I believe we should judge ourselves and our communities by how well we succeed in fostering and celebrating these qualities in each of us.

But I must offer two caveats. The first is that my original question — “What does it mean to be a liberally educated person?” — is deeply misleading, because it suggests that one can somehow take a group of courses, or accumulate a certain number of credits, or undergo an obligatory set of learning experiences, and emerge liberally educated at the end of the process.

Nothing could be further from the truth. A liberal education is not something any of us ever *achieve*; it is not a *state*. Rather, it is a way of living in the face of our own ignorance, a way of groping toward wisdom in full recognition of our own folly, a way of educating ourselves without any illusions that our education will ever be complete.

My second caveat has to do with individualism. It is no accident that an educational philosophy described as “liberal” is almost always articulated in terms of the individuals who are supposed to benefit from its teachings. I have similarly implied that the 10 qualities on my list belong to individual people. I have asserted that liberal education in particular is about nurturing human freedom — helping young people discover and hone their talents — and this, too, sounds as if education exists for the benefit of individuals.

All this is fair enough, and yet, too, is deeply misleading in one crucial way. Education for human freedom is also education for human community. The two cannot exist without each other. Each of the qualities I have described is a craft or a skill or a way of being in the world that frees us to act with greater knowledge or power. But each of these qualities also makes us ever more aware of the connections we have with other people and the rest of creation, and so they remind

us of the obligations we have to use our knowledge and power responsibly.

If I am right that all these qualities are finally about connecting, then we need to confront one further paradox about liberal education. In the act of making us free, it also binds us to the communities that gave us our freedom in the first place; it makes us responsible to those communities in ways that limit our freedom. In the end, it turns out that liberty is not about thinking or saying or doing whatever we want. It is about exercising our freedom in such a way as to make a difference in the world and make a difference for more than just ourselves.

And so I keep returning to those two words of E.M. Forester's, "Only connect." I have said that they are as good an answer as any I know to the question of what it means to be a liberally educated person; but they are an equally fine description of that most powerful and generous form of human connection we call *love*. I do not mean romantic or passionate love, but the love that lies at the heart of all the great religious faiths: not eros but agape.

Liberal education nurtures human freedom in the service of human community, which is to say that in the end it celebrates love. Whether we speak of our schools or our universities or ourselves, I hope we will hold fast to this as our constant practice, in the full depth and richness of its many meanings: Only connect.

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
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Mentoring Mainspring: Academic Expertise or “Real World” Experience?

Rick Pilarsk, Northeast Center, FORUM/East

Mentoring can pose a dilemma analogous to the question in human development that counterpoises nature versus nurture as the bedrock of individual involvement. Thus, in mentoring one might ask: What is more important, the mentor’s academic/educational experience or the mentor’s practical work experience?

Like the virtually insoluble query in human development, the answer must be “both.” Perhaps, at that point we should leave it to the interested researchers to try to resolve the differentiating ratio of relative importance. However, in the meantime, I would like to offer my personal perspective about how my long and varied experience in business invigorates my mentoring activities.

To begin with, when I review a student’s annotated resume, I can relate quite precisely to the experience being described. At one point in my life, I have either performed in a similar position, or I have interviewed, selected and managed people who were to perform those kinds of duties. Two things are operative in the situation. First, I can relate to the individual’s mindset and professional environment because of my similar business experience. Secondly, I can identify elements of learning that qualify for prior learning in the person’s work experience. This places us in close alignment to work together in the mentoring process as the student’s ESC experience unfolds.

So often when I am in a mentoring conversation with a student, I find myself transported in time, back to a desk in an office, where I remember performing many of the same services that this individual performs in his or her everyday work life. I can see and almost feel what they are talking about when I tap into my experience reservoir. I can project myself into their situations and more fully understand, not merely empathize with, their circumstances. And then, when the person explains how they would like their education to transport them on their professional journeys, when they describe their professional and personal goals and objectives, I can again relive the life path and resonate with past periods in my life. I can project in my mind’s eye what kinds of things they may encounter in pursuing their aspirations. I can have a realistically practical perspective of what they may encounter.

And yet, I must always bear in mind that my experiences are not the student’s experiences. I may have insight into the student’s circumstances, but I must not identify with the student’s life situation. Mentor is not mentee. Objectivity must prevail. While my ancillary insight may put me well into the picture, I try to remember to guard against the assumption that I know so much that I can tell what may be best for this student. It reminds me of a mentor’s subtle, poignant power that is often imputed and invigorates my vigilance against excessive orchestration.

Up to this point in this introspective dialog with my academic and professional selves, I have been considering the element of understanding student circumstances, which tends to put me into the picture of “where they’re at.” Integrally, a mentor needs to understand “where they want to go,” personally and/or professionally, in order to mentor them toward their goals. Once again, my prior experience serves me well. Leaning on my years in business, I employ some of the experiential tools to foresee future demands through which I can probe with pertinent queries and offer helpful suggestions.

What is this person likely to encounter in his/her career? What studies would help the most? What weaknesses does the student have that can best be buttressed? What strengths can that student leverage with greater depth in order to improve his/her chances and levels of success? How can this student best broaden him/herself academically to be a well-educated person with potent skills in critical analysis and leadership? These are all questions that any mentor may ask; yet the answers induce different interpretations in the recipient of the response. It is my opinion, as well as my experience that my practical work background is particularly efficacious in my effort to digest the inferences and offer guidance to the mentee.

Perhaps my previous experience at the head of a corporation is even more useful in considering the relevance of specific studies in a student’s degree planning. In our dialog, I can try to compare the aspirations and expectations with what I have actually encountered myself, not forgetting that we are not one. As I have so often said in regard to my consulting experience, frequently a key manager’s value is not visible because she has applied her experience to a strategic decision and avoided potential threats to success that might unnecessarily absorb considerable resources. The invisible value is that the mistake was never made, so the real value is implicit and often not readily apparent.

Like, in mentoring students who are planning their management education specifically to advance their careers, blind alleys can be terribly consuming. As we cooperate to share as much information as possible, I find I am able to offer perspectives the student may not have considered, so that the student may make the bestinformed decision he or she conceivably can make.

But then again, mentoring life is not quite so simple, is it? The crux of the matter is that it is the student’s life that is important. The perplexing challenge always remains: How can I give as much as I have without being directive? How can I help students see the blind alley (if that metaphor is not too contradictory), with inserting too much influence into their decisions?

Indeed, I value my experience, but I try to remain ever wary of the danger of directiveness. I must try always to carry in the forefront of the discussion: Who am I to make these kinds of decisions for anyone? The answer is clear and loud, and the hope is that I listen carefully to that inner voice. Use the knowledge and experience you have been fortunate to have gained, and try to use it to help students fulfill their lives’ dreams to the best of their ability and for their own best interest. Whatever that may be I realize I cannot know, and that knowledge is my guiding principle.

According to my Merriam Webster pocket dictionary, a mentor is “a trusted counselor or guide.” May I earn the trust by remembering to be a counselor and guide, so that students I mentor make their own decisions about their own directions in life. And may my rich life experience be of some help, as a roadmap that describes the many roads, highways and byways to complete the journey. Which itinerary to choose must always remain the responsibility and free choice of the mentees who drive their own individual career vehicles.

The Adult Higher Education Alliance/ American Council on Education will hold its annual conference October 21, 22, and 23, 1999 at the Gideon Putnam in Saratoga Springs. Proposals for papers, workshops, panels, and hands-on demonstrations of technologically mediated learning are invited, addressing the theme: Connections — Adult Learners and the Evolving University. Focus is on the intersections of humanistic learning and emerging instructional technologies. Also, Alliance has ongoing interest in promoting discussion of student diversity.

What are the effects of instructional technology on learner-centered pedagogy? What are the effects of information technologies on practice, philosophy, and theory? What issues shape the future of adult alternative higher education?

The call for papers is available on-line at www.skidmore.edu/alliance-ace99. Or, e-mail Judy Gerardi who will mail the print-out to you. You’ll see that proposals of 450 words, double spaced, are requested by May 28 and that several specific themes are presented.

Empire State College is one of four cosponsors of the conference, with Skidmore’s University Without Walls chairing. This is a nice opportunity for use to expand our exchanges with others in adult higher education. Those of use who have attended in the past have been delighted with the variety of topics and level of discourse.

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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Midwives, Mentors and Distance Learning: Conversations with Vivian Cunningham, NM, FNP, MS Lee Herman, Central New York Center

Every vocation reminds its practitioners of its best purposes with images and stories. In academic mentoring, we are called by Socrates. Naming himself “a midwife’s son,” he claims to practice his mother’s art: “My art of midwifery is in general like theirs.... Those who frequent my company at first appear, some of them, quite unintelligent, but, as we go further with our discussions, all who are favored by heaven make progress at a rate that seems surprising to others as well as to themselves, although it is clear that they have never learned anything from me. The many admirable truths they bring to birth have been discovered by themselves from within.” (Plato, Theaetetus, 150b-d)

What did Socrates learn from his midwife mother? What can we learn about mentoring from midwives?

A good place to start is to talk with an academic mentor who is also a midwife. Vivian Cunningham is a family nurse practitioner, a nurse midwife, and a clinical assistant professor in the SUNY Stony Brook School of Nursing master’s program in nurse-midwifery. She and her colleagues in this program, Pathways to Midwifery, call themselves “mentors.”

Pathways to Midwifery operates through distance learning. The 120 students live and work in New York State, the Northeast, Texas, Arizona, California, Alaska. The eight full-time faculty live and work here and there in New York State. Ms. Cunningham maintains a clinical practice in Auburn, a small upstate city. Some 10 miles from town, in the dining room of a weathered shingled farmhouse on lands which have been in her family for generations, she does much of her work with students and colleagues in virtual reality. Suiting ourselves to our topic, Ms. Cunningham and I conversed mostly by e-mail, though we met in person twice, once in my ESC office and once in her dining room office. During the week of one of those conversations, she and her colleagues, no more immune to SUNY budget cuts than we are at ESC, conducted a faculty meeting in a temporary “chat room” they’d set up on “Yahoo!”. Everyone in Pathways needs to be a resourceful, self-directed learner.

But it’s not fiscal conservatism which inspires Pathways to Midwifery to operate through distance learning and to require independence. Like Empire State College, Pathways originated in a commitment to provide higher education access to underserved populations of potential students. The Stony Brook program began in 1995, with some 60 students during that year. Its founding director, Judith Treistman, and some of the other founding faculty, including Vivian, came from a similar program: The 99 Community-based Nurse Midwifery Education Program began in 1989, as part of the School of Midwifery and Family Nursing in Hyden, Kentucky. The founder of that program, Kitty Ernst, hoped to create midwifery-based “birth centers” throughout the country. She wanted to make this sort of health care widely accessible, especially to underserved populations. To do that, she knew that she needed to increase the number and the distribution of nurse midwives. And to do that, she needed to make nurse midwifery education itself accessible, both geographically and financially, to wider populations of potential students. Hence, distance learning. Vivian Cunningham was in the first class. At the time, she was living in Ovid, NY, working as a family nurse practitioner at the Gannett Health Center of Cornell and at Planned Parenthood of the Finger Lakes.

No stranger to educational innovation, Vivian was also in the first class of bachelor degree students in nursing and in the

first class of master's degree family nurse practitioners at SUNY Binghamton, as well as the first class at Hyden and among the first faculty of the Pathways program. She is also used to accepting and thriving on the diversity found in distances. Though she has always lived in central upstate New York, she's traveled, often to conferences and classes, in West Africa, China, Mexico, the Caribbean and India. With the Red Cross, she's participated in emergency relief from the effects of a hurricane in Puerto Rico. As a member of Witness for Peace, she's documented the condition of Haitian refugees in the Dominican Republic.

Successful mentoring, whether in person or at a distance, depends so much on teachers appreciating that students bring their own resources to learning: their skills and knowledge, powers and experiences from their own lives, which may be so different and far from our own. There is something about midwifery itself which supports this appreciation. As Vivian explained to me, midwives learn to nurture and rely upon the powers of their patients, the birthing mothers. Midwives understand and appreciate that they are not the mothers of the children they are helping to birth. As with midwifery, so with mentoring: "You have to model what you teach," Vivian emphasized. She and her colleagues say that they "birth" their students, meaning that they help students give birth to their own learning.

But this does not mean that the midwife-mentors just let their students be. There is a tension between the desires and convenience of the students, who are usually busy adults already maintaining nursing practices, and the requirements of an academic program which is a pathway into a complex and demanding vocation. ESC mentors often refer to their students "juggling roles" as learners, workers, family and community members. Vivian talks about her students having to "sandwich" diverse priorities. The program allows a flexible pace of learning, but there is an academic schedule. Also, students must to some extent coordinate their schedules with each other, because they are required to work in regional groups. She believes collaboration is an important quality of successful distance learning, just as collaboration, I would understand, is essential between midwife and mother.

There are required courses and tests. As Penni Harmon, one of the midwife mentors, puts it, students "have to learn 'the facts'." For that matter, so do the mentors. A broad range of expertise, both conceptual and practical, is required of the faculty. Although each mentor is somewhat specialized (e.g. in home birthing, high risk obstetrics or primary gynecology), nearly everyone teaches nearly every course in the program. The mentors need to be generalists and technically refined. They must do and teach what their students learn. The American College of Nurse-Midwives Accreditation Council (NMAC) requires them to maintain their own clinical practices. Mentoring, Vivian reflected, constantly confronts the practitioner with the questions, "Do I know enough?" "Do I know what I need to know?"

Students do their clinical training under the supervision of local "preceptors." These volunteers teach and evaluate clinical skills; they certify students for entrylevel practice and as ready to sit for the national exam of the NMAC. Although much of the non-clinical teaching/learning occurs at a distance, students are required to attend a four to five day orientation in Stony Brook at the beginning of the program, and to meet with the mentors six to eight times for clinical activities during the two-year program. Depending on cost efficiency, sometimes mentors will travel to where the students are. It remained an implicit and unsettled question during our conversations how much learning and of what kinds can occur in virtual reality.

Although there is a definite "body of knowledge" which any nurse-midwife must possess (the core competencies required by the ACNM for entry-level practice), Vivian also describes a good deal of content flexibility. Students competent in one area of knowledge do not need to spend as much formal time on it as students who are not. What they already know and do not know is taken into account in the design of individual studies. Especially in conceptually oriented required courses, such as "Wellness" and "Midwifery and Philosophy," students collaborate with mentors in creating content suited to their individual interests.

Midwife mentors are preparing their students to enter their own calling, midwifery, to join, as Vivian says, "the sisterhood." (A few students, by the way, are male, as is one faculty member.) As befits the tradition of an "art," as Socrates calls it, which had a long history before so many callings were rendered "professional" and male, the learning of midwifery in this program still occurs by apprenticeship. Students learn from the example and the stories of the practitioners they hope to become. The midwife mentors must, I imagined, bear a significant load of paradigmatic authority, the semi-numinous authority of exemplars. This goes well beyond the sort of bureaucratized and seemingly expert authority many academic teachers exercise in setting curricula, evaluating assignments and awarding credit. Penni

Harmon, noting a tension within the mentor-midwife role, describes the “disparity of power that mentoring implies” and the potential conflict between being an expert exemplar and being collaborative.

At ESC, our students do not intend, by and large, to become “one of us.” They are not apprentices to their mentors. Do we at ESC model something useful to our students? To what extent do we help them learn by our examples and stories? I guess that to the extent that we do not “profess” — transfer officially legitimated and ready-made information and ideas — we might model something: the commitment to learning itself. As Vivian says of herself and her colleagues, “We strive to motivate our students to be lifelong learners.” Perhaps this motivation comes from our wanting to learn about our students so that we can help them be self-directed learners. The caring curiosity we model to them is about them. It is not clinical or dispassionate; it is a kind of affinity. Just as between mentoring and professing, there is a tension between the nurse-midwifery and the “medical” models of primary health care. The medical model emphasizes highly subdivided areas of expertise and depends heavily on technology. Nurse midwifery, as Vivian observes, is certainly not anti-technology (lest there be no nurse midwife distance learning program!). Nor does it ignore medical expertise. Vivian believes it important to “underpin your nursing with your medicine.” But the nurse midwife brings something more than clinical expertise; as with mentoring, it too is a kind of affinity.

In this approach to primary health care, there is a strong emphasis, Vivian noted, on education and counseling. “Patients” are not just passive sufferers. They are encouraged to become active collaborators in their health care, just as students are encouraged by mentors to be collaborators in their education. “We see patients,” Vivian comments, “as people other than their illnesses.” And unlike the dispassionate distance, supported by a gigantic disparity in technical knowledge, cultivated by many modern doctors and other health care professionals, nurse midwives connect with the affective, personal and family lives of their patients. Mentor-midwives do the same.

The technology of the Pathways to Midwifery program enables (and exposes) Vivian to “hearing” from her students at all hours and about all manner of things. During our last conversation, in her dining room office, her computer hummed its download of 68 messages students had sent her since the previous night. At ESC, many of my colleagues and I find ourselves both attracted to and overwhelmed by this kind of connectedness to our students. Even as we worry over where and when to draw boundaries, we value these multipliciously stranded bonds — official and personal, cognitive and affective — between ourselves and our students. Exactly these connections between the many dimensions of their lives and our own makes education fascinating, precious and lifelong. The dining-computing room in Vivian’s house opens into living-weaving room. Next to the sofa stand a loom and two intricately exquisite, smooth, wooden spinning wheels. Around the room hang and recline fabrics of many colors and textures and patterns, including some of Vivian’s own weaving. And baskets overflow with homespun yarns and tresses of unspun silk, sheep’s wool and cashmere. Connections made, innumerable connections yet to be made. It is a comfortable, intriguing place, where mentoring occurs.

During our discussion of the “technologization of childbirth,” Vivian referred to the “epidural epidemic”— the commonplace administration of painkillers during birthing. But, she observed, in missing the pain of the birthing experience, one also misses the “power” of making it happen. Later, she spoke, as though of a ritual passage, of the painful and fearsome “I just can’t do it” crises her students often experience as they approach graduation. “We try to help them through, as midwives,” she said. She added wryly, “I worry when they don’t go through this,” and then with more gravity, “I worry that if they don’t, they will think this [work] is a breeze and they will be dangerous.” About 20 years ago, my colleague, Hugh Hammett, advised me that “Education begins when you have that feeling of the bottom dropping out.” That feeling is deeply painful and invaluable. I thought of Socrates helping his interlocutors bring on and endure “the birth pangs” of their ideas.

Students enduring and accepting this birthing pain acquire tremendous power over themselves. And perhaps this is also an essential experience for a mentor, whether of midwives or others, to model the painful but powerful experience of ignorance and birthing. Being a learner is to such mentors and midwives no more a disease or an infirmity than is giving birth. “Part of the midwifery philosophy,” Vivian says, “is `the power of childbearing.” She adds, “I love being with adolescents giving birth. I always say, `Look at what you have done!’” Enjoying those memories in my office, at the end of a darkening wintry afternoon, her face lights up. “We must value what they already know, the gifts they already have.” I’m not sure if Vivian was referring just then to her students, her patients, mentors, or all of us. “A birth that happens easily is a good fit between baby and pelvis; the baby has room. The process works well if the woman is in touch with her body; the midwife facilitates this. After a nice birth, the mother says, `I couldn’t have done it without you.’ But that’s not quite true.”

ALL ABOUT
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Some Thoughts on the Interrelations of the Cognitive and Emotional Modes in the Mentoring Situation

Peter Schneider, Long Island Center

As a mentor in psychology whose specialty is in the clinically related areas, I often encounter students who come up against course material that touches on personally sensitive areas, i.e., personal conflicts (resolved or not), traumatic experiences and life events, psychological ideas which seem quite alien to them but stimulate conscious processes. It is often a tricky matter of clinical, academic, and ethical judgment how to handle student reactions to readings or topics that arise in mentoring sessions. I am generally aware of the importance of not blurring the line between academic teaching and learning, and psychotherapy. However, I am also of the opinion that, in the field at least, the deepest learning generally engages the emotions and cannot remain abstract or impersonal. So, what to do when a student's (or my own) "stuff" emerges in the course of a mentoring session, or in written work or in a study group?

We need to examine some examples. Of necessity, these will be somewhat abstractly presented and/or disguised to protect identities involved. In a study group on abnormal psychology, students did an in-class presentation on a particular syndrome in which they discussed the literature on etiology and treatment. Many students picked areas with which they had firsthand acquaintance.

In one meeting, a student was presenting. About midway through the presentation, another student started to comment and in the middle of speaking started to weep while telling the presenter that she (the presenter) was right on target about the syndrome. This study group consisted entirely of mature and reasonably sophisticated students so they were not stunned or upset, but there was a moment of silence in which clearly nobody knew what to say next. Feeling responsible and also wanting to demonstrate my clinical cool, I asked the student after a few minutes if she was OK. She said she would be alright. I then asked her if it was OK with her for us to continue on this topic. She replied that it was, adding that she just realized she still had some serious work to do on herself. At that point, I made a comment to the effect that studying this field often stirs up personal stuff and that this was material that is best grasped not as knowledge "out there" but from the inside. It so happened that everyone in this study group was planning to go on to do graduate work in the helping fields. I said that practically everyone in my class in clinical psychology graduate school had some upsetting experience in the course of their training; it is almost inevitable. After class, a number of students checked with this person to make sure she felt OK about what had happened.

This was a situation in which the norms were unclear. In a graduate program in the helping fields (clinical psychology or social work), particularly in psychodynamically-oriented programs and in training settings such as internships, it is expected that things like this will occur. In quasi-supervisory sessions, group or individual, more processing and quasi-therapeutic discussion of transference and counter-transference will often take place. This seemed inappropriate here; it was not clinical training and the students did not know each other that well. However, not to deal with what was happening at all would have been insensitive and might have been harmful or, at least, alienating to the student and to the group. So, without too much calculation, I groped toward a response that would help the student feel cared about, nor set apart from the others, normalized, taken seriously, and not scrutinized. I see I also tried to shift the class's (and the student's) attention to the general issue. That is to say, my response was somewhat "academic."

In a different setting (a one-to-one mentoring session) with a different student, personal material came up that prompted from me a somewhat different response. The study was Theories and Techniques of Counseling and Psychotherapy; the student was in her last contract, applying to graduate school, and already had some experience in the helping field. I was holding forth to her about a therapeutic impasse I was in with a patient in my practice. I was trying to illustrate a point about the difficulties of working with resistances such as substance abuse that are extremely self-reinforcing. The student said to me: “Well, it’s simple. You just have to give her an ultimatum.” I asked her how she could be so sure it would work, and she calmly told me that she had been there as a patient. Unlike in the above situation, I asked her to tell me more about it if she did not mind. She said it did not bother her in the least, and told me an interesting and rather complete story. After listening to it, I said I was quite impressed and thanked her for the supervision.

This was an interesting situation because the student signaled clearly that she wanted to tell her story and that she was not at all distressed. She also felt she had something to teach me. Although I did not entirely agree with her view, I did not challenge it for several reasons, which I only see retrospectively: a) She could be right; I’m certainly stumped with this patient and do not consider myself the last word on this subject despite my years of experience (and I told the student that); b) I thought it was more important to affirm the student’s knowledge at this point than to get into any elaborate critical thinking exercise (e.g., drawing out her philosophical assumptions or comparing the data of the two cases); and c) Here was a chance to model open-mindedness; to try to function in the receptive mode in the hope that the student would absorb that this way of being also has value particularly in this profession of therapy.

So what did I not do here? I didn’t do many of the things that I believe in, such as stimulating critical thinking, self-examination, etc. I think that on an educational level, in the mentoring setting, I was engaged in something that relational psychoanalysts call an “enactment.” Rather than be a wiseguy and challenge or interpret her certainty, I went with it. Perhaps this was an unusual experience for her; perhaps teachers or others in her life had never or rarely validated her self-knowledge? I don’t know, but it felt right to me.

Here is a final example from a mentoring session. A man in the course of taking Abnormal Psychology with me comes to understand his own history of violence as a defense against some early traumata, both physical and psychological. I simply say that it sounds plausible to me, and we move on. He seems a little tightly wound, and I do not want to mess with it. Even though he brought it up, I do not feel that he was asking me to pry or use it academically in any way. He just wanted me to know. Here the traditional boundary between teacher and student and between teaching and therapy was very clear.

So what does it all mean (Mr. Natural)? I would say that at least with students in my field, even though we are not doing therapy and do not follow the norms and procedures of the therapeutic situation, clearly we are often doing psychological/emotional work of some kind. Or, if we are not doing it, often the student is. I think it pays to be aware of that. Particularly in our characteristic mode of instruction — mentoring, the personal/emotional and cognitive/academic modes of functioning are often intermeshed in observable ways, and we can powerfully enhance our students’ and our own learning with awareness and judicious use of that fact.

The annual meeting of CAEL (The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning) — their 25th Anniversary Conference — will be held in Seattle, Washington on November 11-13, 1999. More details about the conference can be found on CAEL’s web site at www.cael.org/confwork.

ALL ABOUT
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Some Problems of the 20th Century: Looking Forward and Looking Backward
Clark Everling, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School of Labor Studies

Clark Everling was the 1998 Recipient of the ESC Foundation Award for Excellence in Scholarship. He delivered this talk at our recent All College Conference.

Introduction

I was away last year when this award was presented, so I did not get to say thank you then, and to say how deeply honored I am to receive this award. I would also like to thank all of those who extended me greetings for this award. I want especially to thank Robert Seidel. Bob acquired my book, *Social Economy: The Logic of Capitalist Development*, shortly after it was published. He read it carefully and offered constructive and critical comments. I consider that one of the most outstanding acts of collegiality that I have experienced. It is the kind of generosity of spirit that Bob expresses that I am in quest of today in talking about some of the problems of the 20th century and something of the meaning of our experience and our prospects.

I believe that the 20th century has been a struggle to locate and understand our own humanity and the conditions for its realization. The 20th century has very much been about life in an industrial, highly socialized, humanmade world, filled with examples of almost incomprehensible inhumanity. Slaughter in two world wars, the holocaust and genocide, daily stepping over the homeless in the streets. The great W.E.B. DuBois said at its beginning that the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line. He was right. But I want to join others in expressing today that it is also the lines drawn by class and gender. I want today to explore the economic dimensions of our social relationships as these have developed in the 20th century. I have decided to do this by examining certain myths about the market which, I believe, hide the content of our economic and social relations and make it difficult for us to locate and understand our own humanity.

Shortly before preparing this paper, I attended the Eastern Economic Association annual meeting. Like any such gathering it was an occasion for jokes about the profession. One colleague defined economic history as the search for a black cat in a dark room. He said that economics is the search for a black cat in a dark room when the cat isn't there. And that econometrics (statistical economics) is the search for a black cat in a dark room when the cat isn't there and you claim that you have caught the cat. I hope that I get closer to the mark. But jokes about economics and economists today are partly a product of the discrepancy between what economists say and what the average person experiences every day. For example, six days after the implosion of the Russian financial system last August 24, *Time* magazine interviewed 40 prominent economists and 39 of them said that they did not expect a world economic slump.

The denial of a world slump with Asia already long in crisis and 40% of the world economy in deflation, I propose, is part of the theoretical and moral obtuseness that presently guide much of our thinking. In economics, this comes, I believe, from too much focus on the market as simply a series of exchange relationships. John Maynard Keynes pointed out in the 1930s that exchange always presupposes a previous distribution. What you need and what you can afford are always determined by what you already have. Karl Marx had earlier made this same point. If the 20th century should have taught

us anything, it should have taught us that the content of that previous distribution is composed of adequate housing, education, health care, recreation and leisure, and other elements of an urban social and community infrastructure. The presence or absence of these has a lot to do with who we are as human beings and who we can become.

I argue below that the neglect of these elements of urban existence in understanding world economic development has a lot to do with the present global crisis and with threats to our future. To develop this perspective, I want to explore certain myths about market relations: First, that the market is not essentially historical. Second, that market transactions are essentially at arm's length among largely anonymous buyers and sellers. Third, that market relations are impersonal transactions. Fourth, and finally, that the market will guide us, especially the US and Europe, past the deepening global crisis.

Market Relations are Historical

The present global economy is a product of historical processes that developed around industrialization at the beginning of the 19th century. England dominated early industrial and exchange relations and, in the early 1800s, its exchanges were primarily in goods with countries on the European continent that were developing somewhat more slowly. But this appears, at this time, as primarily an exchange among equals. Industrial centers in England and Europe are interconnected by rail. Similar rail linkages exist among emerging industries in the newly independent Latin American countries. By the mid-1800s, the export of capital to these and other areas begins to follow the export of goods.

But by the late 19th century, a different picture is emerging. These are now evidently not economic relations among equal trading partners. England's dominance over these processes has grown. The British pound sterling is the real international currency, not gold or silver. European industrial countries on the continent have begun to extend their rails and investments to dominate less developed countries such as France over Spain, and Germany over Eastern Europe. Latin American industrial development has been sacrificed to their becoming the producers of primary commodities, mainly for the US and Western Europe.

By the early 20th century, there is no part of the world that has not been divided among the Europeans, the US, and Japan, as colonies and areas of domination. Both World War I and the Depression of the 1930s make it clear that those nations outside of the great powers themselves can industrialize on their own only when the great powers are preoccupied with their own problems.

Following World War II, national struggles for independence include struggles for industrialization often through supportive relations with the Soviet Union. Until the early 1970s, this appears to be a bipolar world between the developed and the developing nations. But investment in East Asian, especially by the US, aids those countries in gaining important technological leads. The technological intensity of this development helps explain why, for example, between 1985 and '92, that 90% of all of the capital available for investment outside the US, Japan, and Western Europe, went into only 14 countries, mainly East Asia. Now those economies are in severe deflation, which threatens to grow deeper there and in Japan.

Briefly stated, the world economy after 1945, and especially after the early 1970s, came to be centered in a relatively few countries. The further development of the East Asian and Japanese economies has been limited for the last ten years by their relative inability to break into developed markets outside the US and their inability to get new generations of technologies and products which would allow them to compete with the US. Consequently, we have today what the *Economist* recently described as a lopsided global economy, which is too heavily dependent upon the US and its overinflated stock market. Numerous observers, including former Labor Secretary Robert Reich, now warn that US consumers cannot sustain themselves and remaining parts of the world against global deflation.

Buyers and Sellers Know One Another

As I have just suggested, buyers and sellers know who they are and know one another according to their developed historical and social positions within economic relations. By the early 20th century, the great powers had divided the world among themselves. Their corporations were increasingly in head-to-head competition for the reallocation of the same markets. The intensity of this competition helped produce World War I. That war shifted enormous economic and

financial power to the United States. Trading relations in the interwar years were highly dependent upon the US. The disproportion of that power meant that even most European nations could not maintain trade and exchange relations among themselves and the US sufficient to permit continued employment. When the limits to workers' wages and farmers' earnings could no longer sustain the US economy, the Great Depression began.

Germany was the great loser, in World War I and after. The breakdown of its government following the war was very much a product of the conflicts among industrial classes and conflicts between political right and left. The rise of Fascism under Hitler was a consequence of depression and the continued inability of Germany to sustain its economy and employment through trade. Military rearmament became an answer to domestic employment. As for resources, which could not be earned through international exchange, Hitler's answer was simple. Take them by force. This he proceeded to do in the East, and then throughout the whole of Europe. By 1941, Germany was consuming almost the entire iron ore production of France, which was now, effectively, its colony.

Deflation, such as that in the Great Depression, is declining prices brought on by declining exports and limited domestic markets, which are themselves results of layoffs and disinvestment. Deflation is a downward spiral that is both the result and premise for inadequate markets. The export markets are determined by very definite relations of power among nations and control over economic development. Domestic markets are very definite products of incomes and the distribution within the society of wealth and urban social life requirements.

Market Relations are Personal

Deflation, because it is declining prices that undermine investment and production, makes trade among nations and exchange among classes difficult or impossible. The inability to exchange on anything like an equal basis among nations and social classes reduces those relations to force. Classes then step into political, police, and military garbs. The dominant classes seek to impose the authority of the state. It is those least advantaged by exchange relationships who lack social and political rights who are, of course, most directly susceptible to the use of force and scapegoating.

Marx made an additional point about the personal character of exchange. He said that exchange, as social relationships, always require the delivering up of a product in some form, that is, the alienation of oneself into a product for exchange with another. The more intimate and direct social relations become, the more intimate the forms of exchange, the more personal the forms of alienation. The less personal independence and sense of social and personal rights one feels, the more alienated. Consequently, social relations that have only exchange as their object and content reinforce relationships of class, race, and gender. This is reduction to what one most essentially is, as determined by social relationships, and as object for those relationships. Militia movements in the US ask essentially the same questions as Hitler's stormtroopers: Are we not white men? Is this not our country? Are we not among those who rule this country? Who is it that keeps us from holding our rightful place, who displaces and marginalizes us?

Economic Globalism Depends Upon National Economic Development

Thus far, I have suggested three things in this paper in discussing the evolution of the global economy: First, that economic globalism is based upon historical relationships of power and dominance. In the 20th century, struggles around these resulted in depression and two world wars. Second, the economic and social position of the nations and peoples within nations are highly vulnerable to breakdown as a consequence of economic disproportions and inequalities. I indicated the economic dominance of the US in the present global economy. Here I want to indicate the economic power of transnational corporations which, left to themselves, dominate economic development. Third, I have suggested that social relations must be understood in terms of their human content and human needs as those are historically developed. Here I want to suggest that it is addressing these needs in the US and everywhere that is at the core of avoiding world deflation and depression.

Today, transnational corporations (TNCs) are global webs of economic development, which the United Nations has called the most significant actors in the global economy. TNC sales exceed the aggregate output of most countries. The foreign content of output, assets, and employment in many TNCs ranges from 50 to over 90%. The largest 600 industrial TNCs account for between one-fifth and one-fourth of value-added production in the leading capitalist countries. TNCs account for 80 to 90% of all of the exports of the US and 60% or more of US imports with at least 50% of TNC transactions being

internal, buying from and selling to themselves. Approximately 50% of the US trade deficit is accounted for by the internal transactions of TNCs. TNCs, both financial and non-financial, control the bulk of international lending, have liquid assets in several currencies, and are important participants in world financial markets. The largest 56 TNCs have sales ranging between \$10 billion and \$100 billion. The expansion of the international economy through the TNCs has tended to involve more and more small companies, especially in the area of services.

In the 1990s, slightly less than half the 35,000 TNCs are from four countries: the US, Japan, Germany, and Switzerland, with the UK ranking seventh as the most popular home of TNCs. Of the top Fortune 500 industrial TNCs, 167 are headquartered in the US, 111 in Japan, 43 in the UK, 32 in Germany, and 29 in France. The combined wealth of the top 500 manufacturing and top 500 banking and insurance companies amounts to \$10 trillion, twice the US gross domestic product (GDP).

TNCs investment in any given country centers economic development around themselves. This leads to economic regionalization so that economic development happens for some people in those societies, but not others. This creates social polarization: social dualism of haves and have-nots in relation to economic development. But the global crisis is equally a crisis of capital and the TNCs. Since the 1960s, TNCs have struggled with the problems of how to maintain market advantages and stay in control of “cutting edge” technologies, in an increasingly interdependent world where technologies and common needs are ever more widespread and readily identifiable. TNCs help make urban forms of social existence ever more universal but they want to develop only the forms of urban social space and its requirements which are most profitable to themselves.

As a result, economic development is restricted and TNCs answer the economic problem of underconsumption by underproduction. For example, General Motors produces approximately 30% fewer cars today than it did in the early 1980s. DuPont can profit using less than 60% of its productive capacities. General Electric restructured and reduced employment and products so that its earnings rose 50% during the 1980s, while sales increased only 12%. TNCs become financial institutions in their search for profitable investments. Many companies, such as GE, make 40 to 60% of their profits by acting as banks for themselves and other corporations.

TNCs hold and gain market advantages through their abilities to internalize profitable activities and control costs, while “spinning off” less profitable operations. This is what TNCs call “perfecting markets.” Their internalization of advantages restricts economic development to their own forms. Economic development becomes regionalized around internationally-connected operations. For example, according to *The New York Times*, there has been no economic development in New York State since the early 1980s, which was not tied to the global economy. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank seek to enforce this economic globalization and regionalization within countries around the world, in part, by demanding export-based economies and privatization which can open social services and national wealth to private international financial markets.

Consequently, economic expansion, which depends primarily on global connections, becomes increasingly separated from the economic development of the nation as a whole. TNCs do relatively well, while economic and social decline characterizes life within their home and other nations. For example, economic expansion after a recession in the US no longer improves the conditions of those in poverty. Economic expansion and poverty now operate as separate cycles for the first time since 1945. Economic expansion, which used to raise all boats, now raises the yachts but not the rowboats.

Economic development today involves the creation of what is called “high value” production, distribution, exchange, and consumption through the integration of economic activities within urban space. What Michael Porter of Harvard Business School calls the “value chain” includes, of course, high technology production and communication facilities, tie-ins to research and development facilities including universities, skilled labor and consultants, and associated corporate services. But it also depends upon the quality of urban infrastructure, housing, education, health care, public and private services, recreation and leisure facilities. TNCs integrate their own operations within the more prosperous portions of urban areas, those that are capable of reproducing their own social requirements.

Investment in infrastructure, housing, education, health care, and so on, are essential to all urban space. In the US, 51% live in cities of larger than 1 million and 78% live in cities of larger than 100,000. The rest of the population depends upon urban forms of social requirements; only 1.8% live on the land.

Infrastructure, housing, education, and health care are essential to urban neighborhoods — economic development because they are bases for employment, incomes, savings, and investment. A wealth of these urban requirements allows an area to develop and generate bases for their further development. Neighborhoods and regions which have these requirements can retain 75%, or more, of their incomes within that area and thus have the bases for that area's own reproduction. Conversely, studies of the European Union and the UK have shown that economic regions within and among them are further separated from one another in incomes and economic development than they were at the beginning of the 1970s and the same is true of the US.

Education at all levels is characterized by Jonathan Kozol as “savage inequalities.” 34% of white people in the US are “shelter poor” and do not have enough for basic necessities after paying for housing. Within the African- American community that figure is 49% and 50% for Latinos. In any given year, 43% of people are without adequate health care. 20% have no coverage and another 23% can afford only very minimal care.

The urban metropolis, which has grown up with the 20th century, is a new form of social settlement within human history. The metropolis carries on human reproduction through the economic interactions of its forms of property and divisions of labor. Neighborhoods are the essential units for reproduction within that space. Neighborhoods and their surrounding regions are self-sustaining and capable of their own reproduction when their ability to generate and retain incomes within that geographic area also allows them to reinvest in the forms of production and service essential to life within the area.

People dependent upon urban forms of property for their social existence become less able to reproduce their existence as they lack those forms of property. And all of those forms of property are in increasingly short supply as TNCs concentrate and centralize capital accumulation and investment. The lack of urban social requirements means that people are more dependent upon their private incomes and benefits for the reproduction. But those wages and benefits are increasingly unable to generate urban social requirements such as housing, education, or health care, and permit sufficient levels of .

Aristotle said that the most important question is: What is the human? Our experience in the 20th century has provided us with positive as well as negative responses to that question. At this point, we face economic and social questions to which our responses can either throw us back upon our potential for barbarism or we can go about recognizing the universality of human needs in modern urban industrial and service economies and societies.

The lives of these adult students almost always included work. They had held many jobs, but these were the kinds of jobs the worker referred to as “just a...,” as in “I’m just a welder,” or “I’m just a housewife,” or “I’m just a carpenter.” The epithet “just” trivializes these occupations as the educational system trivializes the intelligence of those who do them. But if we created an environment where students could critically reflect on these jobs, they would inevitably find that each demanded its own set of highly complex skills. If we could discover the skills employed in the successful doing of a job, we could trace those back to the intelligences that direct how those skills act on the world. If students elevated the jobs they had done to acts of skill and intelligence, they would have the chance to assume that elevation of skill and intelligence for themselves.”

Laurence Robert Cohen
“I Ain’t So Smart and You Ain’t So Dumb:
Personal Reassessment in Transformative
Learning” (1997)

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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Writing Narrative Evaluations

Xenia Coulter, Central New York Center

After fifteen years of writing evaluations, I recently realized that they have become much easier to write than when I first began. And if they are easier to write, I figured that I must have learned something. And if I learned something, it seemed to me that I ought to be able to articulate that learning so that I might share it with those who still find them difficult or onerous to write. As it happens, the articulation part turned out to be quite a bit more difficult than I had anticipated, forcibly reminding me of the difficulties our students face when they try to put into words what they have learned from experience. And like those students, I am not entirely sure, in the end, that my analysis truly captures the process. At least I can say that I have reconstructed a series of ideas, which I offer here hoping that this description may truly be, if not helpful, then at least suggestive. An example:

In this study Ms. Brown read and took notes on a standard child development text and then read and wrote reports on three additional books:

Maurer & Maurer, Life of the Newborn

Donaldson, Children's Minds

Salovey & Sluyter (Eds.), Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence

She was asked to summarize each book, relate them to the text, and describe how they applied to her own experience with young children. We met periodically to discuss these materials. She then wrote two papers, one in which she described various conceptions of "development" and the issues and concerns that inform the field of child development, and one on a topic of her choice based upon library research or data that she collected.

This study was a very successful one for Ms. Brown. Her notes and our discussions indicated that she read the text carefully and completely. Her three book reports showed that she experienced no difficulty in understanding the important themes and concerns of the authors. Although in her first report, she was reluctant to provide a critical view, as she progressed through the study she was increasingly willing to provide alternative perspectives to some of the authors' conclusions. In all the reports she was very skillful in relating the material to the text and in showing how several of the issues illustrated or explained some of her own experiences. The paper on the meaning of development was challenging for her, but it provided her with an excellent opportunity to think about the field as a whole. Her final paper was a report on a series of interviews she conducted with young (middle-class) mothers to assess the relative importance they place on intellectual as opposed to emotional and moral development. Her findings were fascinating (emotional development was almost an unknown concept to these young mothers), and her report was clear, organized, in an appropriate APA format, and well-expressed (although in future contracts she will need to learn more about citations and references). In sum, Ms. Brown acquired a very good understanding of the major periods of child development, its empirical nature, and the major concepts and theories that inform the field.

The first paragraph (describing the contract)

Most unit and center mentors must succinctly summarize the contract in the first part of the evaluation to provide a record

of what was done. As it happens, this description also facilitates the writing of the evaluation itself because it provides an easily available way of organizing the evaluation proper. Therefore, I recommend that mentors even in programs with pre-structured courses extract from the usually rather lengthy contract descriptions the bare bones of what a student was required to do even if it's just in the form of a list. The following questions may help identify the activities a student was expected to have completed during the study.

- What was the student expected to read?

A standard text?

Other books?

Articles?

- What was the student expected to do with these readings?

Take notes?

Summarize? As a whole? Chapter by chapter?

Describe/discuss orally?

- What kinds of written work were assigned?

Working with ancillary textbook materials (e.g., study guides)?

Short written assignments?

Papers (essays, research reports, descriptions, summaries, etc.)?

Portfolios?

Training manuals?

Course syllabi?

- What other learning activities were requested?

Interviews?

Empirical research projects?

Exercises?

Observations in the community, school, etc.?

Creative products (other than written)?

Audio- or videotapes?

Fieldwork (how many hours per week/how many weeks)?

- What was done as a result of these (non-writing) activities?

Described in a written report?

Presented orally?

Performed or otherwise shared?

Then, for those who do not work with prestructured contracts, it's a simple matter of filling out this list to create the opening brief narrative description of the contract. Once you've discovered an order that works well for you, this description will soon write itself almost automatically, as you can see from what follows.

In this study, Ms. Brown read and took notes on a standard child development text.

I do not ordinarily provide the title, author, year, or publisher of the text since, in my opinion, textbooks are all basically the same. I am particularly careful not to give the year because I don't want to risk listing a book that will sooner or later be obsolete.

She then read and wrote reports on three additional books, Maurer & Maurer, Life of the Newborn Donaldson, Children's Minds, and Salovey & Sluyter (Eds.), Emotional Development and Emotional Intelligence,

With nonstandard readings, I do provide author and title (the publisher clutters the writing and is unnecessary) because it provides information about the focus of the study without necessitating further comment.

in which she was asked to summarize each book, relate them to the text, and describe how they applied to her own experience with young children.

Note that I say was asked to (other wording might be: the assignment was, she was expected to, etc.). This provides me with the opportunity in the evaluation itself (in the following paragraph) to comment if the student did not do all that was asked, or did more. It also makes it possible to say that the student did all that was requested, which, in the interests of brevity, I don't usually do, but which certainly would now make sense.

We met periodically to discuss these materials

Other possible adverbs might be: biweekly, frequently, on a regular basis. If you met by phone or e-mail, then: We spoke by phone. . . or we corresponded by e-mail. If you didn't have contact with the student at all, you can leave this sentence out. If you expected to have contact with the student, but it didn't work out, then you could say something like: We planned on meeting/corresponding/ staying in touch... on a regular basis, but it seems a bit awkward for a brief summary of the contract.

She then wrote two papers, one in which she described various conceptions of "development" and the issues and concerns that inform the field of child development, and one on a topic of her choice based upon library research or data that she collected.

I left out "was asked to" because doing these two papers wasn't negotiable, but that's a matter of taste, I think. Note that I give the paper topic as part of the course description when it's my topic, but I will leave for the student;s work.

The second paragraph (the evaluation)

If the first paragraph is clearly written (or in the case of CDL, FORUM, Labor College, and other prestructured courses, the mentor has in front of him or her a clear list of what was required), the evaluation simply consists of going in order through the description or list and providing highlights about each activity that is mentioned. In general, the list ought to be in the order in which the activities were performed. From the standpoint of aesthetics, I conceptualize this paragraph as being the "Results" section of a research report, whereas the previous paragraph, in which the contract is briefly described, as the "Methods" section. As with a research report, the two sections are written in the past tense.

This study was a very successful one for Ms. Brown.

I like to start with a summary statement and have a number of standard start-up sentences that I draw upon, such as: This study was a challenging one for Ms. Brown. Ms. Brown found this study to be quite difficult. Ms. Brown's work in this study was sufficient to merit full credit. Ms. Brown's work in this study was some of the best I've ever seen. If the comment is somewhat negative, I try to qualify it in some way. I have more to say on this point in a later section (see "Student attributes and development"). For example, I might say, "Although Ms. Brown worked on this study almost entirely on her own, her work was excellent." Or I might write, "Although the quality of Ms. Brown's work merits credit, it might have been significantly improved had she taken the opportunity to meet more regularly with me to receive feedback." (This last version is a strong statement, reserved for students who walk out of my office and return two years later with a notebook of worn, coffee-streaked, but credit-worthy notes and papers.)

Her notes indicated that she read the text carefully and completely.

Other comments might be, "Although her notes were rather skimpy, our discussions indicated that she acquired some familiarity with/was familiar with/understood/mastered the important terms, concepts, and theories described in the text." I suppose one could be even harsher: "Her notes left a great deal to be desired, and in her next contract Ms. Brown will focus upon acquiring better skills in note-taking and reading texts." Or on the other side, "Ms. Brown submitted nearly 50 pages of notes, thoughtful commentary, and interesting questions on the text showing that she had truly engaged the subject." In general, I only take time to make more than perfunctory notice of textbook reading when the student's engagement with the text is significantly above or below expectations.

Her three book reports showed that she experienced no difficulty in understanding the important themes and concerns of the authors. Although in her first report, she was reluctant to provide a critical view, as she progressed through the study she was increasingly willing to provide alternative perspectives to some of the authors' conclusions. In all the reports she was very skillful in relating the material to the text and in showing how several of the issues illustrated or explained some of her own experiences.

In essence, I am evaluating these reports using (very roughly) the major categories of Bloom's taxonomy: comprehension, analysis, critical thinking, application, integration. It is not Bloom's scheme that is important but that I have a set of articulated criteria (in current jargon, "rubrics") against which I assess the student's work and about which, more importantly, I make comments. It is truly not very helpful to the student to read only that his or her work was excellent, good, average, or minimal. They need to be told what they did well and, if appropriate, what they need to learn to do better. If the student's work is good, I don't always say what still has to be learned — I assume it's evident by omission. Note that I discuss skills and behaviors and never refer to the student's ability or use any term that implies a judgment of student capability. It's the work that is being evaluated, not the student. (The use of the past tense also helps keep one from making such judgmental comments as, Ms. Brown is a weak/strong/ excellent student.)

The paper on the meaning of development was challenging for her, but it provided her with an excellent opportunity to think about the field as a whole.

I use the word "challenging" as a soft way of saying the paper was not completely successful. In this particular instance, I don't dwell on it because it is an assignment I do not expect many students to do well, but I want them to try. I like pushing my students intellectually, but I don't think it's fair to punish them if an assignment requires sophisticated integration and synthesis, and a broad perspective, when these are skills the student is only just beginning to develop. Hopefully, in a later contract, the student will acquire better mastery of these skills and I will then comment on this mastery. Thus, an outside reader will see that new skills are acquired from contract to contract — which is what I believe our education should be about.

Her final paper was a report on a series of interviews she conducted with young (middle-class) mothers to assess the relative importance they place on intellectual, as opposed to emotional and moral development. Her findings were fascinating (emotional development was almost an unknown concept to these young mothers), and her report was clear, organized, in an appropriate APA format, and well expressed (although she will need to learn in future contracts more about citations and references).

I believe that making comments about a major paper produced by the student (I've even in exceptional cases used quotes from such a paper) is fun to do, provides some support for the student, and offers useful information to the reader. It does challenge the mentor to help the student pick a topic that is interesting and meaningful. Even if the assignment is to write three or four shorter papers on "canned" topics, it is helpful if at least some of the topics allow room for personally relevant empirical research (observations in the community, interviews, analysis of work situations, etc.) that encourage papers that are unique to the student (and therefore interesting to describe). Note that I included an explicit suggestion for a future contract. I could have required the student to rewrite her paper with proper references, but in this case I knew I had more opportunities ahead and it didn't seem that important. With some other student, I might have required the rewrite, and then I probably would have said nothing at all about it in the evaluation, unless she showed some kind of extraordinary improvement (which seems rather unlikely in the case of citations).

In sum, Ms. Brown acquired a very good understanding of the major periods of child development, its empirical nature, and the important concepts and theories that inform the field.

I consider this last summary sentence to be optional. I added it because I didn't want to end with the parenthetical citation comment. Sometimes I add it because I haven't otherwise said very much, and other times because I want to list exactly what we covered, such as in Statistics where instructors may differ in what they cover (assuming the topics were not mentioned in the first paragraph). Obviously "acquired understanding" can be replaced with other phrases, such as "engaged" or "familiarized herself with" modified by stronger, weaker, or more colorful adjectives and adverbs. Over time, I have acquired a small armory of such terms to call upon as dictated by my assessment of the student's work.

Student attributes and development

Writing an evaluation by commenting systematically on the required learning activities of a contract produces, in my opinion, a clear, useful, succinct, and acceptable assessment of the student's work. However, this approach does not provide an easy way for the mentor to introduce or include developmental or context-independent remarks about the student's work. Perhaps because of this difficulty, I have found myself over the years making such comments increasingly less, usually only when the student's behavior is truly exceptional, one way or the other. And, admittedly, the task of adding such comments makes the writing of the evaluation much less automatic and more time-consuming. I often try to "sneak" such remarks into the narrative as qualifying statements or antecedent phrases, but if all else fails, I will simply insert one or more sentences, sometimes at the beginning of the evaluative paragraph, or more often at the end, if the situation merits it.

The kinds of comments that I include relate to such behaviors as:

Self-direction or independence

Conscientiousness

Persistence

Responsiveness to feedback

Organization

Timeliness Enthusiasm or interest

Effort

Progression or improvement

It is difficult to give "generic" examples because so often these comments are very particular to a given student and a given situation. Here are a couple of comments I have made as qualifiers to the beginning sentence of the second paragraph:

Although the student found this study of statistics to be very challenging, Ms. Brown made great efforts to acquire a basic/sufficient/solid/good understanding of the material.

Ms. Brown was exceptionally persistent in working through the required exercises.

This study was very successful for Ms. Brown, even though because of circumstances beyond her control she was forced to work on these materials almost entirely on her own.

Here are comments that might be inserted in the body of the paragraph perhaps in connection with remarks made about particular learning activities:

Ms. Brown was remarkably responsive to feedback and quickly/slowly/willingly/painstakingly learned to organize her reports in an appropriate format and to support her observations with careful argument.

Ms. Brown submitted her assignments in an exceptionally timely fashion. (This is the kind of remark I might make for a student who otherwise did rather unexceptional work.)

Ms. Brown's evident enthusiasm for this subject led her to read a number of extra books and articles that provided special depth in our discussions (note that I do not refer to the student's writing, which may not have been all that remarkable).

It is not an accident that these examples are all positive. I am extremely cautious about making negative global statements about a student partly because a student's bad performance may be more situational than I realize and partly because such statements are not likely to be helpful. I do not need to make negative remarks in order to convey to an outside audience the level at which the student is operating. But I do need to find something positive to say in order to motivate the student to persist. In other words, I regard narrative evaluations as an opportunity to describe what the student has accomplished and to suggest what yet might be done, rather than to point out what the student did not accomplish or is unlikely to do.

As I examined the evaluations I've written and tried to articulate what I do, I began to wish that this paper represented a conversation among mentors rather than just my particular world view. It is in the writing of this analysis that certain general principles (that I was only dimly aware of) seemed to emerge, but it would be very important to know how others approach this task to see just how general these principles are. Please therefore understand that these remarks offer an approach that seems to work well for me and which in particular seems to make the task of writing evaluation a manageable one. But surely it is not the only approach. That said, I hereby offer what, upon reflection, seems to summarize what I find most important to keep in mind when writing evaluations with minimal angst and maximal efficiency.

- List all the learning activities.
- Know explicitly the various expectations you have for these activities (e.g., use the Bloom taxonomy or other assessment rubrics).
- Evaluate the activities chronologically providing only special highlights (rather than an exhaustive description) and making other comments only when the student's work is exceptional in either direction.
- Focus upon the work, not the student.
- Find something positive to say.
- Use omissions to convey student weaknesses unless they are specific enough that the student knows (or can learn) how to address them in future contracts.

1 It is startling to review a student's file and see within the same contract one tutor presenting global positive statements about a student's writing and another making strong negative judgments about the that same student's "ability" to write. The reader is forced to conclude that one (or both) of the tutors don't know what they're talking about since there's no way to judge which one is right. If the evaluation focuses instead not upon the student, but upon the written work, it might be possible for the reader to reconcile these contrasting points of view given the differences in the work required and the differing expectations of the two tutors. Certainly being specific will be less confusing to the student

ALL ABOUT

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My Gaelic Revival **Frank Rader, Northeast Center**

When I applied for my sabbatical, I remarked that it was a grand time to be interested in things Irish. This generation has experienced a cultural explosion that has celebrated the many rich sources of traditional Irish music, dance, literature, poetry, folklore and filmmaking. This contemporary renaissance harkens back to the more renowned Gaelic Revival at the turn of the century which spawned Yeats, Synge, Joyce, O'Casey and others in the pantheon of Irish culture; that movement inspired a bloody war of national liberation and a destructive civil war which created a Free State that was less inspiring to the artist. The present phenomenon has emerged during the latest round of Troubles in Irish history — a history that appears poised to embrace peaceful power-sharing in that fourth green field of Ulster. The Good Friday agreement has procured a shared Nobel Peace prize for the North, and it is hoped that this latest revival hastens the burial of centuries-old hatreds. The music of the Chieftains, DeDannan, the Bothy Band, Altan, Solas, and Cherish the Ladies has serenaded the planet these past few decades, forming a lovely accompaniment to the flowering of Irish drama in Brian Friel, the poetry of Seamus Heaney, the films of Jim Sheridan and Neil Jordan and the consummate collection of Irish cultural studies known as Riverdance. When I was a lad, I had great difficulty locating any Irish music on the old AM dial on a St. Patrick's Day; now every day is St. Patrick's Day.

What was available amounted to a diluted form of Hollywood Irishness typified by the cops, priests, hoods and entertainers played by Jimmy Cagney, Pat O'Brien, and Bing Crosby; this was supplemented by stories of leprechauns chasing pots of gold across a postcard view of Ireland while John Wayne dragged a feisty Maureen O'Hara over green meadows on the way to a memorable donnybrook with Victor McLaglen. After the brawl was over they repaired to the nearest pub and drank the Guinness to their hearts content. Just overgrown kids, these Irish, quick to fight, and quick to forgive. Sentimentalists at heart too, for there wouldn't be a dry eye in the house when some tenor sang Macushla, Mother Machree or The Minstrel Boy. Occasionally, the radio delivered an old ballad sung by the legendary John McCormack, or Jack Benny's inhouse singer, Dennis Day; but these welcome interruptions only made me wonder if there was anything else out there that I had not yet heard about. Was this all there was to being Irish: learning your catechism by heart, rooting for the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame, swimming upstream through the formidable obstacles of a stultifying authoritarianism bequeathed to us by the immigrant generation? In that pre-Vatican II world, the church-school-family triad dominated our little world, including a definition of Irishness in America; it proved to be a rather bland, begrudging and dutiful world with a chip-on-the-shoulder pride in being Irish and Catholic. The heroic image of the soldier-scholar-saint was paramount because it celebrated the virtues of courage, intelligence and goodness; there was little of the "gay, lilted laughter, like some fairy's song" in the air of northeastern Pennsylvania in those days. Where were the Chieftains when we needed them?

Perhaps this Gaelic Revival had to await Ireland's own escape from the doldrums of deValera's archaic vision of what the new nation should stand for. Although the 20th century brought increased independence and eventually total freedom from England, Ireland's bitter civil war and subsequent repressive government created a world not at all unlike the one I knew as a child. With the passing of deValera and the rest of the revolutionary generation, Ireland has loosened up quite a bit and joined the rest of the world. The cell phone, computer and American country music are as common in the new Ireland as the American tourist seeking his/her roots. In embracing their membership in the European community, the

Irish have seen themselves through the eyes of others, and that has fostered the cultural explosion we have enjoyed of late. This renaissance has also shared a parallel universe with the recurring Troubles in the six counties of Ulster that remain in the United Kingdom. The violence of unearthed tribal hatreds has perhaps, in a perverse way, inspired this flowering of Irish culture. Ireland has lost the inferiority complex that often bedevils a colonial people; their current difficulties not only focused on the more recent problems between nationalist- republicans and unionist-loyalists, but it has prompted the Irish to look beyond the Troubles into a very deep and rich history that stretched out long before modern colonization began. One disadvantage of having a long history, like a large family, is that despite having some relatives you would choose to forget, you still have favorite uncles and cousins who bring you great joy. Experiencing the glories of this Gaelic Revival has only whet my appetite for exploring further the last revival at the turn of this century. My sabbatical, then, took the form of a pilgrimage of sorts.

I recall my excitement two years ago at the prospect of applying for a sabbatical which would focus on Irish studies. The feeling resembled the preparation of a new topic for a tutorial or a study group. I therefore approached this task as if I were creating a learning contract with myself for six months of credit. I planned to: read more intensively in Irish studies, especially the period from the 1890s to 1922; to continue my research and writing in Irish-American history; to write more of my own personal and family history; to revise and create learning strategies for our students; and the centerpiece of it all, to revisit Ireland and explore its many layers of history. My initial impulse was to dive into that list of books that chronicled the making of modern Ireland. I read more about the emancipation campaign of Daniel O'Connell, the Irish-speaking Kerryman who beat the English at their own political game; in pre-famine Ireland, he was revered by the average Irish countryman until the Young Irelanders and the Great Hunger/Famine relieved him of his shaman-like powers. The ensuing crop failure and the coldly inadequate responses of the English government signaled the end of the hidden Ireland of the Gaelic-speaking peasant; many of the evicted who survived the fever and the hunger became exiles who brought their Anglophobia to the New World. This anger refueled the dormant nationalist movement. Fenianism gave expression to the repressed Irish desire to be rid of England, once and for all, by advocating the return of the gun into politics. This thread of nationalist conviction spurred on the martyrs of the 1916 Easter Rising and the survivors of Bloody Sunday in the Derry of 1972. The physical force men were overshadowed in the 1890s by the New Departure which joined the constitutional attempts of Charles Stewart Parnell to achieve home rule with the social reformers of the Land League under Michael Davitt. The important role which the Fenian exile John Devoy played in this campaign demonstrated how critical Irish-American leadership and fund raising would become in the struggle for Irish independence. Whatever progress was achieved seemed unimportant with the fall of Parnell from power after his adulterous affair was disclosed. Many bitter Irish men and women beat a hasty retreat from politics and sought new avenues to express their concern for Ireland. It was at this time that the son of an Anglo-Irish Protestant minister sounded a national call to arms for the de-Anglicizing of Irish cultural life. Douglas Hyde's manifesto declaring Ireland's cultural independence led to the creation of the Gaelic League, a crucial effort to preserve the Irish language. It was here that my intensive reading also began.

The main point of entry was *The Field Day of Irish Writing* edited by Seamus Deane and the provocative analysis of Declan Kiberd's, *Inventing Ireland*. These sources launched my journey through the writings of Yeats, Synge, Colm, Martyn, Moran, Moore, Hyde, O'Grady, Joyce and others who celebrated Irish themes in their writings. Some hoped that this outpouring of creative impulses would have inspired a consensus over subjects and their treatment, but knowing the Irish penchant for passionate internecine warfare, the Gaelic Revival created a lively debate over who had the correct definition of Irishness. This cultural divide was often defined as a struggle between the Irish Irelanders and the west Britons, but it was more complex than that. What the Irish discovered during this excavation of their past was that it was more multi-layered, cross-cultural and often lacking the continuity desired. Some wanted the perfect stained glass window, while others found a cracked looking glass. I admit that I was surprised that the feelings about this cultural debate ran so deep, and ultimately affected the country's political future.

Many of the Anglo-Irish founders of this movement like Hyde, Yeats, and Synge were apolitical types who wanted to mine the rich deposits of Gaelic Ireland's oral and written folklore and transform it into a literature that could be performed in the new Abbey Theatre. Yeats's sojourn into the Celtic twilight and Synge's pilgrimage to the Irish-speaking Aran Islands glorified many of the traditional Irish virtues of a simple, spiritual, innocent folk. Many young Irish Catholics were insulted by what they saw as a reincarnation of the stage Irishman, a Jim Crow-like reference to an enslaved people. Furious arguments broke out over Synge's Hiberno-English dialect in the *Playboy of the Western World*, his celebration of patricide and his depiction of Irish womanhood. Padraic Colm's countrymen in *The Land* were shrewd, earthy land-owners who better described the postfamine Irish man and woman. Yeats and Synge drew from the more

traditional pockets of Gaelic life while the Irish Irelanders utilized a more realistic sampling of a people in the throes of modernization. Regardless of their persuasion, this creative generation inspired a greater public interest in things Irish and how the past would serve to instruct the future. This generation was quite aware of their special place in the making of that future. Yeats was troubled that works such as *Cathleen Ni Houlihan* had sent many young Irishmen to a soldier's grave; it was true that many would find appealing the image of an old woman recruiting another generation to fight for Ireland's deliverance. The Gaelic League invariably lost the apolitical purity of Douglas Hyde when the more activist, scholarly Eoin MacNeill organized the Irish Volunteers to put some steel into the cultural backbone of Erin's youth. While MacNeill remained a reluctant belligerent, the Fenian physical force men captured the movement and, in the hands of the young teacherpoet Padraic Pearse, fused the mystical and messianic with the militantly political strains in Irish history. Pearse became the spokesman for those who planned to expel the English once and for all during the Easter drama of 1916. This blood sacrifice set in motion the events that created the partitioned Ireland that we know today. A "terrible beauty" had been born. This brings me to what I called the centerpiece of my sabbatical — my threeweek visit to Erin's green shores.

This was a memorably rewarding trip because of my walks around Dublin, including a stop at that holy well of porter, the Guinness brewery. A day on Inishmore, the largest of the Aran Islands, gave me a firsthand look at an Irish-speaking colony at the entrance to Galway Bay. But the three most historically enduring memories were of Glasnevin cemetery, the townland of Carrownedan and Croagh Patrick.

Glasnevin cemetery, situated in north Dublin, provided a walking tour through modern Irish history; as the megalithic tombs of Carrowmore and Newgrange heighten awareness of the pre-Celtic period and the monastic settlements at Clonmacnoise and Glendalough celebrate the Christian era, Glasnevin is alive with the ghosts of O'Connell, Parnell, deValera, Collins and Devoy. It was on a particularly soft morning that I trod upon this very holy ground and felt the multiplicity of emotions that accompanied the processions of the fallen as they were brought to their final resting place. It was here that Pearse delivered his inflammatory oration at the gravesite of that bold Fenian, O'Donovan Rossa, in 1915, which recruited more soldiers for Mother Ireland.

After Dublin's museums and libraries, I yearned to head into the West and revisit the region where my mother's people originated. I stayed in the village of Ballycastle on the north Mayo coast. It was only a few miles from the recently opened Ceide Fields dig which uncovered a 5,000 year old agricultural settlement buried under layers of bogland. But my main intention was to find the townland or collection of homes, on the outskirts of town, known as Carrownedan. After several inquiries and trips past some abandoned farms, I was finally directed to a crossroads with the name of the townland painted on a stone. There was only one working farm there now, and my relatives were no longer here, but I felt that I had repaired that broken mirror and tied up some loose ends in my own family's history. Seamus Heaney once said that language gives people origin; since the language was lost in America, the land would have to satisfy my own thirst for origin.

Some 40 miles south stands the holiest mountain in Ireland, Croagh Patrick; this conical shaped mountain on the shores of Clew Bay, was the supposed site of the patron saint's 40-day fast. According to legend, he withstood the temptations of the devil and then drove the snakes out of Ireland. In pre-Christian times, the locals honored Lugh, the god of harvests and so after Patrick's time, the festival of Lughnasa was celebrated on the last Sunday of July. The major event of this day was a pilgrimage up the steep, rocky 2,700-foot mountain, where special prayers were recited near and at the summit. I had made this trip several times in my daydreams about Ireland, partly because I believed that my own relatives must have trekked the 40 miles from their home to climb the Reek, as it is also known, perhaps in their bare feet. In the three-hour ascent on a brilliant day in June, I often thought of the many who left their prints on the mossy clumps of soil near the edge of the trail; I knew that this hike was not a race against time, but a silent pilgrimage of my own, retracing the steps of ancestors in what was for them a very holy communal activity. I now know the energy they expended and the joy they felt when they beheld the grand vistas from atop this holy site. After cherishing this fulfilled dream, I knew it was time to go home, for I had learned a great deal more about what it means to be Irish.

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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What Computers Can't Know

Joan Persily Levinson, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School of Labor Studies

In the last few years, logging on to the Linguist List — a large, moderated academic e-mail list — I'd been struck by the rapid growth of a new area of linguistics research that showed up as discussions, conference programs, and calls for participation. The general subject was natural language processing (NLP), or computational linguistics, an area of research that seeks to build a computational analog of human language processing. Although linguists have been working in arcane byways of computational research for at least a generation, the field seems to have exploded in the last three years. Something like over 10 percent of the 1998 conferences listed in the Linguistic Society of America's *LSA Bulletin* were devoted to NLP, a greater proportion than in such traditional areas as syntax, semantics, phonology, historical, discourse, or any of the other 30 sub-areas of linguistics. While I could understand the important issues in these other fields even if they were not my own specializations, I was at a loss in regard to the goals, terminology, and problems of natural language processing. (The term "natural language" is used in contrast to artificial languages such as mathematics or propositional logic, and is often interchangeable with "human language.") My growing discomfort finally led me to participate in a seminar on Machine Translation, one of the major thrusts of NLP.

Although I have barely scratched the surface of NLP, surprisingly I came to understand better the language possibilities available to us in our use of words and grammar and the communicative consequences of our choices. This, oddly enough, was closer to my initial interest in linguistics many years ago than to either computer science or to my earlier theoretical studies.

There is a basic structural principle in language: To know what some form is we must know what it isn't. Analyzing language for the purposes of the computer is a different enterprise from theoretical linguistics. The first seeks to detail every aspect of normal language behavior in all its variety. The second believes that part of understanding our human nature involves uncovering the shared underlying principles of all human languages and therefore the shared linguistic endowment of all people. The one research program does not vitiate the other. Language, once in use, gets twisted beyond the inevitable built-in principles and becomes a vast collection of contingent learned knowledge that seems instantly available to language users. Modern computers permit the large-scale collection, storage, and analysis of the fruits of that knowledge. Such a "corpus" of language consists of millions of sentences and even more millions of words of a wide variety of real-life written texts, and there are now several such large-scale corpora. With so much natural English on line, it became feasible to develop tools of analysis that would exhaustively and accurately describe English as it is really used, and then to apply that knowledge to computer manipulation of documents — e.g. in translation, information retrieval and extraction, text analysis and summarization, "intelligent" Internet searches, and speech recognition and synthesis.

A machine "knows" nothing that humans don't teach it. So, to construct protocols that could achieve some small simulation of human language use, we would have to be maximally explicit in programming the computer about every aspect of that use. And that requires us to specify exactly what we do when we use language, how all its parts actually appear in communication. It turns out that what we thought were adequate descriptions of syntactic strings or word senses or lexical collocations were far from a complete description of how English worked. That is why the early attempts at machine operations on language — particularly in translating — had such painful results. Everyone loves to quote how

“The spirit is willing, the flesh is weak,” translated into Russian, came back into English as “Vodka good, meat rotten.”

What are some of the linguistic activities we carry on when we use language that a program would have to emulate? We understand whether an utterance is in our language or not; whether it is a sentence or not; whether it is a question or a statement. We are able to disambiguate the intended meanings of words — we don't wonder about anatomical details if someone says he was dealt a rotten hand, nor do we worry about plate tectonics if someone says he saw an island sailing to Bermuda. We might, however, question a friend who says he saw the fleet sailing to Bermuda as to who was doing the sailing. So in effecting a translation a machine would need to disambiguate structural ambiguity and to select from the different senses of a word the right one for the sentence it appears in.

A natural language program, therefore, must identify the words of a language, know all their meanings, attach the correct morphology, identify the restrictions on their combination in sentences, and eliminate the irrelevant senses in a particular passage. It must also “parse” a sentence — identify subject, verb, object, subordinate clauses, prepositional phrases — and understand how these parts work together to contribute to the message. And it must provide a semantic interpretation of the sentence (its propositional content as distinct from its contextual interpretation) and also recognize when discourse across sentences affects meaning. Finally, the program must be able to solve problems of reference — who is meant by “he,” and that “200 acres” in one sentence and “the land” in the next refer to the same entity.

For a computer program to do this, every piece and part of “language” needs to be annotated. The main annotation components are a lexicon, a grammar, and a parsing algorithm. The first is a list of the words that might be found in almost any normal text of the language with all their relevant features. The one I know best has about 130,000 words, identifiable by some three hundred lexical categories. “Relevant features” means a good deal of the information a human being would know about any word, without being actively aware that he knew. For example, the word “round” would have to be tagged as being Noun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Preposition, because it functions in all these ways. The word “fly,” in just one of its meanings as “insect,” might include anatomical features such as “no stinger.” To write out the needed semantic information of any word might take up a page of text, and furthermore, this information would have to be systematically and categorically organized in formats identical to the lexical entries for all the other words, so that the algorithm could function automatically.

The second component, the grammar, consists of an extensive set of sophisticated parse “trees,” the elaborate hierarchic syntactic structures that identify all the possible kinds of sentences and their constituent parts, and the interrelation of these constituents at all syntactic levels. The lexical items that could fill the “nodes” of a parse tree would have to be extensively identified: human/nonhuman; mobile/immobile; transitive/intransitive; verb: human subject only. As the parsing algorithm works its way up the parse tree from the smallest item to the complete sentence, it would have to compute all the possible meanings of words-plus-syntax, eliminate those which do not “make sense,” and come up with an “interpretation.”

One grammar program I've worked with, a Parts of Speech Tagger and a Chunker, has 48 different part-of speech categories. The syntactic analysis used by a tagger emerges from computerized “tree banks,” where thousands of different sentences have been analyzed and “rules” of usage have been generated. These “rules” are not at all identical with the restrictive rules of theoretical linguistics; the former are designed to be maximally explicit descriptions; the latter embody explanatory principles. For example, the words “to” and “of” are so rich in their usage that any grammatical annotation would be incomplete, and they are simply tagged “to” and “of.”

Humans of course do more than ascribe meanings, analyze syntax, and interpret collocations. They leave out, they imply, they infer: the language with which we ordinarily communicate is by design imprecise and rife with metaphor. Most of the time we understand each other instantaneously. It is built into our cognitive abilities to use context, situation, domain, inference, and many other cues to “compute” the intended meaning from an utterance in our language. Although there are some research efforts to provide “world-knowledge” bases, they are extremely tentative and not generally expected to be successful.

But even in the strictly linguistic domain, linguists have learned that not all language phenomena are clearcut enough to be subject to formal annotation. As Geoffrey Sampson says in *English for the Computer*, a language is like a fractal, which reveals more and more detail the more closely it is examined. Machines are nowhere near duplicating what humans

can do, nor do any researchers think they ever will be. It is no longer the stated goal of natural language processing to mimic humans. But, ironically, the very effort to get better results even in restricted computational tasks has given us a much richer and more complicated description of what humans do when they use language.

My foray into computational linguistics may not have been “about mentoring,” but it has been about learning, what occurs when we want to understand something that seems hidden from us, and what it means when the possibility to find out is there for us. We may not get exactly what we were looking for; we often get more.

Education is not ‘academic boot camp’...It is, instead, the awakening of the mind so that it can take charge of itself and its own thought. Up to a point, required courses can serve that function. But they always send an ambiguous message: You are an adult, but you are a child; you are capable of doing advanced work, but not capable of deciding what you should be studying. At a certain point, then, students should be encouraged to take the job of planning their studies upon themselves, with faculty as advisers rather than dictators.”

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ALL ABOUT
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(excerpts and reflections)

Thelma Jurgrau

In 1997, Thelma Jurgrau retired as a mentor at the Hudson Valley Center. She began mentoring at the Genesee Valley Center in 1977. Later this month, Thelma will receive an Alumni Achievement Award from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

Sunday, 3/22: Lucy and I left Budapest last night for Krakow, our entry point into Poland. The nighttrain was relatively quiet except for inspections by Passport Control officials and their sniffing dogs as we crossed the border first into Slovakia and then Poland. The night was clear, a full moon illuminating snow-covered mountains like stage props. Now, at dawn, I can make out figures walking along roads that frequently crisscross the level, wooded countryside. A woman and child remind me that I am approaching the birthplace of my mother. I imagine them on their way to church this Sunday morning, imagining, too, that my heightened awareness of Christianity is normal for a Jew looking for her roots in Poland.

Ostensibly, my motive for going to Poland was to search the archives for family history. As a Ph.D. in Literature I have spent many hours seeking documents related to 19th Century French writers, particularly George Sand and her circle, which included Polish Chopin. But that was hardly a reason to go to Poland. Nor had I any desire to see Auschwitz, Treblinka, or Majdanek, although I would be nearby. My connection goes back to an earlier generation that survived World War I and was living safely in New York City when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939. When my mother died this January, it seemed a trip to her hometown, Krasnobrod, and to that of my father, Bielsk Podlaski, would be a fitting way to put them to rest. My friend Lucy was curious enough about my search to want to be helpful, though her roots are in rural Nebraska.

Sunday, 3/22 (continued): We try to enjoy the eight hours in Krakow until we can board the train to Zamosc, the stop nearest Krasnobrod, but an overcast sky and streets flooded with melting snow increase my anxiety about the nine days to come. Will our luggage be safe in the locker at the crumbling train station? Have we read the schedule correctly? Will our train arrive on time and will the young student I contacted be waiting when we get there? Has she found us a hotel and a car to take us to Krasnobrod? Has she been able to arrange a time to visit the archives? Will they yield anything? I seem to have inherited my parents' distrust for the place and the people.

Although they did not actually meet until seven years later, Meir Levin and Ryvka Hertzberg arrived in New York at the same time — June 21, 1921. My 19-year-old father surely felt relieved to be reunited with the other members of his family, for at 10 he had been left in charge of his mother and younger siblings when his father departed. The hardships they went through during the intervening war years in Poland left him with nightmares. He told me stories of being chased by angry farmers for stealing food, of riding horses to pasture all night to earn a few zlotys, of being beaten by Polish soldiers when he refused to give them the boots his uncle had sent for his bar mitzvah, of burying a younger brother who died of starvation.

And what mixture of feelings did my mother, a girl of 14, have at the prospect of seeing the father she hadn't lived with since she was seven? Pincus Hertzberg, my grandfather, had emigrated on the eve of World War I, after his wife died, leaving five young children in Krasnobrod. The adolescent face on Ryvka's passport picture seems guarded, resentful, sullen. To my youthful queries about Europe — a mysterious place that held an attraction for me — her answers were sparse; mostly feelings of anxiety would emerge. She used the word "pogrom" and told about having to hide in tall grass so as not to be found by Cossacks on horseback who would commit unspeakable acts. Once in America, she wanted to forget the other place.

Monday, 3/23: Anna was indeed waiting for us at 11 p.m. last night, when our train arrived from Krakow, with her friend, Karol, and his red Fiat, to take us the few blocks to a hotel on the main square of Zamosc. I feel reassured as I look out the hotel window this morning. A wintry sun is spreading over this immense Italianate square, revealing arcaded three-story buildings in pastel colors. The serious demeanor of Anna and her excellent English also raise my hopes. She has prepared our way into the archives, housed in a building just a few blocks from the square. We show my letter of permission to a woman clerk, who then hands us a series of forms to fill out, stating who I am and what I am looking for by way of places, names, and dates. From the names of those whose documents I seek it must be clear to the clerk that I am a Jew looking for information about my forebears. Perhaps her little frown is due to friendly concern. Here in the Zamosc archives I have the possibility of finding an official record of my grandfather Pincus's birth, which he gave as March 1886. Although the archives show no record of his birth, I find that of Majer Hertzberg, a second cousin. Going back through earlier records, I find, in the yearbook for 1881, the signature of my great grandfather Chaim, as witness to the birth of Moshko, brother of Majer. I admit I feel a certain thrill to be looking at the handwriting of the family patriarch.

Chaim Hertzberg had lovingly cared for my mother and her siblings when his son Pincus emigrated to New York. Growing up, I was impressed by the framed portrait of him that I discovered in a closet. The enlarged photograph showed the bust of an old man in black, wearing a tall yarmulka, with much of his face hidden by a white beard, over which peered two knowing brown eyes. Evidently my mother didn't think the picture suited her decor, but I hung it in my room, pleased to claim him as an ancestor. By then I may have absorbed the message subtly conveyed by some of my history teachers that even though America was founded on the principle of equality, there was nevertheless some prestige in being able to trace one's family back a few generations.

Tuesday, 3/24: We find out a bit more about Anna and Karol over breakfast. They have known each other for the three years they've been studying English at the Teachers College in Zamosc. Unlike young couples in Paris or New York, they don't make a show of physical affection, nor do they smoke or drink. Anna comes from a small town southeast of Zamosc and lives in the dormitory, while Karol lives with his family, natives of Zamosc for generations. He is able again this morning to borrow the family car to transport us the dozen kilometers to Krasnobrod, where we are looking for birth records of my mother and her siblings, death records of her mother, Temma, and her grandfather Chaim, and the marriage record of her parents. A minor setback: the records of the early 1900s are in Russian, a reminder of Russia's presence in that part of Poland then. Anna makes an effort to remember the Russian alphabet she learned in elementary school in the early '80s, when Poland was again under Soviet influence. (Later she revealed that she tried to forget Russian as soon as the Soviets left).

Our finding here is limited to the marriage record of Pincus Hertzberg to Temma Kornfeld, in the yearbook for 1906, which clears up the mystery of my grandmother's maiden name. It also means that she had given birth to five children in seven years, since Pincus was a widower in New York by January 1914. And it confirms that Pincus did indeed add several years to the ages of his children when he began the immigration process, as my mother always claimed. Although her passport gives her birthdate as 1905, she was probably born in '07 or '08, barely a teenager on the momentous voyage to New York.

After the archives we walk around the village, aware that nothing remains of the Jewish section of Krasnobrod since World War II. However, the tall white stucco church in the center certainly dates from my mother's time. At each side of the arched entry, on the wall guarding the entrance to the churchyard, are two dark-roofed turrets, ascending to a third, on top of which is a delicately forged Polish cross. A large group of working people are emerging from a midday, pre-Easter service, and they eye me with curiosity, even suspicion as I take pictures from across the unpaved road.

I ask Karol to inquire at the church as to where we might find out more about the remains of the glass factory where my great-grandfather worked. Karol is directed to a small museum at the far end of the churchyard, but he seems reluctant to take us there, perhaps because of an expanse of muddy ground to cross. I do not insist on going — a decision hardly worthy of the scholar-detective I claim to be. I sense unfriendliness and react with the timidity of the foreigner, the outsider, the Jew. As we drive away, I consciously try to impress on my memory the stretch of green countryside, still sprinkled with snow, surrounded by tall birches and pines, a view I am leaving forever.

Later, in Warsaw, I found out the name of the owner of the local glass foundry that had once been managed by my great grandfather, a name that would have been familiar to anyone in Krasnobrod had we inquired: Kazimierz Fudakowski. And I remembered my mother sharing with me some recollections of a more refined Poland — the annual Christmas party in the manor house of the foundry owner. As an older grandchild of a valued worker, my mother was invited. She recalled the gentle manners of the daughters of the family as they showed her the library and large salon where she may have heard the string musicians that left her with an unfulfilled longing to play the violin. Her illusion that, if she held one, she would actually be able to play the instrument, was destroyed later by an unkind relative who placed one in her hands for that purpose.

Our final destination with Anna and Karol is Lublin, where there is an archival library, in contrast to the small offices we sat in in Zamosc and Krasnobrod. Here I have the possibility of finding birth, marriage, and death records as far back as 1827. If Chaim was 40, as he stated when he signed the birth certificate of Moshko in 1881, he would have been born in 1841. Now Anna is translating from Polish, testifying to a time before or between foreign invasions, and she has become familiar enough with the system to read quickly. Having found signs of Chaim's existence, we are hopeful of finding more. We have to go back as far as 1837 to find that on 5 March 1837, at 4 p.m., Szyia Hertzberg, from Krasnobrod, 32 years old, showed the baby, born 26 February at 10 p.m., wife, Chany, 28 years old — a boy named Chaim. The old man with a beard and piercing eyes was once a baby! And now I know the names of my mother's great-grandparents: Chany and Szyia. The birthdate 1837 tells me that Chaim was 49 when his son Pincus was born, and 77 when Pincus left him in charge of his five children to go to America. When Pincus went back to Poland in 1937 to say a final goodbye to his father, we children speculated on exactly how ancient our great-grandfather was. Now I knew: 100.

Wednesday, 3/25: Robert, in a yellow jacket that identifies him as our guide, is waiting at the Bialystok station when the train arrives this sunny afternoon to take us to the hotel where he has reserved rooms. He immediately apologizes for his halting English, which though not on the level of Anna and Karol's, should be sufficient for my purpose. Robert works as a tour leader for sporting groups that come to Poland from all over Europe; he is aware of his failings, he explains, because his girlfriend is an English teacher.

Since the archives will not be available until tomorrow morning, we spend the rest of the afternoon in the quiet village of Tyccin, 20 kilometers west of Bialystok, visiting the restoration of the 17th century Great Synagogue that testifies to a once large Jewish population. A young Polish woman in black responds to our knock at the heavy wooden door of a three-story building, painted white and roofed in red tile, on a deserted street. We are the only visitors, although she still expects a busload of tourists from Israel. The lights go on, along with recorded cantorial music, as we walk into the exquisite prayer hall with newly parqueted flooring, where fragments of Hebrew text painted on the whitewashed brick wall have been carefully restored, along with the Torah Ark and altar. Placed here and there are individual reading stands, with blue and white prayer shawls draped over them, as if in readiness for the evening service. Along one wall, in several glass cases, are displayed antique menorahs and Seder plates. We read that the project was largely financed by an American Jewish foundation. The caretaker then leads us up a narrow circular staircase to see the restored rabbi's study, furnished with books and pictures, and on the top story, the dining room where a table is set as if for Passover. It is a surprise to see this icon to Judaism on the fringe of a tiny village devoid of Jews, at whose center stands a small Baroque church. I wonder how the natives feel about its presence.

Thursday, 3/26: The strong influence of Russia is again apparent in the Bialystok archives. Like Anna, Robert has to revive his early acquaintance with the old alphabet, but since he lived under Soviet rule for 20 of his 30 years, it is less difficult for him. The real problem is that the only remaining documents pertaining to residents of Bielsk Podlaski, where the Levins came from, are a handful of crumbling notary records for 1902 and 1903, in faded ink, that show no sign of the names we are looking for.

Our trip to the town itself is more rewarding. Krystyna, the young museum historian, has just dismantled an exhibition on Bielsk Podlaski between the Wars. She shares photographs and drawings with us of the now-extinct Jewish quarter — including two synagogues, bathhouse, Hebrew school — all places my father would have known. Now there are functional-looking, seven-story apartment buildings on the barren lots, and on the long main street, modern-looking drugstores, sporting-goods shops, and luncheonettes. There is a moderate amount of midday car traffic. The people going about their business, dressed for late winter, pay little attention to the American tourist taking their picture. As Krystyna walks us through streets where Jews once lived, we see a one-story wooden house, darkened with age, two or three rooms large, that perhaps resembles the one where my father's father lived and made boots to order, with his helpers, his wife, and his twelve children.

The sun is low by the time Krystyna leads us into the Jewish cemetery, where we pick our way over rocks and muddy ground, through overgrown grass and trees, to examine long-untended graves, broken tombstones bearing illegible inscriptions in Hebrew, where some of my relatives may very well be buried. This young village historian, who left her office to walk with us into the Jewish cemetery, turns to me when we reach the end, and says softly, in English, "Excuse me." When I ask, "What for?" she replies, "For all this."

Friday, 3/27: Lucy is making a point of looking out the train window as we travel from Bialystok to Warsaw, perhaps to avoid looking at the man sitting opposite her — well-dressed, in his sixties, skillfully holding a newspaper with one hand and turning pages with the artificial hand he keeps on his lap. Across from me sits a middle-aged workingman, in homespun clothing, moving his lips as he fingers a wooden cross. I make the assumption that each represents a major theme of Polish history: the ravages of war and an abiding faith in Christianity. I think about the four young Poles I met and how they related to me as a Jew. With Anna and Karol, anti-Semitism did not come up. Growing up in the '70s, they were personally ignorant of the events of World War II, although one of their grandfathers served in the Polish army. I have no way of knowing whether they harbor anti-Jewish feelings beneath the mask of courtesy they showed me. Both Robert and Krystyna, 10 years older, showed sympathy for the tragic events of recent Jewish history. Lacking skill in English, Robert made up for it, taking on my mission as his own by venturing beyond the archives. He also located a book on Jewish synagogues I had been looking for and presented it to me. Through her sensitivity and study of history, Krystyna opened herself to painful knowledge that she translated into action: an apology directly to a Jew.

Saturday, 3/28: Our first morning in Warsaw, Lucy and I discuss our plans for the day as we approach the end of our trip. Perhaps because my Jewish consciousness has been raised considerably here in Poland, it occurs to me that if we get to the Nozykow Synagogue by 10 a.m., we may be in time for the Sabbath service. So far, all we've seen by way of synagogues in the eight towns we've visited were the remains of one in Zamosc, now being used as a public library, and the restoration in Tykocin, neither presently serving a community of Jews. Most of the synagogues in Poland were destroyed by the Germans during World War II, along with their congregations, so I'm both curious and mildly apprehensive as we climb the steps of the anonymous-looking building in Twarda Street. Inside, a man in a booth waves us upstairs and we find ourselves on the balcony of a lofty prayer hall, walls and ceiling painted white, with tall leaded windows and chandeliers. Our guide book tells us that the building was founded in 1902 by Zelman and Ryvka Nozyk, that it survived the war and is now the only active synagogue in Warsaw. A handful of other women are seated along each of the three sides, reading from prayerbooks or whispering to one another. Since most are wearing hats, I put mine on. Lucy, not being Jewish, does not feel that compulsion.

I am surprised at the number of old and young men in prayer shawls and yarmulkas participating in the service below — perhaps 40; the significance of their presence, especially the older ones, wells up inside me. The war ended 53 years ago; some of the men look like they're in their 80s; they must somehow have survived it to be praying here now. My tears are for this tradition that survived nearly total extinction. These men strike me as an endangered species that I want to help keep alive. They also revive the memory of my grandfather, Pincus, with whom I shared a room at age four, and whom I would see bowing before the window each morning in his black and white tallith as I awoke.

It is now half-past noon and the service is still going on. Three different portions of the Torah have been read in anticipation of Passover next month. This has required much ritualized maneuvering on the part of the rabbi and his assistants. The older men point out additional portions that must not be overlooked; the younger ones seem restless. I am reminded of the interminable services of my youth, the boredom, the sense of irrelevance of the synagogue to my life, and the resentment at the role women were relegated to.

At the Kiddush afterwards, we find out that the old men in the congregation are indeed survivors; the younger ones come from several European countries and the U.S., under the sponsorship of Jewish organizations or the Peace Corps. We are happy to be invited to lunch, where we meet the American director of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, seated at the head of the table. It was he who conducted the Sabbath service, in keeping with his activism in the movement to revive the Orthodox Jewish community in Warsaw.

Monday, 3/30: In his office, Yale Reisner sits with Lucy and me for over an hour, sharing stories of by-now-middle- aged people, left as babies with gentiles when their parents were taken to the camps, and who, discovering their Jewish origins, come to the Institute to find out if they have any remaining relatives. One such was a Catholic priest whose adoptive father, on his deathbed, confessed his son's Jewish origins to him. Reisner research confirmed the names of his Jewish parents. In Israeli archives, the priest located more relatives, Chasidim, who came from the U.S. to meet him. According to Reisner, the discovery has made the priest a spokesman for closer ties between Catholics and Jews. I feel almost embarrassed to reveal my small archival rewards.

Reisner's enthusiasm for his vocation is contagious. I understand that his desire for a resurgence of Judaism in Poland arises from a powerful source and that its revival has to follow traditional forms, yet I question the wisdom of American support for the revival of Judaism in a place where over three million Jews perished and where the Polish wish for a new Jewish presence is doubtful. That the aged survivors take solace from being part of such a revival makes sense, but is it possible that more than a handful of younger Jews can be enticed to settle in Poland for good? What will happen when American money runs out? But what kind of Jew am I to ask that question?

Monday, 3/30: Quite by chance, Lucy and I find ourselves, on our last night in Poland, in an elegant chamber listening to a pianist perform Chopin's Preludes, Opus 28. Ostrogski Palace also houses a collection of Chopin memorabilia — pianos, portraits, art objects, documents. Here I recognize George Sand's large, measured script on a letter to her intimate friend of ten years. As the incomparably lovely music wafts upwards, I imagine looks of astonishment on my parents' faces could they see me sitting in this stately hall, among an audience of well-dressed Poles, in the capital city of their birthland.

Special thanks to Regina Grol for helping me prepare for my trip to Poland.

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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Circle News

Circle members have enjoyed participating in the Adult Higher Education Alliance (formerly The Association for Alternative and External Degree Programs for Adults). In the previous issue of All About Mentoring, we reported briefly on presentations at the annual conference in San Diego. For this issue, Xenia Coulter gathered comments from Circle and other ESC presenters at the conference. They are included below, and we hope that you find them evocative and interesting. Also in this issue, we provide information about Alliance's next annual conference and invite you to submit proposals.

In late October, 1998, seven Empire State College mentors traveled to San Diego to take part in the 18th Annual Alliance/ACE Conference, "Distance and Diversity: Adult Learners in the Next Millennium." They had this to say about their experiences:

Judy Gerardi: My reaction to the first Alliance/ACE conference that I attended in Evanston, Illinois, in 1992, was pleasure and surprise that there actually existed an organization devoted to adult higher education. I had been aware of ones devoted to adult education or to adult development, but not to quality scholarship in adult higher education. I felt sad as well, since I evidently had been more intellectually isolated than I should have been. The papers presented in Evanston were rich in details regarding practice and impressive in reflection, theory building, and grounding in scholarship. I realized that across the country were many many colleges where faculty pored over the meaning of student-centered education, the significance and implication of being an adult returning to school to earn a college degree, and where faculty wondered how their particular disciplines interacted with models of adult learning.

These reactions continued at this year's conference in San Diego. Also, I had become familiar with ongoing research by other more-or-less regular participants at the annual conference and looked forward to hearing what they had done over the intervening year. I also had warm reactions to many members of the Alliance, so I looked forward to catching up with them. Our keynote speaker at the closing plenary, Dean Elias, was impressed with the noncompetitive atmosphere as well as with the quality of work presented. Presentations of interest to me were a careful analysis of advising as teaching by colleagues from the University of Minnesota and the conceptualization of a teaching model that helps students achieve individual development goals by faculty members from DePaul. A final comment: at one meal I sat between Ken Cohen and Chris Rounds, and after about 20 minutes of excited conversation about the conference, I realized that we had not discussed workload. That was nice!

Irene Rivera de Royston: Participation in professional organizations can offer an individual a social network and instant collaboration. It might also be an avenue for people to share their own ideas regarding the principles of their work. The Association for Alternative and External Degree Programs for Adults (the Alliance) has been that forum for me. The members of Alliance have contributed to my development as a professional in the field of alternative education. I have participated in this organization for over five years, presenting at annual conferences, participating in the task force on diversity, reading newsletters, and networking with other faculty on issues such as best practices in alternative education for adults and outcome measurements. I have gained insight into my own practice of lifelong learning and the encouragement of self-directed learners.

At the recent conference, I was reminded of the importance of expert inquiry and the use of media within a workshop on the critical analysis of films. The faculty from Capital University (Ohio), modeled an inquiry process they use while facilitating a study of ethics through the use of contemporary films. Several members of the faculty from the University of Redlands (California), presented a workshop on cultural proficiency in professional education programs. Their continuum model included assessment on the polar points of cultural incapacity and cultural proficiency, and their research promotes skilled self-reflective approaches to recognizing behaviors and elements of cultural proficiency. Alliance maintains its practice of organizing the annual conference presentations around themes such as “Assessing Learning,” “Building Community,” “Developing Faculty,” and “Understanding our Context.” The conference track on “Expanding Diversity” included two presentations of which I was a part — one with Xenia Coulter and Christopher Rounds and one with Judy Gerardi. Both presentations were discussions of practice-based research. The Coulter/Rivera de Royston/Rounds presentation included a videotape of students discussing cultural learning through experience and reflection. In the Gerardi/Rivera de Royston presentation participants were challenged to consider how cultural influences can be a bridge or block to the learning process. These and other presentations confirmed the reputation that Alliance has earned as an organization which welcomes alternative thinking and which collaborates with a crosssection of teaching faculty dedicated to self-directed and lifelong learning.

Carol Carnevale: This was my first Alliance/Ace Conference and I plan on attending many more. It was an invigorating experience! One aspect of the conference that was very enjoyable was the time available for informal discussions on the presentations and adult learning, in general. It gave me the opportunity to get to know many of the participants and to engage in thoughtful conversations with them. I found the group to be very collegial. There was a sense of cooperation among the participants and not the competitive atmosphere I find at other academic conferences. I learned a lot about their institutions and was able to reflect on how that related to Empire State College. I came away from the conference with greater appreciation for our ongoing commitment to self-directed learning and student empowerment in degree program planning. I appreciated the opportunity to spend several days as an active scholar and returned to ESC with new insights and renewed dedication to our mission. I highly recommend this conference to all ESC mentors. It will be Saratoga Springs next year, and I hope to see all of my colleagues there.

Ellen Hawkes: Two superlative experiences: participation in the Alliance/ACE Conference and a chance to enjoy San Diego’s ambiance. Over the past several years, Ken Cohen and I have collaborated with Irene Rivera de Royston on several All-College presentations about mentoring practices and faculty development, sound preparation for an Alliance workshop. Since Irene was already involved in several programs about diversity, Ken and I wrote a proposal for an interactive workshop, “Meeting Learner Goals and Expectations: Mentoring Relationships and Student Stories.” Its acceptance helped us look even more closely at our mentor/student interactions and to share some of our experiences with an audience knowledgeable about adult learners and receptive to our discussion of facilitative relationships, motivation, and the impact of student stories on our approach to mentoring. Planners for this October, 1998, conference are to be commended for their selection, program, and focus. And next year’s conference is in Saratoga Springs, sponsored by ESC, Skidmore and Vermont College. Don’t miss it, as these conferences are, in my opinion, a priority for all mentors!

Ken Cohen: I very much enjoyed being in a nice location with some of my ESC colleagues. The San Diego weather was perfect, in fact, probably “too perfect” to want to be there as a resident — some cold, some gray, and some icy precipitation make things a little more interesting for me. Chatting, touring around, dining out, and jogging with fellow ESCer’s and without having to work on vital college tasks were very novel and enlivening. The other participants at the conference were a nice bunch of folks, a lot like our gang, and I could easily envision many of them working here as mentors. This was the first Alliance/ACE conference that I attended and I came way with the impression that ESC is (still) a premier institution in alternative adult higher education. ESC appeared to be one of the few institutions that stands basically as a whole college with its own mission-setting capabilities, strong faculty, governance, etc. Many other participants came from programs that appeared to be splinters of larger institutions and much more focused on capturing a market niche and meeting the bottom line than we have had to be. A main concern expressed at a meeting by these other faculty focused on dealing with many adjuncts and their selection, training, and monitoring. I got the impression that our asynchronous model is relatively rare with most other programs meeting in groups or classes on weekends or evenings. I encourage my colleagues to take part in these enlightening and enjoyable events.

Xenia Coulter: Along with Judy and Irene (also Sylvain Nagler and Lee Herman), I have been attending and presenting at the Alliance/ACE conferences for a number of years, and I very much enjoy the fact that I know many of the participants and have many easy opportunities to meet new people. I also find it very stimulating to hear from colleagues at other institutions interesting issues of practices and descriptions of new ideas and theories, which I can bring back to share with ESC faculty and even, sometimes, students. I am also very relieved that in our presentations, we do not have to explain from scratch the ideas of mentoring, individualized education, adult students, and the intricacies of ESC, as we do at more traditional conferences.

This year's conference was notable for the number of ESC presentations (five!). The scheduling did not allow me to attend the talks by Judy and Irene or Carol, which I deeply regretted, but I did hear the presentation by Ken and Ellen. It was a joy to hear my colleagues speak so articulately of ESC practices and intriguing to listen to them emphasize issues related to practice that are different from my own. Chris and I facilitated a discussion on faculty development and were similarly intrigued to discover that other institutions have programs and problems that significantly diverge from our own. I came away from the conference, as I always do, with new ideas, new ways of thinking about adult higher education, and new perspectives that I know will inform my practice as well as my own thinking about alternative higher education for adults.

Chris Rounds: This was my first Alliance/ACE meeting. What a pleasure to meet so many people who share our struggles in working with adult learners in nontraditional settings. Being no fool, I stuck close to Irene, Xenia and Judy, old hands by now at these meetings, and was introduced to people from a dozen institutions and as many states. Our presentations prompted lively discussions and helped us to expand our understanding of what we're about. Other presentations helped me to appreciate the formidable research potential inherent both in what we do and in the way we do it. Traveling to San Diego enabled me to put my ESC experience in a new and thought-provoking context. It was a real pleasure. I found myself, on the last morning of the conference, sharing ideas about critical thinking and independent learning skills development with new friends from five or six institutions not unlike ESC. We had all been trying things with our students and working to improve our practice, but without colleagues with whom to share our experiences, successes, and failures. We reluctantly concluded our discussion with a promise to stay in touch and work on a presentation for next year's Alliance/ACE meeting in Saratoga Springs.

I had not attended a national conference in many years, and Alliance/ACE provided an excellent reintroduction to that environment. People were thoughtful, friendly, and interested in what we do and how we go about it. I came away proud of what we have accomplished and impressed by the quality of my colleague's work. I gained a new appreciation for the scope and diversity of adult and nontraditional academic programs and confidence that ESC retains a unique leadership role within this expanding community.

The titles of the ESC papers were:

Carnevale, C., Oaks, S., & Ostrov, J. "Coming Together on the Web: Fostering Reflection through Dialogue."

Hawkes, E. and K. Cohen. "Meeting Learner Goals and Expectations: Mentoring Relationships and Student Stories."

Coulter, X., Rivera de Royston, I., Rounds, C. "Learning About Diversity Through Experience: Case Studies with Nontraditional Students."

Gerardi, J., & Rivera de Royston, I. "Diversity: Adult Learners and Cultural Perspectives on Learning."

Mandell, A., & Coulter, X., "Faculty Development in Nontraditional Institutions."

ALL ABOUT
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MI News

Submissions to *All About Mentoring*

If you have read a book that interested you; if you have attended a stimulating conference; if you have had a valuable, surprising or difficult mentoring experience you would be willing to describe; or, if you have a comment on any part of this issue or on topics/concerns relevant to our mentoring community, please consider writing about them for *All About Mentoring*.

If you have developed written materials for your students that may be of good use to others; if you have a scholarly paper-in-progress or a talk that you presented (however informal); or if you have a short story, poem, drawings or photographs, please consider submitting them as well.

Please send *All About Mentoring* reports on your re-assignments and sabbaticals. You might also consider interviewing a colleague about his/her mentoring practices. (For example, the latter could be an important way for us to help all of us know and remember the insights of those who have been working at ESC for many years.)

Please send submissions to Alan Mandell (ESC, 225 Varick Street, NYC 10014-4382) or via e-mail (the simplest method). We very much look forward to your contributions. The next issue of *All About Mentoring* will be published in late summer, 1999. Please send your contributions by July 1. Thanks very much.

ALL ABOUT
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Call for Cases

Together, the Mentoring Institute, Faculty Conference, Professionals and our local union chapter are hoping to continue to stimulate conversation about our mentoring practices and institutional priorities.

“Learning at a Distance” is a theme that we want to pursue over the coming year. Our goal is to solicit (and then use as a stimulus for discussion) a number of “cases” from faculty and professional colleagues about the experiences we have had and strategies we have used to support student learning at varying “distances” — that is, wherever it is taking place. Please send your 1-2 page case to *All About Mentoring* by July 1.

We will publish the cases — they need not be elaborate — in the next issue of *All About Mentoring*, and then set up a series of discussions using them as takeoff points. Please consider describing what you have done.