ALL ABOUT

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EDITORIAL

Parallel Lives

What is a beginning? What must one do in order to begin? What is special about beginning as an activity or a moment or a place? Can one begin whenever one pleases? What kind of attitude, or frame of mind is necessary for beginnings?

Edward Said, Beginnings *(1975)*

The Value of Beginnings

It is valuable to think about beginnings. At the same time it's also true that some question such an interest in first steps, wondering if hidden in such an interest is really a desire to turn the clock backwards and become preoccupied with a golden age. From this skeptical view, the world can be neatly divided into the pragmatists, who unabashedly face the world as it (supposedly) is, and the romantics, who, in wishing for utopia, skirt the tasks at hand. For these self-proclaimed pragmatists, to wonder about beginnings thus becomes an exercise in systematic deflection. We miss what we need to see; we imagine better times (that perhaps never existed at all), which are really only flights of the imagination. The "pragmatist" can keep working away, responding to the times. The "romantic" can never just get down to it.

But thinking about beginnings (even in their complexities; even in debates about their interpretation) is important. And it is important because, as Wayne Willis points out in the opening essay of this issue of *All About Mentoring,* beginnings can help us understand the distinctiveness of the values, ideas, practices, tensions, and ideals that launched a project in the first place. More than being stymied in nostalgia, a serious and critical look at origins can push us to ask how where we began informs the ongoing work of an academic community.

One "Special" Beginning

Empire State College came into existence as an alternative – as a living critique of American higher education, which in the late 1960s and early 1970s was boiling over. Not only were many people confronting basic questions about "legitimate" knowledge (no writings by or about women, no African Americans, no Latinos or Poles or Jews, no systematic questioning of power and authority?), they were asking equally basic questions about forms and structures of learning (buildings and dormitories and sports arenas make a university, you can only be a serious student when you are 20, taking-in and spitting-out what those who know tell us is learning?). The learning contract, the narrative evaluation, credit for experiential learning, the individualized degree program, a network of centers and units and programs – the very centrality of mentoring – were introduced, played with, refined, and then fiddled with again, in the spirit of creating a very different university. This new place (obviously, even the notion of "place" had to be up for grabs) was to be more flexible, more inclusive, more attentive to student interests and needs, more collaborative, more willing to take in what had been left out (both people and ideas), and designed to encourage us to keep asking the hardest questions about teaching and learning. What a beginning: tradition-breaking, unachievable, presumptuous, and, of course for some, completely wrong-headed from the beginning.

And Another Beginning

At about the same time that Empire State College was starting out, the British Open University (now the OU) was getting its first students. Begun as the "University of the Air," the OU shared with us a commitment to access – geographical access for sure, and also access to a university education by individuals and groups that had been denied entry by historical rigidities and social hierarchies. Almost concurrently (thus, our "parallel lives" not our Victorian marriage), The State University of New York and the British Labor Party both promoted their educational experiments in the name of democracy, social justice, and educational "openness." Echoing some key Empire State College values, look at the current mission of the OU:

> "The Open University is open to people, places, methods and ideas.
>
> It promotes educational opportunity and social justice by providing high-quality university education to all who wish to realise their ambitions and fulfil their potential.
>
> Through academic research, pedagogic innovation and collaborative partnership it seeks to be a world leader in the design, content and delivery of supported open and distance learning."

I certainly don't claim to know all of the nuances of OU history, but as I have tried to understand, from its "special" beginnings, the OU was committed to "distance education" (the "wireless university" as it was called in an early vision), and this has always meant a radical vision of educational delivery. Could the contents of a university curriculum, one created by the most acclaimed academics in the land, be made available to absolutely anyone over 18 (the OU's only entrance requirement)? Could imaginative and efficient systems of course production, distribution, student support, and assessment be employed that would ensure that academically rich materials and services were available anywhere in the UK and soon around the globe? With its more than 200,000 conferred degrees, its more than 150,000 current undergraduates and its 30,000 graduate students, the OU has answered with a resounding "yes" to both questions. What an agenda it has set: how incredible it is that the more than 2 million students that the OU has served have been able to buck the seemingly unmovable rituals of place and perfectly proper study that higher education in the UK had, it seems, set in stone. And now the OU is literally everywhere.

And from there?

Empire State College and the Open University wanted to change basic assumptions about access to higher education and, certainly, both have done just that. Each institution has helped chip away at the ivory tower and disabuse the academy of its elitist assumptions about who can learn and where one can learn. But it's also important to see that while the two institutions share commitments to access, their beginnings also set them off in different directions.

The OU responded to the need for a new university by creating the finest, most elaborate, and well-conceived courses that academia could offer. Why, the OU has asked, shouldn't a single mother in Birmingham or a worker in Leeds (or now, an engineer in Kenya) have the same opportunity to study British Social History or Shakespeare or Chinese Civilization or string theory as a young man or woman at Warwick or even at Cambridge? Why shouldn't the same books and assignments and opportunities for serious university study be available to them? In effect, the OU has said: we will indeed provide these resources and set up state-of-the-art systems of communication and thereby prove to you that such a basic democratization of access will not undercut the essential qualities of good learning. And, impressively, this is what the OU and other mega-universities that have followed its lead have done.

Empire State College responded to the need for a new university by creating a fascinatingly flexible structure within which infinite learning possibilities could be built. Why, Empire State College has asked, shouldn't a single mother in Herkimer or a teacher in Mineola, or a health care worker in Williamsville, have the opportunity to turn their questions and everyday life concerns into academic studies, to design whole curricula that integrate their work experiences with new projects, and that, overall, will give them a chance to find a voice in the academy? In effect, Empire State College has said: through the use of learning contracts developed with a mentor, with an institutional acknowledgement of skills and learning gained outside of official college study, and with the promise that students will collaborate in the construction of their college and graduate study plans, we will prove to you that imaginative, work-and-life relevant, and academically sound degrees can take shape. And, impressively, this is what Empire State College has done.

It would be ludicrous to claim that selves, communities and whole worlds can't change, that they are stuck in their origins. (If this were the case, neither Empire State College nor the OU would ever have been born at all.) But remembering beginnings, and the reasons for and debates about those beginnings, can make a difference, particularly if the most cherished values, the heart of institutional life, are at stake.

If the OU were to decide that distance learning had become unfashionable, or new courses for new students previously unwelcome in the university were not worth producing, or that market considerations meant that erecting campuses around the UK (or in China) were the way to go, it would have lost its core.

If Empire State College were to decide that individualized study was just too expensive, or involving students in making academic decisions was too damn messy, or that developing interesting, academically rich, and elaborate pre-set courses and curricula with no room for improvs, little moves, and student-mentor collaborations – whether offered online, face-to-face or in groups – were the way to go, we, too, would have lost our way.

Unless, of course, we decide that we have the "frame of mind … necessary" to begin anew.

Alan Mandell

It is surprising what it takes to make an adult human being.

– John Berryman, "The Development of Anne Frank," from *The Freedom of the Poet* (1976)

"Killing the Spirit"? Empire State College in the 21st Century

Wayne Willis, Genesee Valley Center

Note: An earlier version of this article was presented as a paper at the Genesee Valley Center's sixth annual Festival of Ideas, June 20, 2006.

In 1990, the noted American historian Page Smith published a blistering critique of higher education in the United States. He titled his book, *Killing the Spirit*. Smith had been a long-time professor at UCLA before coming in the mid-1960s to the new University of California at Santa Cruz as a founding faculty member and the first provost of one of its divisions, Cowell College. He remained at Santa Cruz during its formative years, but resigned in 1974 when a university committee denied tenure to a young colleague whom Smith believed was especially dedicated to the school's radical educational ideals. He had concluded, as Gerald Grant and David Riesman put it, "that a university that had no place for such a teacher had no place for him."[1] Smith never returned to the academic world. For the rest of his life, he devoted himself to independent scholarship and raising chickens.

Killing the Spirit was largely an updated statement of the convictions that had taken Smith to Santa Cruz a quarter century before. Although a prolific author himself, Smith contended that "the vast majority of the so-called research turned out in the modern university is essentially worthless. It does not result in any measurable benefit to anything or anybody … It is busywork on a vast, almost incomprehensible scale. It is dispiriting; it depresses the whole scholarly enterprise; and, most important of all, it deprives the student of what he or she deserves – the thoughtful and considerate attention of a teacher deeply and unequivocally committed to teaching; in short, it robs the student of an education." The worst offenders, according to Smith, were the great research universities and the most prestigious liberal arts colleges where the "publish or perish" principle operated with a vengeance. The "oases" in this academic "desert" were the "hundreds upon hundreds of small, obscure colleges … whose faculties teach devotedly and whose students learn happily and well," particularly the community colleges "where thousands of able and intelligent men and women take their teaching opportunities with the greatest seriousness," pursuing "their mission with spirit and élan." These colleges, he wrote, are "the hope of higher education in America."[2]

Wayne Willis

A "true education," Smith said, was "one designed to produce a true person." To achieve this goal, students needed to be made "an integral part of the learning process." Smith regretted that the student revolt of the 1960s had not achieved a more long-lasting success in its struggle against a bureaucratized, impersonal, "soulless" system of education. Among Smith's many targets was the continued dominance of classroom lecturing, "the most inefficient way of transmitting knowledge ever devised," as well as the least involving. Grading was another of the "greatest obstacles to effective teaching."[3] (From the beginning Santa Cruz had rejected letter grades in favor of narrative evaluations, a method that it has kept to the present, although in more recent years a grading option has been added.)

When I first read Smith's book in the mid-1990s, I thought that, had he known about Empire State College, he would have liked a lot of what we did here and the spirit in which we did it. Like Santa Cruz, Empire State College was born during the wave of higher education reform and experimentation that swept through America from the mid-1960s through the early '70s. Empire State College shared many ideals, goals, structures, and methods with Santa Cruz and other dissenting and inventive colleges of this period. A few, like Antioch, had long histories of educational progressivism, derived from the work of John Dewey, Alexander Meiklejohn, Arthur Morgan, and other early twentieth century reformers. Most, however, were either brand new institutions or new "subcolleges" created within otherwise conventional colleges and universities. In her book, *The Innovative Campus* (1999), Joy Rosenzweig Kliewer identifies 314 schools of this type that were created in the United States during the '60s and '70s, not including institutions that primarily served adults, offered external degrees, or relied upon distance learning. While Kliewer excludes Empire State College on these grounds, the key characteristics of her "innovative institutions" fit Empire State College very well.

Kliewer closely studied six schools from their founding through the late 1990s. These included two private colleges (Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts and Pitzer College in Claremont, California), and four public institutions (New College in Sarasota, Florida, Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay). She found that in their early years all of these places had five "dimensions" that distinguished them from more typical institutions. First, these schools practiced "teaching and learning" across disciplinary boundaries. Faculty were not organized by departments, but affiliated

with interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary areas of study. They had freedom to create courses and to work independently with students on subjects of interest that were not part of their own formal education or established expertise. Secondly, all six were committed to processes of "student-centered education" that enabled students to take a large measure of responsibility for designing their academic programs and shaping the learning they pursued within their studies. Contract learning was a common feature, as was the use of narrative evaluation. Core curriculum and distribution requirements were rejected. Thirdly, each school considered "experiential learning" to be "integral to the academic program" and encouraged students to engage in "out-of-classroom projects," internships, and travel study. (However, since most of their students were of traditional college age, they did not ordinarily award credit by evaluation for prior learning from work and life experience.) Fourth, an atmosphere of "egalitarianism" prevailed within these academic communities. Everyone usually dealt with each other on a first-name basis. In some cases, such as Evergreen, faculty had no formal title other than "faculty member." All had highly participatory governance structures. Finally, there was an "institutional focus on teaching rather than research and/or publication," which was embraced by faculty who displayed an ardent "spirit of vocation about teaching."[4]

I hope that our current experience (or at least our memory) of Empire State College is still close enough to this composite description so that we can see how deeply indebted our college was to the alternative higher education movement of the '60s and '70s. The innovative features that Kliewer identifies were as integral to the early Empire State College as they were to any of the schools included in her study. When the college enrolled its first students in the fall of 1971, it added itself to an educational counterculture whose formation was already well under way. While we often speak of the "mentor role" as if it was a unique Empire State College creation, faculty at other progressive colleges were already functioning less and less like traditional professors and more and more as advisors, guides, and co-learners with their students.

What may indeed have been unique about Empire State College is that it took a liberating vision of higher education that had been nurtured in residential, selective, private and public colleges for traditional students and applied it to a nonresidential, geographically dispersed, open enrollment institution that aimed to serve "individuals of all ages, throughout society, according to their own lifestyles and educational needs."[5] It is this emphasis on vastly widened access to education, along with the methods used to accomplish it, that most differentiates Empire State College from philosophically similar schools, such as Hampshire and New College. If we are to understand the original spirit of our college, it is crucial to realize that what Empire State College attempted to do was provide for just about everybody the sort of individualized, self-directed, cross-disciplinary, experientially rooted, and just plain friendly educational experience that was becoming available to a minority of academically skilled, independent minded, late adolescents at residential colleges across the country. Thus, Empire State College took on a greater challenge than any of the schools studied by Kliewer (or by most other researchers). Many of the satisfactions and frustrations of professional life at Empire State College over the years stem directly from the extraordinary ambitiousness of the college's founding vision.

No vision, and certainly no institution, remains untouched by time. Yet when Kliewer published *The Innovative Campus* in 1999, she was impressed by how well the six schools profiled in her book had managed to preserve the qualities that had been most important to them nearly 30 years earlier, although Santa Cruz, Wisconsin – Green Bay, and Pitzer had drifted much farther toward conventionality than Hampshire, Evergreen or New College. A quick tour of their web sites seems to show that these three are still holding on pretty well in 2007. On visiting Hampshire with my son two years ago, I found its students, faculty, and top administrators retained an invigorating sense of themselves as intellectual and aesthetic free spirits, and conveyed a critical social consciousness that was not as immediately apparent at mainstream schools. It was poignant to hear new Hampshire faculty talk about how glad they were to be released from letter grading.

How much of Empire State College's early spirit has survived? When I came to the Genesee Valley Center in 1977, I was amused to hear some mentors who had started with the college in the early '70s talk about how Empire State College was losing its energy as an alternative school and was in danger, as the philosopher George Drury put it, of being "resorbed" by the prevailing system. What, I wondered, could they possibly be thinking of? This was at a time when Empire State College still had no curricular guidelines for areas of study or disciplines within them; there was no precise labeling or counting of advanced or liberal credits; students enrolled to study for "months" of time, rather than a number of credits; they could start a 16-week enrollment on any week day of the year except for the August reading

If we are to understand the original spirit of our college, it is crucial to realize that what Empire State College attempted to do was provide for just about everybody the sort of individualized, self-directed, cross-disciplinary, experientially rooted, and just plain friendly educational experience that was becoming available to a minority of academically skilled, independent minded, late adolescents at residential colleges across the country.

period. During degree program planning, a student and mentor could put together any combination of transcript credits, CLEP exams, credit by evaluation requests, and learning contracts and give it whatever title they chose, so long as they could convince the rather pliant members of the assessment committee that there was a pattern there that made sense. Although I had read a good deal about alternative education, Empire State College appeared breathtakingly, even (dare I say it?) a bit irresponsibly, open. Although Empire State College was not as "far out" as some of the experiments discussed in my favorite book on educational change, Judson Jerome's *Culture Out of Anarchy* (1971), it went far enough for me.

But when I look back at some of the college's earliest documents, I get a glimpse of what may have been troubling some of my colleagues. For instance, students had once enjoyed even more flexibility in the timing of their enrollments. In 1972-73 they enrolled for 12-week quarters, but the Empire State College bulletin for that year says, "The weeks do not have to be sequential."[6] This reflected the new college's aim to "transcend conventional academic structure," including "set periods of time."[7] Perhaps more importantly, some of the actual learning contracts that are described in detail in early college publications show a degree of imaginative integration across subject areas and modes of learning, as well as an intellectual depth, that I believe was quite unusual only a few years later.[8] Such contracts were probably never typical, but they reflected goals of best practice toward which the college had hoped its students and faculty would aspire. However, by the late '70s mentors were carrying large student loads and a student's four-month enrollment period was usually divided into compartmentalized studies with little coordination between mentors. Soon the separate, course-like nature of each study would be underscored when the college converted to a standard credit system. The college was becoming a more formal institution. Rumor had it that when GVC's former dean, John Jacobson, became vice president for academic affairs in 1974, he said his goal during the first few months was to write one new college policy each week!

In 1979, the college began to codify guidelines for concentrations in response to demands from the New York State Education Department. The more specific the guideline, the more likely it was to be treated as a set of requirements. Exact tallies of the liberal and advanced credits also began to be compiled for assessment of each student's degree program proposal. Increased standardization of expectations, combined with heavy student loads and limited imagination, caused mentors to produce "canned" learning contracts, rather than studies designed with and for the individual student. The establishment of the Center for Distance Learning expanded access to education for an ever-growing number of students, but CDL's dependence upon highly prestructured courses was incompatible with individualized, student-centered education as it was then understood in most branches of the college and in the wider educational counterculture.

However, by the late '70s mentors were carrying large student loads and a student's four-month enrollment period was usually divided into compartmentalized studies with little coordination between mentors.

Another departure from the early vision of the college was also significant. Empire State College began to reconceive itself as a college for "adult learners," rather than a haven for "students of all ages and situations" who did not wish, in the words of the 1972-73 bulletin, to become "standardized products on some sort of educational assembly line."[9] On the one hand, this shift acknowledged the simple reality that most of the students who accepted the college's invitation to learn were adults in their 30s and older. On the other hand, the notion that the college was an "adult college" weakened our sense of fraternal connection to institutions like Hampshire and New College, thereby severing us from many of our philosophical roots. To compensate for its intellectual isolation, Empire State College increasingly oriented itself toward the world of adult higher education. One result is that many long-time faculty members who came to the college in the 1970s thinking of it as part of a national movement to change American society by constructing new models of higher learning found themselves working in an institution that was losing its sense of affiliation with that broader movement.

The problem was not so much that Empire State College was serving fewer young students than it might have done. It was that our work with adults came to be discussed as if it was an essentially different endeavor from what faculties at other progressive colleges were doing with their younger students. It now appeared that the reason the college treated its students as individuals and enabled them to self-design their programs was that this approach suited a *specifically* adult population – but, then again, not *all* adults. For those who might better be reached through a prestructured curriculum, Empire State College increasingly offered other options. When the goals of expanded access and individualized learning seemed to conflict, access gained priority.[10] Empire State College publicized itself as a college of maximum convenience for busy adults; a place that would find one way or another to serve you, outside the traditional campus. In this way, the college has steadily grown and fulfilled its goal of educational outreach to underserved people, while obscuring some of the other fundamental purposes and values that had brought it into being. As its founding documents show, originally Empire State College wanted to be more than a method for students to earn degrees inexpensively without attending classes. It aimed for a qualitatively different and better educational experience, not a replication of the norm by other means.

Despite the internal tensions and inconsistencies, much of the early countercultural spirit of the college did survive the 1980s and 1990s to endure

the new wounds of the 21st century. Over the last few years, general education requirements were inflicted entirely from the outside, by the SUNY Board of Trustees, while letter grades were adopted with the approval of our governance bodies and a term calendar was devised and declared by the college's own central administration. There are arguments that can be made for the beneficent influence of general education requirements, letter grades and a term calendar, but it cannot be credibly claimed that any of these things is consistent with the college's founding commitments to "flexibility and individual learning."[11] President Joe Moore's imposition of a uniform term calendar throughout the college is particularly ironic, since one of the college's boldest innovations was its complete individualization of enrollment cycles. Chancellor Ernest Boyer wanted to free the student from "the rigidity of the calendar,"[12] something that Empire State College was well designed to accomplish. When President Jim Hall wrote the final chapter to Richard Bonnabeau's history of the college in 1996, he predicted that by 2021 Empire State College's system, "permitting students to begin study at virtually any time" according to their personal circumstances, would be "adopted by most institutions."[13] Perhaps if that does happen, Empire State College will reverse itself once more and tag along, when it might instead have led the procession.

Students are not the only ones hemmed in by the term calendar. Already we hear complaints from faculty, formalized in a resolution from the Niagara Frontier Center, that it is not possible to churn out large numbers of thoughtfully written narrative evaluations within the time allotted at the end of each term period. Their proposed solution is to abandon narratives and have an all letter-grade transcript. One thing leads to another as Empire State College blasts away its progressive educational foundations. It remains to be seen whether the newly mandated online registration process and catalog of "learning opportunities" will serve the education of students or result in more bureaucratic obstacles and generic instruction – just what Empire State College was meant to overcome.

Kliewer's book concludes with an analysis of several factors that enabled some of the progressive colleges of the 1960s to maintain their special qualities over time. She found that the continued presence of large numbers of early faculty members helped to hold these institutions to their "original distinctive missions" and supporting practices. Oldtimers transmitted the culture of their colleges to new faculty who, in turn, had been selected because they appeared to "share the basic values of the pioneers." As a result, faculty at Hampshire, Pitzer, New College, and Evergreen had not tried to replace the "free-flowing, nondepartmental organizational structures" that sustain the collaboration of faculty and students across fields of study. Faculty were also rewarded primarily for the quality and creativity of their work with students, rather than "being evaluated on the basis of the conventional, disciplinary research and publication standards." It has been just as important for administrative leadership, as it has for faculty, to retain its understanding of core principles and the practices that are consistent with them. Administrators at private colleges, or at public colleges with a relatively high degree of autonomy (such as New College and Evergreen) have been best positioned to resist external lures and pressures that threaten the distinctive character of their institutions.[14]

To some extent, Empire State College can still be fit into Kliewer's portrait of the enduringly alternative college. Many of our senior faculty have spent most, if not all, of their professional lives here and feel strongly about preserving the college's mission and culture. New faculty members are expected to be enthusiastic about Empire State College's educational values and practices and to reflect them in their work. Faculty still identify with very broad and often overlapping areas of study instead of discipline-based departments. Our interaction with each other focuses far more on our work with students than on talk about our personal scholarly projects. However, most of the college's first generation of mentors is long gone, and many other senior faculty are nearing retirement. Our physical dispersion, combined with our loose organizational structure, continues to make it difficult for faculty to develop a strong, collective stance in governance bodies and other college forums, leaving our core values weakly defended. Institutional leadership resides mainly with administrators who are often less attuned to the early spirit of the college than were some of their predecessors.

Mentors and students are now confronted with an organization that seeks to preserve its reputation for "personal academic advising and attention" and programs built "around the lives of individual adults"[15] while operating within academic and administrative rules that are far more conventional than they once were. The new emphasis on externally visible scholarship will reward faculty who manage to pull away from their work as mentors to produce such scholarship, but also punish faculty who do not. The current Strategic Plan stresses expanding access to an even wider range of adult students and new devices to improve our retention rates. Worthy goals in themselves, and the plan also aims to enhance "learning resources for individualized and group studies." But no current college document conveys Empire State College's former passion for providing access to a liberating style of education that was *superior* to what traditional colleges offered their students and might even foreshadow a transformed educational and social world.[16] The belief that we could do, and *were doing*, something like that is what made some of us feel that it was well worthwhile to endure many of the college's deprivations and indignities of work life. (Preposterous workloads, shabby facilities, no library or other campus amenities, *et cetera, et cetera.*) Grandiose it might have been, but when Empire State College is stripped of its sense of utopian promise, it becomes a somewhat less interesting, less satisfying, and seemingly less important place.

The Yale sociologist Burton Clark says that distinctive colleges construct an "organizational saga" or "legend" about themselves that gives voice to their distinctiveness and motivates their members to preserve it.[17] An organizational saga expresses only a part of the institution's actual history and present reality, but it is the part that is most inspiring to its members, the part for which they are willing to struggle and sacrifice. For me,

and perhaps for some others who are still here, the dissenting social and educational movements that flourished during the 1960s and ’70s molded the organizational saga of Empire State College. Because I still revere the essential spirit of these movements, I mourn their declining influence on our college’s policies, practices, and sense of itself. Empire State College may yet create a new, or highly revised, saga that will be equally energizing. I sincerely hope that it does, but perhaps I will be forgiven for detecting few signs of it at present. With what do we replace Empire State College’s old radical spirit? One answer came recently from an apparently far more disillusioned colleague, who wrote, “We [at Empire State College] are a deeply religious people, and our religion is ‘business’ or, perhaps more strictly, ‘marketing.’”

Footnotes

1 Gerald Grant and David Riesman, *The Perpetual Dream: Reform and Experiment in the American College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 280.

2 Page Smith, *Killing the Spirit: Higher Education in America* (New York: Viking, 1990), 7, 19-20.

3 Ibid., 204, 210, 215, 219.

4 Joy Rosenzweig Kliewer, *The Innovative Campus: Nurturing the Distinctive Learning Environment* (Phoenix: American Council of Education/Oryx Press, 1999), xviii.

5 *Prospectus for the New University College* (1971), as quoted in Richard F. Bonnabeau, *The Promise Continues: Empire State College: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Empire State College, 1996), 18.

6 *Empire State College* (undated bulletin, issued for 1972 - 1973), 73.

7 Prospectus for a New University College, quoted in Bonnabeau, *The Promise Continues,* 18. Ê

8 *Empire State College* (undated bulletin, issued for 1972 - 73), 12-28.

9 Ibid., 4.

10 As Bonnabeau shows in *The Promise Continues* (23 - 24), the conflict between prestructured and more spontaneous, individualized approaches to learning at Empire State College goes back to struggles between two early college leaders, Loren Baritz and Arthur Chickering. Although Chickering and individualization did more to shape Empire State College’s self-image and practices during the 1970s (thereby linking the college philosophically to other thinkers and institutions in the educational counterculture), prestructured programs (especially the Center for Distance Learning) eventually became prominent. Empire State College presents itself today to prospective students as a school that has no philosophical preferences for one mode of learning over another, but seeks to provide multiple pathways to the attainment of a degree. This neutrality shows how far the college has distanced itself from the transformative ethos of its early years.

11 Ibid.

12 Ernest L. Boyer, “Foreword” to Bonnabeau, *The Promise Continues,* 6.

13 James W. Hall, “Imaginings: Looking Back from the Year 2021,” in Bonnabeau, *The Promise Continues,* 179.

14 Kliewer, 217-220.

15 Quotations from *Learners First: The Campaign for Empire State College* (undated and unpaged promotional pamphlet).

16 “Man’s fate and the fate of education are inextricably linked,” proclaimed Empire State College’s first bulletin (1971 - 1972). “Therefore, the future of the world,” and human survival within it, “depends upon the wisdom of our actions concerning future educational priorities and programs. Sound judgments and wise priorities will support the major reorientations required for the expansion of human satisfactions and potentials. Misjudgment and misplaced priorities may lead to a new human nature combining the animal irrationality of primitive man with the materialistic greed and lust of industrial man, and powered by the destructive forces available from modern technology. That could lead to the end of man.” They sure don’t write them like that anymore! The redemptive fervor of Empire State College in the 1970s was quite alarming to some, such as the New York State Education Department staffer who reportedly said, “Empire State is a cult, not a college.”

17 Burton Clark, *The Distinctive College* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970), 233 - 262.

> To discover who people think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it, it is necessary to gain a working familiarity with the frames of meaning within which they enact their lives. This does not involve feeling anyone else’s feelings, or thinking anyone else’s thoughts, simple impossibilities. Nor does it involve going native, an impractical idea, inevitably bogus. It involves learning how, as a being from elsewhere with a world of one’s own, to live with them.
>
> – Clifford Geertz, “A Life of Learning.” American Council of Learned Societies, Occasional Paper No. 45 (1999)

This Is Texas, Sugar

Heather Ostman, Metropolitan Center

At the bottom of the gate, a woman shook a white sign over her chest; the sign said "HIDEE" in black letters. Everyone else had gotten off the plane and left a while ago. This woman was short and stuffed into tight jeans way too long for her. She'd tucked a pack of cigarettes under one of her short sleeves, over her shoulder, and her face looked like she was either really surprised about something or really alarmed – like she'd won the lottery without a winning ticket or talked to a man whose head stuck out of his stomach. Get a load of this chick, Heidi thought and turned around for some sympathy – mercy, really – from the stewardess who'd marched her off the plane. Maybe she'd let her go back to New Jersey, but the stewardess's hard Miss America face said no way and she closed the gate door.

"Shit." Heidi picked up her grandmother's old paisley print suitcase and pretended to be looking for someone else when she passed the woman with the sign.

"YoumustbeHeidi!"

"What?" Heidi didn't know what she'd said with that heavy Texan twang, but the woman was abnormally happy, mental actually, about whatever it was. And up close, Heidi realized she wasn't surprised or alarmed at all, but she had drawn on her eyebrows where her real ones used to be. The brown lines were thick in the center and went up high and around, like she'd traced two eggs over her eyes. For a second, Heidi thought maybe she was a cancer patient or something and had lost her hair, or some of it, anyway.

"I said, You Must Be Heidi." The woman spoke loud and slow – like she thought Heidi was deaf or retarded. She shook the sign in front of her chest again.

"Nope," Heidi said and started walking away.

"You sure look like the way Dr. Landau said you'd look." The woman followed. "'Bout 16, 17, brown hair. Dress like a head."

"A what?" Heidi stopped.

"Yer dressed like a head!"

"You don't have to yell," Heidi said.

"Sorry. You look like, you know, a head – a burnout. You got them too tight jeans and too long hair. We git girls like you all the time. By the way, you ain't gonna be needing no flannel shirts like that here. It ain't like New York, 'specially in June."

"I'm from Jersey." Heidi turned and faced the woman. In her mind, there was a big difference between New York and New Jersey. Any idiot knew that.

"See, I knew it was you, sugar." The woman smiled like they were playing a game and she'd just gotten a Get Out of Jail Free Card – something she may have needed in real life.

Heidi pointed to the sign. "That's not how you spell my name."

"Sorry, sugar, I never knew a Heidi before."

"Stop yelling already. I can hear you."

"Aw right, aw right. Anyway, I'm Darlene and I'm driving you over to The Ranch."

"Okay, Duh-leen."

"It's DAR-lene."

"Yeah, I know. I heard that, too." Heidi decided she had to get the hell out of here. She put her suitcase on the floor between her feet and took out a pack of cigarettes from her shirt pocket. She needed to figure it out fast, so she scanned the airport, looking for exit signs.

"We gotta go, sugar. We ain't got time for a smoke."

Heidi's lips tightened around the cigarette and she held the lighter in midair. Her eyes locked with Darlene's. Heidi was staring down at the woman, since she was about five or six inches taller, but Darlene was built like a pit bull and scared her a little. The woman's face was caked with heavy tan-colored base makeup, and just like she'd done her eyebrows, she'd drawn brown lines around her lips and filled them in with a slightly different shade of brown. Darlene brought the sign down, and Heidi saw the words on her t-shirt: "If Jesus didn't say it, I ain't listening."

If she'd been home, Heidi might have laughed out loud, but something in the way Darlene had lowered that sign made her think this woman was no stranger to bar fights and jail cells. Forget Jesus, she thought, this woman could kick some ass. If Heidi were older, if she had any money, if she had anywhere else to go, she might have gotten a taxi right that minute – did they even have taxis in Texas? If they did, she would have told the driver to take her somewhere, anywhere else but here. But Darlene's dark eyes were hard and didn't seem to have any pupils, so Heidi put the cigarettes and the lighter back in her pocket and picked up her suitcase.

"Well, are we going to go or what?" Heidi finally said.

Darlene shot her a look – the kind the Puerto Rican girls gave before they beat the crap out of each other in the school bathroom – but the woman didn't hit her or even say anything. She just turned fast on her heels and headed toward the exit.

Heidi followed, but she was careful to keep a few feet back, so maybe no one would think she was actually with Darlene, who, by the way, walked like her ass was on parade. The woman's hips swung from left to right with every step. Each butt cheek squeezed under the restraint of her tight jeans. It was amazing she could walk at all.

"Here we are," Darlene said when they got to a pink Corvette in the airport parking lot. Her voice was as friendly as it had first

been when she held up the sign. Maybe it was the car that made her cheer up again. It looked like a giant wad of cotton candy and reminded Heidi of a Mary Kay car she'd seen once back in Montvale. But not quite the same thing.

"My pride and joy." Darlene opened the doors of the Corvette. She pointed one hand toward the car and put the other on her hip, as if she were on a game show. "Ta-da!"

When Heidi didn't say anything, the woman shoved the sign behind the driver's seat. "Yer going to have to hold yer suitcase on yer lap, sugar."

Heidi nodded.

"Now that's a cute tote you got there." Darlene pointed to the little paisley suitcase.

Heidi made a face. She thought maybe the woman was making fun of her because the suitcase was hideous. It was the one thing her grandmother – her Nana – owned that her mother let her keep after they cleaned out her apartment last year. Not only was it hideous in its yellow, pink and orange paisley print, but Heidi never really liked her Nana in the first place. She had never known what soap tasted like before she had sleepovers at Nana's, and she'd never been called a crybaby or slapped on the face before, either. Staying at her grandmother's house was never a picnic, but her mother would ship her off for weeks, sometimes months at a time, and pretend it was some kind of vacation. The suitcase just reminded Heidi of all those times she'd be begging her Nana to let her go home, and the old lady would just slap her and tell her to stop whining like a baby. It added insult to injury, now that her mother had sent her so far away with the suitcase.

Heidi dropped herself into the Corvette's bucket seat and pulled the suitcase to her lap. The smells of strawberry and orange scented air fresheners assaulted her right away. And then the pink. Everything – seriously, everything – was as pink as its outside: the seats, the dashboard, the steering wheel, everything. And besides a road atlas tucked between the driver's seat and the console and a pair of fuscia-colored foam dice hanging from the rearview mirror, the car was immaculate. Heidi had never been in such a bizarre and tacky car before, and she began to think Darlene might not have been cracking on her suitcase.

"Those are big dice," Heidi said after Darlene strapped the seatbelt around herself.

"It's Texas, honey. Everything's big here!" Darlene's mouth flew open as she laughed out loud, and Heidi could see large black spots on her back teeth.

Then she heard the Corvette's automatic locks bolt, and Heidi knew she'd missed her last chance to run like hell. It was just like she was trapped in one of those bizarro-world stories Patrick liked to read to her from "The News of the Weird" column in the free paper – like the story he'd just told her four days ago, before everything happened, about the woman who dressed up in a gorilla suit to crash her own surprise bridal shower, and then got mauled by her friend's dog (the same friend throwing the shower) because the animal thought she was an intruder. Now Heidi was trapped in the beginning of her own story; she was a prisoner to fake eyebrows and rotting teeth in a Mary Kay Corvette. Patrick would have laughed his ass off – she would have, too – if they were reading about it back at home. But there was nothing funny about this. Heidi was alone and she didn't know where Patrick was. She was exiled in a real story, where she didn't know how she could ever get home again.

"How do you like my ride?" Darlene yelled over the roaring muffler. "Sorry so loud," she lowered her voice a little. "I'm saving up to fix the muffler." The thunder beneath the car made it sound like they were going faster than they were, but Darlene drove slowly as they followed the signs out of the parking lot. Every now and then, though, she took a turn too fast.

"It's nice," Heidi lied. "Really pink." She looked around the matching interior and wondered why none of this woman's friends and family stopped her from wasting all that money on something as awful as this car.

"It's custom, sugar. 1979. It's a classic now already."

"It's only been six years. How can it be a classic?" Heidi asked.

"That's right, sugar, it's only been six years. But it's a classic because it's U-nique. Picked out the color myself."

"Pink's your favorite color?" Heidi still couldn't get her head around the idea that someone would buy a car like this on purpose.

"No, pink ain't my favorite color, but I wanted to pick something nobody else would have. My favorite colors are black and orange. You know, like Harley Davidson colors. Brrrm!" Darlene grabbed the steering wheel and twisted her right hand like she was riding a motorcycle. The woman's eyebrows stretched up, up, up, and she smiled that big rotten smile at her.

"Oh," Heidi said. "Hey, what's your last name? Are you Italian?" Only Italians in Heidi's neighborhood drove cars almost as tacky as this one, although she wasn't sure there were any Italians this far west. She hadn't seen any pizza places yet.

"Am I Eye-talian?" Again Darlene's mouth opened wide and let out a hefty laugh. The black spots on her molars looked like deep caverns, and Heidi wouldn't have been surprised if plumes of grey smoke swirled out from behind the woman's teeth. "Whatever gave you that idea? Honey, I am 110 percent Texan." Then Darlene's face became serious except for her eyebrows, which were still high and surprised, and Heidi thought she was going to tell her she did have cancer and had about 90 minutes to live. "Now, sugar, you need to understand something. This here is an anonymous program yer going to. It ain't right for you to be asking people their last names. You hear me?"

"Sorry." Heidi bit her tongue to keep from cracking up. What anonymous program? She already knew Dr. Landau knew her first and last name, where she came from, and who was paying the bills – her stepfather Abe. So what was so anonymous about that?

"It's all right. You didn't know it, but now you do." Darlene turned on the radio. "An anonymous program," she mumbled to herself. "No last names."

Country western music blasted from the speakers behind their heads and drowned

the muffler out. If Heidi had known anyone in Texas, she would have died four times over already from the sheer mortification of driving in a pink Corvette that smelled like a fruit salad, blaring country music and sitting next to a woman with eyebrows drawn over her forehead. It was unfair to be thrown out of her house, she thought, but this was just mean.

"How long until we get there?" Heidi asked.

"All in God's time, sugar," Darlene answered. "In God's time."

Heidi had no idea how long that was. She looked Darlene over and started to wonder if the woman was bullshitting her with the God crap. This woman was more like one of those white-trash biker hags, the kind biker guys call "my ole' lady," than a Jesus freak. Maybe the whole God thing was part of the act. Maybe Darlene was really in a gang and had kidnapped her for the Hell's Angels. Now that would be something, Heidi thought. If she were held for ransom, her mom would feel really guilty for sending her away like this. What if the bikers made her become a gang member until her mom paid? What if they made her rob a bank? What would her mom pay to get her back? Would she pay?

"Too loud?" Darlene said and turned the radio down.

"It's okay." She thought the music sucked, but at least it kept them from talking.

"So what's your doc?" Darlene kept the volume low anyway. They drove past signs leading to I-35.

"My what?"

"Your D.O.C. Your drug of choice. Why'd you get sent to The Ranch?"

"I don't know." Heidi'd already decided Darlene, even if she wasn't a kidnapper, was an asshole and she wasn't going to tell her anything.

"You don't know or you ain't going to tell me?"

"I said I don't know."

The car climbed the entrance ramp to the highway. Darlene drove in the right lane, speeding up and slowing down, then speeding up and slowing down again, like she kept having to force herself to stay below the speed limit. Heidi stared at the suitcase on her lap. Even though she'd never liked her Nana when she was alive, she held the suitcase's vinyl edges with two hands now, in case she could maybe reach her in heaven from way out here in Texas.

"Humphf. You don't know your doc? Like they say, 'Denial ain't just a river in Egypt,' sugar."

"What?"

"I mean, nobody's sent to The Ranch by mistake."

Heidi wasn't sure this was true and she didn't see what it had to do with Egyptian rivers, but she kept her mouth shut. There was no way she was going to tell Darlene what happened when she could barely think about it herself.

"Well, we do have a while before we get there, so I'll just tell you my story – because that's what we do in the Program. We tell our stories to help each other." Darlene glanced at Heidi and lowered the air conditioning. "You too cold, sugar?"

"I'm fine."

"All right. You just holler if the air's too much." Darlene turned the air conditioning up again. "Now before I came to work for Dr. Landau at The Ranch, I was in an Adult Facility for Drug Addiction," Darlene pronounced the words slowly, as if she were reading them off a card. "A TC, you know, a treatment center. Dr. Landau used to work there before she opened up The Ranch and Homefield, and she remembered me from the first time I was there a few years back. She keeps in touch with the other counselors and one of them must've told her I'd slipped and come in again." Darlene looked over at her. "Homefield's the boys' home, sug, I bet you didn't know that."

"No, I didn't." Heidi stared at the cigarette pack under Darlene's short sleeve and wanted to smoke bad, but she was still a little afraid to try lighting a cig up again. Darlene hadn't smoked yet. And the pink ashtray, like everything else in the Corvette, was clean.

"Anyway, before that I was addicted to crank. Me and my ex, Barry, used to cook it up in my kitchen and sell it." Darlene yowled and startled Heidi. "Lordamercy! We made so much of that shit! We used to keep big garbage cans lined up next to the kitchen counter. Ha!"

Heidi stared at her. She had no idea what crank was. No one she knew in Jersey did it, but she nodded like she understood.

"But I was runnin' on empty, you know, like the song says, and my ex was cheatin' on me with my neighbor Betty Jo's daughter and he was skimming some of the profits and then I just up and hit rock bottom, sug." Darlene got very serious again. "I was living the junkie's life: living fast but getting nowhere. I was freebasing a lot too, back then. And my son – he's 13 now and lives with his grandparents – he woke me up one morning and he looked at me and I had like all these burn marks on my lips and he said, 'Momma, why do you have so many scabs on your mouth?' and I said, 'Darlene, what the hell are you doing?'"

"What did your son say then?"

"What, sugar?"

"What did you son say after you said that? You didn't answer him."

"Oh, it's just a figure of speech, honey. I didn't really say it out loud. I probably said something like, 'Shut up and get ready for school, you little shit.' Because that is the kind of person I had become." Darlene nodded her head like she'd said the most obvious thing.

"When did all that happen?"

"Ten months ago."

"Oh." Heidi might have thought the woman was bullshitting her again, except Darlene pulled a collection of colored poker chips on a thin chain from her jean pocket. How she fit them in such tight pants was a little mysterious, but each chip had a number for every month of sobriety, up to the number 10.

"I'm coming up on my one-year anniversary. My life has done a 360 and I am no longer the person I once was."

"You mean a 180."

Darlene made a sucking sound between her front teeth. "One-eighty. Three-sixty. To each their own, sugar. To each their own. The point is I am one with my higher power and I am clean and sober today. I owe a lot to Dr. Landau. And now, by the grace of God, I got a second lease on life, is what I've got." She waited before speaking again. "When I get my one-year pin, Dr. Landau's fixin' to help me get back custody of Rodrick."

Heidi wanted to tell Darlene that Dr. Landau may have gotten her sober but she hadn't done anything for her shitty taste in cars and makeup. But she held back. She wasn't really sure who this Darlene woman was or why she'd rather say she had a raging drug habit that made her lose her son than tell her last name. So instead Heidi just tucked a stray lock of her long brown hair behind her ear and looked out the window to avoid having to talk anymore. Around the highway, the Texan landscape rose up. Constant sunshine had etched wide cracks in the hard soil. Droves of cattle and mechanical arms of oil wells labored despite the unforgiving heat. Heidi watched them flicker by like a reel of film.

"Yer eye makeup's runnin', sugar," Darlene said after a while. She pointed toward Heidi's face. "Meant to tell you before."

"What?"

"Yer makeup, yer eyeliner's all smudged, sug. You look like somebody up an' socked you."

"Look who's talking," Heidi said.

"What'd you say?"

"Nothing."

"Humphf."

Heidi smiled to herself and then checked her reflection in the outside mirror. She pushed her frizzy bangs away from her face. Darlene was right. Her eyeliner, the only makeup she ever wore, had made two faded bruises beneath her blue eyes. Four days ago, Heidi would have wiped the smudges away and reapplied her makeup, but now she left them. She thought they made her look tougher. The runny liner bothered Miss Fake Eyebrows, anyhow, so that was another reason to leave it as is. Besides, where she was going, it didn't really matter if she looked like crap or not.

From Darlene's side, a horn blared outside the Corvette. Two men in a red pickup truck sped up next to them. Heidi leaned forward to look. The driver honked again, and the passenger pointed at Darlene's car.

"I get that all the time." Darlene smiled, but Heidi didn't know what was so great about two old fat guys in greasy baseball caps pointing at a tacky guinea car.

"That man's got straw all over him." Heidi pointed at the passenger, who was now wagging his tongue between his middle finger and his forefinger at her. "Oh, gross," she said and sat back in her seat.

"Check this out." Darlene waved and then fondled one of the foam dice. "You know it, sugar!" she yelled toward the truck, even though the windows of the Corvette were rolled up. She squeezed the fuscia block like it was more than a piece of foam and watched the truck in the next lane. "You boys come to mama!"

The car swerved a little out of the right lane.

"Maybe you should watch the road." Heidi grabbed the handle of the passenger's side door.

Darlene didn't seem to hear her. The truck's horn blared again.

"Come to mama, if you can, suckers," Darlene said and she slammed the gas pedal to the floor and swerved fully into the middle lane, in front of the truck.

Heidi's forehead broke out into a light sweat. A salty taste gushed into her mouth, so she dropped her eyes to the suitcase to keep herself from throwing up.

"This car's a real man magnet," Darlene said, once they slowed down again, after leaving the pickup behind. She slapped the dashboard and Heidi looked up. "A real man magnet, sugar. You should get one for yerself."

Heidi stared at Darlene's profile. Her eyes focused sharply on the road before them, like she was trying to melt the windshield with her vision. Heidi thought if she died out here on I-35, then her mother would feel really guilty for overreacting and sending her away. As satisfying as the idea was, the increasing speed brought another wave of salty saliva into Heidi's mouth, so she reached into her shirt pocket again for her cigarettes. She didn't give a shit now what Darlene said. Just a drag or two would make the nausea go away.

"No smoking in here, sug." Darlene was quick and Heidi froze. "Put 'em away."

"You smoke."

"Not in here I don't. And you don't neither."

"Well, don't drive so fast. I'm getting carsick." Heidi crammed the cigarettes back in her pocket.

"Humphf." Darlene turned the radio up again. A woman with a very high voice was singing a sad country western refrain:

I loved you

You left me

I miss you

You're gone.

Oh, God, Heidi thought, do they listen to anything else out here? She fingered the zipper on her suitcase. Inside, she'd wrapped a tank top around a small fishing knife she stole from Abe. She was tempted to take it out, to show Darlene not to fuck with her. If anything happened to her now, like if Darlene were still a Texan crank dealer and some biker's old lady, Heidi would threaten her until she stopped the car and unlocked the doors. She imagined she could even use the handle of the knife to break the glass of the passenger's side window, if she had to, so she could get out. But there was no subtle way to unzip the suitcase on her lap, so Heidi just kept her hand on its zipper to be ready. If there was anything Patrick had taught her, it was to expect weird and unwanted things to happen. And if there was anything she'd learned from her mother, who had a new boyfriend every few months until she married Abe last year, it was to be ready to leave, just in case things didn't work out.

The more she thought about it, the more Heidi was pissed about being trapped with this crazy woman; she was pissed about being so far away from home; and she

was pissed – no it was more than pissed, it was fury, pull-out your eyes rage – because Patrick was gone and they wouldn't tell her where he was. Heidi decided that from now on she wouldn't talk to Darlene, no matter what. And she wouldn't talk to anyone at The Ranch either, until they called her mom and told her to take Heidi back to Jersey.

"We're almost there, sugar," Darlene said to her over the sounds of the muffler and another country singer crying about the loneliness of love.

Heidi heard her but wouldn't answer. She held the suitcase zipper tightly. But her fury faded when they passed a billboard with an illustrated family above the words: Vacation at Lake Dawton. The people in the picture were at a lake surrounded by white and blue cabins. The mother and the daughter reclined in matching bathing suits and wore broad straw hats on a small beach, and the father and son were throwing a football.

"Is Lake Dawton nearby?" Heidi asked Darlene over the roaring muffler. She forgot she wasn't going to talk anymore.

"Why? You goin' swimmin'?" Darlene laughed out loud. "Don't you worry. The Ranch is sort of like a resort, just with no lake, no men, lots of chores, and group ther'pee." Darlene laughed again. "Hey now, watch them prints, sug."

"What prints?"

"There, the ones you made pointing to the sign." Darlene's face lost its smile as she looked toward the fingerprints Heidi had left on the window. "This here car's my baby. I like to keep things neat, sugar. Shows class, not trash." Darlene pushed back in her seat as she drove and dug her fingers into the front pocket of her tight jeans. She handed Heidi a soft man's handkerchief. It was warm from being squished in her pocket.

"What do you want me to do with this?" Heidi stared at her.

"Wipe 'em off." Darlene pointed to the window.

"There's barely anything there." This woman, she thought, would have to do more than clean fingerprints from this car to prove she wasn't trashy.

"When you are in your own car, you can do whatever you want, sug. But you're in Darlene's 'vette now, and you clean your mess."

"I don't have a car."

"Well, then, maybe you should show a little more respect in somebody else's, somebody who didn't have to use her personal vehicle, somebody who could have taken The Ranch bus to drive your bratty Yankee ass, so everyone in the state of Texas would know yer goin' to a home for bad girls."

She hadn't seen Darlene's blast coming and the words stung her. Heidi wished she could be home again and go back to when it was just Patrick and her. If she were any other girl, she might have started to cry, but instead she mouthed "bitch" to the window and rubbed the mark with the handkerchief.

"Did you say something to me?" Darlene demanded.

"Nope." Heidi kept her face to the window.

"Seemed like you did."

Heidi looked at her. "I said I was wondering if you had cancer."

"Cancer! Why?"

"Because your eyebrows are fake. I bet you get up really early in the morning to draw your face on." She crossed her arms and watched Darlene to see the effects of her insult.

The woman's lips moved but no sound came out. It looked like she was counting. Then she spoke. "A word of advice, sugar: lose the 'tude. Dr. Landau ain't goin' to tolerate any bull from you at The Ranch. Just remember: 'Compliance gets you recovery. Defiance gets you high.'"

"What the hell does that mean?" Heidi jammed the handkerchief between Darlene's seat and the atlas, but Darlene yanked it away and stuffed it back into her pocket. Her sobriety poker chips rattled on their chain.

"It means, don't worry, sug. Put a little 'gratitude in your attitude' and you'll get this deal." Darlene stopped and thought. "And I will thank you kindly not to use profanity in my car."

"You did."

"When?"

"Before. You said 'shit.' You said it twice."

Darlene's expression shifted. "Well, that's different. I was talking about the past."

"It is not different."

"Yes, it is. In my car, it's different." Darlene turned up the radio one more time.

Heidi resolved again not to speak. She wondered how Abe convinced her mother to send her away. Then she thought of Patrick and wondered if they'd sent him somewhere like this, too. She could feel the rage climbing up her throat, and if she were home, she would have been screaming already, slamming doors, and throwing whatever was nearest. None of this seemed fair. But stuck in the Corvette, a ridiculous hillbilly-guido car, she only clenched her fists tightly until her nails punctured the skin on her palms.

"Just relax now, sugar," Darlene glanced at Heidi. "I'm going to let this bad boy out – we need to make better time." She floored the gas and swung two lanes over into the left lane. The muffler vibrated beneath them and the landscaped blurred.

The speedometer leaped over 100. *Patrick!* Heidi screamed in her head. *Where the fuck are you? I swear to God, I'm going to find you!* She dug her nails into her palms even deeper and swallowed hard to keep from throwing up. But it made no difference. Heidi loosened her fists and heaved vomit all over the pristine, pink interior of Darlene's pride and joy.

Thanks to my colleagues at the Metropolitan Center for everything. The piece is the first chapter of a longer work.

Doing Learner-Centered Research: An Interview with Timothy Lehmann (Part I)

Richard Bonnabeau, Center for International Programs

The following interview with Timothy Lehmann was conducted by Empire State College mentor and college historian Richard Bonnabeau on January 14, 1991, as a component of the Empire State College Oral History Project. The original text has now been reviewed and edited. Thanks to both Tim and Richard for their time and attention, and for their willingness to allow us to present this material. A second part of the interview will be included in All About Mentoring *#33.*

Bonnabeau: Why don't we begin this, Tim, by having you identify your title as well as your association with NCAL (The National Center on Adult Learning).

Lehmann: I am currently [1991] associate vice president for research and evaluation in charge of the Office of Research and Evaluation. I am also the director of the recently created National Center on Adult Learning [NCAL], which is sponsored by Empire State College and located here in Saratoga. The center was established as a join venture by leaders of innovative colleges and nationally recognized researchers who were committed to improving practitioner-based research and the theory of adult learning. So I'm carrying two basic responsibilities.

Tim Lehmann, circa 1980s

Bonnabeau: When did you first join the college?

Lehmann: I came to the college in the summer of 1973. I joined the college's Office of Research and Evaluation, at that time headed up by Ernie Palola. I came in as director of program evaluation.

Bonnabeau: How did you hear about Empire State College?

Lehmann: I heard about it from Ernie. I had worked with him when I was a graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley. At the time I first met him I was working at the Higher Education Research Center in Berkeley, and I got involved for about four years in a research project on statewide planning in higher education. Then I completed my Ph.D. and we parted ways. I went to Colorado State and became a member of the faculty in the department of sociology there. Many years went by. Ernie and I had been in touch occasionally over those years, but then he got involved in this innovative institution and gave me a call one day and said that he had an interesting opportunity that he wanted to talk to me about. So that's how it all started.

Bonnabeau: Would you say that you were fairly familiar with Empire State College through your discussions with Ernie or through conferences you had attended and knew about the mission of the college?

Lehmann: I did not understand or know about Empire State College prior to starting a conversation Ernie. I had not heard of Empire State College. Being way out on the West coast or in the Rocky Mountains, I was not aware that such an enterprise had been started two years earlier. It was only through more extended conversations with Ernie, followed by a trip to Saratoga in May 1973, that I really became much more aware of what Empire State was trying to do.

Bonnabeau: What attracted you to the college?

Lehmann: Well, knowing Ernie, and knowing a little bit about the kinds of enterprises he would get involved in, I was intrigued with how he described it. For example, take the college and its innovative aspects. I've always been interested in innovative higher education and I came out of Berkeley during the time of a lot of change, turmoil and innovation. I was involved in a department at Colorado State University that was undergoing enormous growth, enormous change, with the creation of new Ph.D. programs in Developmental Change. This program was responding to immediate social, political, and economic changes along the Rocky Mountain Range. So, I was, in a career sense, involved in changes in the academic world. Also, one of my specialties in my Ph.D. program was organizational change in higher education. I had those two interests in my academic background. When the opportunity of learning something about Empire State came up, I was interested. Prior to coming here for interviews I asked Ernie who I should know about and who would be involved in the interviews – those kinds of questions. And when he mentioned Arthur Chickering and also Loren Baritz, I went to the library and looked up who they were. I was not familiar with either one of them at the time, but I got hold of their books and tried to prepare myself a little bit prior to coming for the interviews. That's the researcher bent in my approach to things.

Bonnabeau: What were you hired to do, initially?

Lehmann: The Empire State College research office had just received the first FIPSE [The Fund for the Improvement of

Post-Secondary Education] grant to develop a new model of higher education research, a cost-effectiveness model in higher education that would be grounded in Empire State College but would be generalizable to other institutions as appropriate. It was a three-year project, which turned into four. I was hired initially to look at the kinds of students that were going to be involved in Empire State College's program and to consider the following questions: Who does this program best serve? Who does it not serve very well and why? What happens to adults as they move through the program? What causes them to drop out? What were the impacts of the program – that is, what we're now today calling "academic outcomes?" How effective was the program, given the fact that it was individually tailored to meet the needs of given students not only with particular backgrounds, but also with particular experiences – life experiences that perhaps had college credits that could be identified and extracted from them? My formal title was director of program evaluation. But Ernie was going to build a conceptually based five-pronged office of educational research under this grant. Paul Bradley was already on board at the time, and he was going to work in the area of faculty, as well as serve the college as director of institutional research. I was going to be in the area of students. Ernie was going to coordinate the office. Eventually, Richard Debus was hired to do the cost-side and Jack Lindquist, a little later on, worked on the policy-making and the program side too. So, we really had the five prongs: students, faculty, programs, outcomes and costs. These were the five variables that came into play in the eventual model.

Bonnabeau: This was what you called the Program Effectiveness and Related Costs, the PERC model.

Lehmann: Yes. The basic idea of this project was to really look at a number of master questions: What kinds of students come into a place called Empire State College? And, what kinds of students come in and work with what kinds of faculty? Because we did have diverse kinds of faculty at the regional learning centers and units and in special programs, what is the influence of these different faculty roles? That is, what affects the kind of learning that students do? What kind of change comes about? What occurs in the programs that are individually created for those students? And at what cost? Most educational research models don't focus much on costs, but PERC placed great emphasis on linking outcomes and costs. So to restate, we wanted to understand what kinds of students, working with what kinds of faculty are going to change in what kinds of ways in their programs of study and what does it cost to do that? Those were the master questions.

Bonnabeau: So, as you earlier mentioned, these are actually "outcome" questions.

Lehmann: At that time, I certainly didn't realize to what extent these discussions that we were having in '74, '75, '76 – and Chickering was involved in a fair number of those, for example, on multiple perspectives of learning – would today be one of the cornerstones of national debates on outcomes and the assessment movement. The idea is that no given single measurement like an SAT score can account for and explain what happens as adults learn. It involves multiple ways to approach student learning – multiple measurements at multiple points in time – what is now called by Sandy Astin [renowned UCLA researcher on student learning] and others "longitudinal designs."

We knew that the focus should be centered on the learner: What do learners think has been happening as they go through the program? What do they think about their own learning? What do they think afterwards …

We really talked and developed and had in our very early publications from the office, some strategies and diagrams that laid this out. In the best of Empire State College tradition, the research strategy parallels the learning strategy, which centers on the student. We knew that the focus should be centered on the learner: What do learners think has been happening as they go through the program? What do they think about their own learning? What do they think afterwards and so on? Certainly you have the faculty writing the narrative evaluation – how they view over time what had happened to that student and how the student progressed through what he or she has taken on – a very rich array of information that's available within our kind of historical, developmental record of the student. And beyond that academic record, we had the research office coming in with all kinds surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and a limited amount of formal testing.

Bonnabeau: And presumably at that time there was also evaluation from outside of the college.

Lehmann: We had accreditation teams coming in – outside people looking at the program coming around and talking to students, and employers making judgments and comments about the value of our program and what's happened with their own employees. So, just right there in that kind of description, you have a pretty encompassing view of student learning. It's not like getting a grade in the traditional college or having a grade point average, which is really a number that reduces complex learning to a single dimension. The PERC approach is really a much more student-centered approach, which says there may be certain kinds of learning that only the individual going through it knows about, really fully appreciates and understands, or is in a position to reflect on it. That way, even the faculty that work very closely as the primary mentor oftentimes cannot fully appreciate some of what, in the old Chickering days, was called the "affective domain of learning" compared to the "cognitive domain."

Bonnabeau: In those early years of the college, you had a great deal of information to use, didn't you?

Lehmann: We talked about the multiple perspectives strategy, but we really looked at the whole record that students presented as they came into the college and went through it. At that time we used to have, as Ernie Palola called them, the six-monthers. Full-

time students could go through the program and graduate if they had a maximum amount of advanced learning in six months. That was the shortest possible time. And we did, in beginning, have some really bright people move through the program and fit that kind of category. But it wasn't too long after the early '70s that it became clear that the majority of our students were going to be part-time students. They really had busy lives; they were working full time; they were involved in lots of other activities; they were married and so on. For these working adults, it would not be really feasible or possible to sustain a full-time learning schedule.

So the idea of a longitudinal study came into play. I think that a very important base of information that many other colleges did not have at the time was the admission form. The early admission form was much more narrative with open-ended questions. People wrote a lot about why they wanted to come to this college, what kind of community resources they could take advantage of, and how they expected to carry out their program. We looked at students from that point of entry all the way through their learning contracts, their narrative evaluations, and the creation of their degree programs. Back then, the college also had "3A and 3B" [a description of a student's specific and general purposes] in the degree program transcript and lots of portfolios were sizable in nature. Since that time, the college either eliminated certain requirements or simplified them so they were more manageable. But we had, in that sense, a more comprehensive flow of information by the college, by the faculty and, in some cases, in some centers, by the students themselves. Often times, students had their own self-evaluations of learning contract work that they placed in the hopper.

Bonnabeau: In effect, you were able to watch and describe the student over time.

Lehmann: Yes, the research office developed our model from the actual way in which students went through the program. Then we developed a series of instruments. The student biographical inventory was used at entry. At that time, we sent every newly enrolled student a biographical inventory. We got a very good response – about 65 percent. We had, by about 1978, 4,500 student biographical inventories completed and we had them coded, computerized, and were able to generate a lot of reports that gave a collegewide picture on the background characteristics of our students. So we did have, in our data bank, a great deal of information. Later, we shifted to a sampling procedure for subsequent studies in the PERC series. The initial FIPSE grant provided us with the foundation to establish the PERC model and to develop the instruments.

Our next survey instrument was a student experience questionnaire, which focused on the critical point at which people completed their portfolios and were awarded advanced standing. We wanted to know how long it took and what was involved? We developed a four-page questionnaire that we sent out to sample the students, about 400. Then we followed that with a program completion questionnaire. When students were in their last contract, we had them complete the questionnaire. And we were tracking individuals. That was the idea. They were not anonymous in that sense and that didn't cause us any particular problems. Students were voluntary respondents. And then that questionnaire was followed up by a graduate questionnaire. That was the conceptual sequence of PERC and that's how we had it laid out. We wanted to know two years after, and then maybe five years after, what had happened to the students. How did they look back on their education and what were they getting out of it?

Bonnabeau: And how about the faculty side?

Lehmann: Yes, we also had faculty in this. At several points in time, very early on, Paul Bradley did an Empire State College mentor role report [see excerpt in *All About Mentoring* #31], and a second report titled "The New Professional: A Report on Faculty in Individualized Education (1978) that was based on both interviews and faculty questionnaires. We did a followup one to two years later that gave us kind of baseline information about the faculty that were attracted to Empire State College, what they found of interest, and so on. So that's the quantitative side.

But we also had a qualitative side. The idea here was to intersperse among a lot of the quantitative checkpoints, ideas about case studies, interviews with students and faculty at different points in time, and faculty panel reviews of documents. So we drew a sub-sample for a number of our studies and followed students through the college. We also did content analysis of the formal documents. All of these approaches complemented one another and provided a very comprehensive picture of student learning at Empire State College. So, we got both the quantitative and the qualitative side of things to give us a richer story of what was happening, especially as people dropped out or came back in.

Bonnabeau: And what were you seeing?

Lehmann: We began quickly to find out that not everybody was going to go through as a "six-monther," that many students were going to take three years, four years, five years, even though they may have a maximum amount of advanced standing credits. Events happened in the lives of adults that made it much more difficult to easily understand why they just didn't proceed through. Our normal image of a four-year undergraduate process did not fit part-time adult learners. We had to create a research strategy that would accommodate a lot of the variance that we knew was going to be there.

At the same time, we also had to create a research strategy that would prevent us from getting trapped into what happens on a traditional campus. Critics could say: "Yes there's been change in your students, but can you prove that it was a result of Empire State's program and not maturation levels of an individual or outside events that occurred? " By careful longitudinal study, where we have a narrative kind of document analysis, transcript analysis, where we have quantitative checkpoints in the surveys and where we have qualitative interview information, we were able to pin down the extent and depth of student learning. This is almost what a lawyer does in a legal model – a trial where the attorney seeks to establish the truth, cross-examines witnesses, demonstrates where the burden of proof lies, and concludes, yes or no, that in fact learning has occurred. We had a great deal of information on a number of

our students about whom we could really, more definitively, say: "This was indeed a wonderful, marvelous learning experience."

Bonnabeau: What was the size of your sample? How many students were you tracking?

Lehmann: Well, as I said, we started with a huge number at the beginning about 4,500 student biographical inventories. We made a lot of investment upfront. Then we got into several hundred of the student experience questionnaires during the 1974 self-study. As I recall, we had about 385 responses. And then we followed several hundred students through to the graduation point. In addition to the longitudinal studies, we did independent surveys of graduates. One of the first ones we did had about 600 graduates. We took all the graduates we had as of 1977 or 1978. So, we had almost a complete picture. We had a very high rate of return – about 90 percent in that group.

We wanted to be able to show to accreditation teams that were coming in '74 and '79 that the college was doing a good job, that this was a college with credibility to it, and that our students were good students – they were as good as, if not better, than those at other institutions. Ideally, we would have liked to draw fully upon our longitudinal study, but practically we couldn't do it because it took too much time away from other kinds of things we were also being asked to do.

For example, in 1978, Empire State College participated in the Legislative Commission on Expenditure Review Study, the LCER Report. Legislative staff was looking at all the new institutions at SUNY. This included Old Westbury, Purchase, the College of Technology at Utica/Rome and Empire State College – the newly emerging institutions, the innovative SUNY institutions. LCER wanted to know how good Empire State College was in comparison to the standard arts and sciences colleges. So they included two arts and science colleges in their studies. We had 1,100 graduates in one of the surveys, far, far more than any of the other colleges. And of course the results were very significant because it showed that our students were at the top. There were six institutions involved and our students and our graduates expressed the strongest level of learning, and the highest level of satisfaction with their programs and with the faculty.

Bonnabeau: What were some of the additional findings that were generated by the PERC and the LCER studies?

Lehmann: The satisfaction levels, in some ways, were no surprise to the college, because the faculty told us from day one how pleased adults were with their learning and how well they thought this program was serving their needs. But there were other results. For example, one group of PERC studies showed that the entering characteristics of our students included tremendous diversity. Under diversity, we had not only geographical diversity (serving every county of the state with students from the rural north to highly urban New York City), but background diversity as well. Many studies that came out in the mid-to-late '70s typified the adult learner as upper middle class, white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant, the kind of person who typically succeeds in education. Empire State College certainly included a profile of WASP students, but what we quickly learned was that we had an enormous diversity beyond that. For instance, we were serving far more blue-collar workers.

Bonnabeau: And how about gender?

Lehmann: We had an interesting change in that area. If you go back to '74 and '75, about 55 or 60 percent of our students were men and more of them were full-time students. Within about eight years, that had flip-flopped. We now had about 63 or 64 percent women. So, we were serving students at the collegewide level in all 62 counties of the state. And in terms of background, in terms of academic preparation, in terms of motivation, in terms of skills and ability, prior learning and learning style – if you take any of these research variables, you'll find that our students' span the continuum. They also span the continuum in terms of age. We've had students from 16 or 17 to 82.

Obviously, this presents an enormous challenge. The faculty confronts, deals with, and educationally manages a kind of diversity that exists in few other places. This is an institution in which you've got very different backgrounds, very different levels of preparation, very different amounts of motivation, and so on. And this changes with each student who you sit with.

In addition to that, you have curricular diversity. We have a fairly open and flexible curriculum. It's built on where students come in with their experience, background and with the diversity I referred to. And they can pursue what they want to study, building on where they've been or starting off in different directions, new directions and so on. So, that was another real hallmark of diversity that seems to me is a critical kind of contribution.

We also served a higher proportion of blacks and minority students than other adult education or nontraditional programs. There's a whole series of reports that demonstrate the types of diversity we have and that identify the educational implications of such diversity.

Because we serve students over the life cycle, we have all kinds of events occurring in the lives of our adult learners. There was a period in the late '70s, early '80s, where adult development became a big buzz word. We have students that are undergoing various crises in their lives: career shifts, new directions, job advancement, or something is happened in their family setting, or in their personal lives in ways that require thinking through what developmental issues are at stake. This can impact or be reinforced by their learning and can be the occasion for more effective strategies for their learning. So that's another area.

Bonnabeau: What other clusters were there?

Lehmann: Well, take the other end of the picture – Empire State College graduates. It was surprising to me, I guess, coming out of a more traditional kind of campus in Colorado and to some extent at Berkeley, that we had a large number of graduates fairly early on from a program of this small size. I can remember one of my first tasks in the fall of '73 was to find out what happened to our graduates. We wanted to know if our graduates were going to be accepted into graduate schools with this funny narrative transcript. A lot of questions were being raised: How were they going to be reviewed by graduate admissions committees? What happened in the employment world? Would these transcript

documents be understood, and so on? And so we surveyed a couple of hundred graduates at that time, in ’73 and ’74.

We found out what had happened to them, the number of times they had applied to graduate school, which graduate schools they applied to, and what kinds of problems they had encountered. And there was a distinct minority of people that were finding graduate admissions committees wanted more information. They wanted letters from the deans; they wanted conversion of narrative evaluations to letter grades; or they just downright did not accept our students.

But we also found that the majority – the larger majority – was accepted into graduate school. They went on, and they were telling us – some of them had already been through a semester or two at that time – how much better prepared they were for graduate-level work. We did talk to a number of graduate admissions deans. Their response was mixed until they began to get experience with a few of our students, the pioneers going through, the path-breakers. It became clear that our program was going to work, that deans and admission’s people were going to be impressed with the kind of work that our students could do.

Bonnabeau: And we had a good number of Empire State College graduates pursuing graduate work, didn’t we?

Lehmann: That amazed me. I can understand maybe a quarter or a third, but here in the studies we began doing in the early ’80s and continuing up until today, we found between 50 and 60 percent of our students going on for some kind of advanced education. We’re finding, in our more recent studies, that somewhere between eight and nine percent, just under ten percent, already have a bachelor’s degree when they come here. So, they’re looking for either some other kind of quick learning that they want to pick up, or a second bachelor’s degree, or some way to piggy-back that into an eventual Master’s degree somewhere else. To me, in a way, this fits in now with a larger picture about the upgrading of education and the need for generations of older students that are pursuing degrees or new learning in a rather serious way.

But what also struck me is that here we now have over 17,000 graduates in our college [1991]. Graduate admissions committees are allowing our students, in large numbers, to come in. They’re not saying, “Well, we’re going to discriminate against them.” Or, “Well, we’re only going to take three; we’re going to have to set up a quota, or we’re only going to take a small number of people in because you’re really not going to be in this profession long enough to really do any good, or whatever.” Or, “If you have to go on for a Ph.D., you know, you’re going to be 55 by the time you get out.” To my surprise, we found much less of this. It was a surprise to look at the proportions of our students that decided to go on. It really says something about Empire State College.

In short, Empire State College plays a vital role in taking attrition casualties from everywhere else, providing a supportive learning environment, helping them graduate, and fostering lifelong learning in its best sense!

Bonnabeau: This certainly has to be seen as another important “outcome impact.”

Lehmann: If you look at our students that come in, almost every one is an attrition casualty from somewhere else. They’ve gone to two or three other colleges, on the whole, or they’ve been involved in other academic experiences. Either they have had a bad result or they haven’t been able to put it together as a degree. There are a lot reasons why they haven’t achieved a degree, so when they come to us, we are like a second, third, or fourth chance place. We are an opportunity for them to at last really pull some things together in a way that builds off their strengths and doesn’t penalize them. We don’t say to them: “Well, you’ve got to go back and take 20 courses of prerequisites in order to become a biologist,” or whatever. So Empire State College builds-off their prior records and experiences. And that, to me, is an interesting other side to this. Our studies of graduates demonstrate how the college fosters a spirit of pursuing education, both in the formal sense of degrees and certificates, as well informally. But that set us against an earlier record where people really ran into failure, ran into difficulties, ran into barriers. They couldn’t get it together, for whatever reasons. I don’t want to always cast them in a negative sense. I mean to look positively. They got married, they moved to another state – things have happened in their lives. Here we have an institution that has an admirable record of success, a good outcome and impact. In short, Empire State College plays a vital role in taking attrition casualties from everywhere else, providing a supportive learning environment, helping them graduate, and fostering lifelong learning in its best sense!

Bonnabeau: What other critical studies did you undertake in your early association with Empire State College, other than PERC and the LCER studies?

Lehmann: In 1972, Ernie and Paul had done “Ten Out of Thirty,” which was an interesting case study of the first 30 graduates, an analysis of who they were, and what they encountered, and what they were doing after graduation. I joined the college just after that report was prepared.

It was extremely influential in the State Education Department’s review of the college in 1974. It gave a wonderful way to understand the college as seen through the eyes of students: What are they experiencing? What does this college do? Here we’re talking about learning contracts, contract evaluations, creating portfolios before it was really that common a thing to do. What is mentoring all about? What does that mean? What does it mean to create your own individualized degree program and be aware of academic standards? We produced thousands of copies of that particular report, believe it or not, and sent it all over the country. It was a wonderful way to explain the college in real terms outsiders could understand. When people

read our bulletins and other literature filled with special Empire State College jargon, it is sometimes hard to follow and comprehend. A lot of our basic policy statements were not defined until '75, '76. If you go back and look at individualized program documents and others, those came out of APLPC [Academic Policy and Learning Program Committee] after '74 (for example, the policies on advanced standing) so the "Ten Out of Thirty" study played a special role in explaining the early college.

Bonnabeau: How about attrition? Did the administration establish that as a priority?

Lehmann: No. That came out of a statistical tabulation we did around '75 or '76 that was part of a PERC study. During the course of working with some of the other institutions involved in PERC – SUNY-Plattsburgh, Hampshire College, the University of Wisconsin at Green Bay, and a small private institution, Northland College in Wisconsin – we began to ask questions about what attrition means in this context. We wanted to find out in a quantitative sense. So Paul and I did a study and looked at about 1,000 students. We had to drop the anchor on timeframes. When is it that attrition will happen? For the purposes of our study, we found that we were graduating approximately 45 to 50 percent and the rest of them were either still in the program or gone, and we weren't sure when or if they were going to come back. So that raised some questions about what was happening. For example, to what extent was "stepping out" something that the college was responsible for? To what extent is attrition really part of the way in which adults have to step out and tend to their personal lives, health concerns, or whatever else leads to their withdrawal from the college? So we did a lot of interviews at that time and began to look at some of that information to determine where Empire State College might improve its program, as well as what steps we could take to recover students – a kind of recovery program for the number of people who said they were going to reenroll. We then would track these adults and see if, in fact, they did reenroll. So, we were pursuing those kinds of studies.

Bonnabeau: What kinds of things did you uncover in your attrition study?

Lehmann: We found about 50 percent of the time the problems were with the individual. That is, there was a death in the family, a job change, health reasons, those kinds of personal dynamics going on that led to the person withdrawing from Empire State College. That was the basic reason. And a lot of people like Loren Baritz [at that time the provost of the SUNY system] were skeptical of these results. They thought that the results were just self-serving, an easy way to get the college off the hook. That argument could be certainly made about the early stage of work here, but since we've repeated this with different methodologies many, many times, I'm more persuaded that students are talking straight to us.

They really are telling us something about what's happening in their lives and that was different from research done on 18- to 23-year olds, who were at one particular developmental stage. They were away from home, they were on campus; sure they may get sick and so on, but it's not the same kind of thing as when you're 45 or 55, and you're faced with traumatic events in your life: you lose your job, you have a death in the family, or finances affect you in a way that doesn't happen, let's say, when you are 20 or 21. So, I think one of the adult development findings that I mentioned earlier that came out of this research was that we really found there was an *irreducible* life cycle attrition factor that was going to occur in programs that serve a majority of students between 30 and 55 years of age. Serving that kind of mid-life population means that you are going to have an attrition factor occurring around 18 percent of the time. You're just going to lose those people for some period of time by the very nature of the students served by the program. We have to understand it doesn't need to go on forever because we know we have a good number of those people come back in and eventually graduate. It may take them eight years, it may take them ten years, or it may take 12 or 15 years for quarter-time students. So, the whole notion of attrition gets really stretched out. The most recent Barton-Gillet surveys in1989 confirmed these early studies.

Bonnabeau: And how about mentor issues; were these a factor?

Lehmann: Yes, we found that a fifth of the total reasons for leaving in the remaining 50 percent were mentor-related. The chemistry between the mentor and the student was just off. There were other differences: age differences, you'd have a very young mentor and an "older" person or the reverse of that, or a man and a woman – a gender difference. There was something going on in that chemistry that led to a person saying, "I can't do this. This is not the program for me. I don't want to work under these circumstances," and drop out. They didn't necessarily go back and say, "I would like to change my mentor. I'd like to do something else." About a quarter of the reasons focused around the assessment process. At that time, it was much more erratic than it's now become. It took too much time. There were difficulties in understanding the process: How it was going to work for them? What kind of credits could students really get? How would they put together their portfolio and so on? So there was a sizable cluster of problems there. Then another, probably a quarter of the attrition, had to do with the program itself: something about the program, their course of study, and the difficulties students encountered with the program led them to be unhappy and withdraw. The final component of the remaining 50 percent, probably another 20 percent, had to do with billing problems, financial aid and other bureaucratic difficulties. There were a fair number of these in the '70s compared to the '80s. We have certainly seen a maturation in the college in terms of the ability to get proper and workable procedures in place.

Bonnabeau: What percentage of those adults that dropped out really didn't drop out? For example, they might have had very specific objectives. "I want to take two courses in accounting or two contracts in marketing and that's it." Did that show up in your research? Certainly, not every adult student wants a college degree.

Lehmann: That's right. And that's something we've come to realize more recently.

One major reason we got into the attrition area is that we are part of the State University of New York. Another major activity deals with the fact that our office is responsible for completing and complying with the State University,

the State Education Department, and the federal government's requests for surveys, information and reports. And this has become over the years quite a sizeable workload. We produce something like 50 to 60 reports a year of various complexity. Most of those go to SUNY, and then they're transferred to other parts of the hierarchy, but we used to do a lot of this by hand.

Attrition was one of these studies. Just counting the students in this college was a challenge. For attrition, the State University, for many, many years, developed its own reporting and counting schemes. At a traditional campus, you say, okay I want to find out how to calculate attrition; I'll take everybody who comes in as a full-time student during the fall. If they're still there when the fall census is taken, we'll drop the anchor and include them in the cohort and so on. Traditional campuses can more easily measure freshman level attrition, sophomore level attrition, or, whether students graduate in five years rather than in four.

Well this cohort strategy presents enormous problems for Empire State College, because we don't have a fall semester. We don't have a spring semester. We enroll monthly; we enroll daily. So we artificially created a cohort that fit the SUNY general parameters and put everybody into the hopper for our computer system.

We know that learners have different motivations: I only want two courses. I don't want a degree. I already have a degree. There are a lot of reasons why people are here aside from the dominant numbers that obviously want a degree. We have no good way of sorting them out in the present computer system. We've had that as an item that we wanted to give attention to, but it's low on the pecking order of priorities to get served by the computer center staff, especially given the needs over the last say 10 years. So we made some estimates about that, and we certainly know that it occurs, but to really pin it down in a definitive way does present some problems from SUNY's standpoint.

Bonnabeau: So the responses of SUNY to what we were tracking were not always favorable.

Lehmann: When I first came here in the early '70s, we had a lot of discussions and debates with SUNY Central. They wanted us engage in course section analysis and all kinds of other things that would determine the faculty workload, which we don't do. But they have all these systems set up, and then Empire State College is an asterisk at the bottom of the page! We're off on the side here in terms how SUNY accommodates Empire State College. It's not because we don't wish to accommodate SUNY requests, but it's because Empire State College 's program and way of operating is very difficult to capture accurately in SUNY's traditional categories.

On the current attrition picture, to give you an example, they want a report on full-time attrition for first time students, i.e., first time and transfers. They break these things down

There are a lot of reasons why people are here aside from the dominant numbers that obviously want a degree. We have no good way of sorting them out in the present computer system.

a lot of different ways. We knew this going into it. We protested. We finally got them to change the forms so they would include half-time students, because that's the bulk of where our students are. But first-time, full-time students, who are predominately 18-year olds, have little meaning to our college. "How many full-time students do you have?" We have very few. "How many first time students do you have?" Very, very few. So we had something like 80 to 100 new first time, full-time students per year, and we would show an attrition rate of 85 percent. Now an attrition rate that seems unusually high is perfectly understandable to us. First of all, we understand why we have so few students who fit this desc ription. This is not a college for them. Mentors and program administrators are advising a lot of these students, very legitimately, that this is not a place for them. You got in here because you thought you could do the work. But when somebody picks up these zebra reports, the SUNY documents summarizing all the campuses in a comparative way, they say, "Look at this!" Empire State College gets fingered as having a terrible problem. This was one of our concerns in the self-studies of '74 and '79, i.e., that the accreditation teams were going to pick this up and say, "What is going on here?" In part it becomes an artifact of the way you define cohorts, the way you're calculating and whether you include half-time students. We're not sure even now what the definition of attrition means for a place like us, for adult learners. Let's take the question of how long should it take to complete a degree. Is eight years reasonable? Is 10 years good enough? Well, SUNY's forms only go five to six years at the most for full-time students. SUNY does not report any information on half-time students. We know that students may drop out and don't come back for three years.

Bonnabeau: Ten years is not unusual?

Lehmann: Ten years is not unusual. So here's a set of issues that revolve around another aspect of this attrition question. You pointed to the question of goals. What's the learner's goal at the outset? We need to know that information in order to factor it in. We should only be counting attrition as a counterpart to 18 to 20-year olds on the regular campus, i.e., for Empire State College students who are serious and degree-oriented. Students with degrees would have to be pulled out, which takes special programming. Or look at those who have different purposes in mind: "We're only going to be here for a couple of contracts worth of learning." In the Center for Distance Learning [CDL] you see a good bit of that. Then we have to know that and sort that out.

Bonnabeau: We found that there are many reasons for students enrolling in CDL.

Lehmann: There are two other things I'll just comment on about the attrition situation. We have drafted a paper arguing that if a person leaves the college in good standing, good academic standing, that person should not be counted as attrition. This is true at community colleges. They face this attrition issue also. If a person who has a GPA of

2.5 and leaves a community college, that person should not be considered part of the attrition. The person just may have gone as a transfer student to another college. Why should you be penalized as an institution by calling that attrition? That person left your institution, but if they left with a track record of good academic standing, meaning that whatever the faculty defines as satisfactory academic progress, you can't call that attrition, or you shouldn't, especially with adults because that has a negative label and creates other problems.

Bonnabeau: That's right. Adult students are highly mobile.

Lehmann: If people leave to transfer elsewhere, then why should the institution from which they left be penalized with a higher attrition rate? So there are real problems in this new view of the purpose and definition of attrition involving adult learners.

Bonnabeau: Of those studies that you did, from 1973 until 1979, which do you think was the most important? Is there one that sticks out?

Lehmann: Well, I mentioned that the "Ten Out of Thirty" was a baseline study. That was very important because, to external audiences, it was very powerful, very meaningful, and very helpful; it lasted quite a number of years. Then I would say the PERC sequence of studies took over from there. We made a lot of presentations around the country and we got other colleges involved to some extent in adapting this model.

Bonnabeau: Have you done follow-up studies that built on what you did on PERC back in the '70s? In other words, did PERC set the agenda for you?

Lehmann: It has but there's been a twist. That came in 1980. It is important as far as looking at the history of the research office. Up to about 1979, we were doing collegewide studies. That is, we were doing the surveys that went out to graduates, to the new students, to whatever target seemed appropriate. We tried to reach every center. But we often did not include some places like the Labor Center [The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies, HVACLS]. They were just getting started in 1977 in big way. In 1980, Jim Hall started strategic planning and there was a change in the office with Ernie and me. In the discussions I had with Jim, I began to see the value of doing intensive program evaluation studies of individual centers. CDL got included early on.

So the idea here was to build research into the strategic planning process of the college. Each center was asked what they were planning on a biennial cycle. And we would then look at a learning center like Rochester or CDL or the Public Affairs Center and review their strategic plan in detail. We would review the annual reports prepared by the center and then create an evaluation plan that made sense to the faculty and to the deans of that center or program.

Instead of collegewide surveys, we looked at an individual learning center. In Rochester we did student biographical inventories on entering students. We did several hundred of those. We did graduate follow-up analysis there. We did detailed enrollment analysis there, and the circulation management program was another piece. We did studies on the faculty and so on.

About every year and half we'd take an intensive look at a new center or a new program, which involved interviews and other data collection efforts. In the course of that, we started a faculty panel review of student transcripts. That really started in an intensive way in Rochester. It was a new kind of qualitative approach where we were drawing a sample of students from a particular center at a particular point in time. We brought in faculty from outside that center to spend three days reading those files. We developed protocol forms and evaluation forms. Later, this became part of what you experienced in the recent Middle State's evaluation. And that worked well. It also was so much more powerful because it tells us a lot about what a student's program really represents. So we pulled together all the documents on a given sample of students including all the assessment information. It was a very rich qualitative review. Judgments were made by faculty knowledgeable in the area of each student's program. So that became, I think, a major instrument for improving the kind of research work we were doing and tying it to the strategic planning cycle of the college.

Bonnabeau: From an anthropological point of view, I see some value in bringing in faculty from outside of the center being analyzed. In effect, you have created a formal mechanism for faculty from around the college to share in the analysis of work done by colleagues at another center. This has the potential to diffuse information and to move away from these individual collectivities of centers that have their own cultures, and possibility move toward a more uniform academic program. This could break down the isolation of the centers.

Lehmann: This was one of our goals. Another one of the problems, historically, has been what to do with area of study groups. Over the years, Academic Affairs has done some less extensive analyses of portfolios, but nothing of the kind that we started to develop at a few centers. We really carried them through collegewide in preparation for Middle States. But precisely to the point here, I think that's a very valuable way for the college as a whole, all the faculty, to begin to see what is going on and see the issues involved. I thought in 1988 when we did this for the college as a whole that it was an enormously valuable way to pull together for faculty and administrative review significant issues affecting planning and the next developmental steps.

To highlight this, let's take interdisciplinary studies, for example. We know that this is a very fast-growing area. It is the third highest degree area in college, behind Business, Management and Economics and Labor Studies. You have got to think about Labor [HVACLS] when you're talking about the college, because we have three or four hundred associate degrees awarded in a given year. Yet we have no area of study group that is known as interdisciplinary studies. We have the early Dearing report guidelines [the first formal effort to spell out the academic focus of the college] on this area that contain several murky definitions. So, one good thing that came out, although we haven't really followed up yet, was to identify that area. This is going to be an area of growth where we must pay more attention and we also should have faculty looking at what's happening here and more research.

Bonnabeau: Getting back to the point that I made, did you see early on in the college the emergence of fairly independent centers with their own cultures – centers with their own approach toward providing individualized learning, student-centered learning? Did that present a problem?

Lehmann: Yes it did. When I first came into the college, Ernie and Paul had been around to the centers, at that time, maybe four or five, and they had interviewed all the faculty and deans and had prepared the first of the mentor reports that eventually Paul put out. Well, I'm a sociologist by background and training, and so is Ernie. Paul was a psychologist. I joined the discussion about how to present the center profiles. It became very clear at that point, that they had started to write about the cultures of the centers. Two or three pages described how Long Island was different from Rochester, which was different from Albany, which was different from Metropolitan. Not just in terms of their organizational layout and the kinds of faculty they had recruited, but in terms of the nature of the faculty culture or the center patterns of behavior or the values that had begun to develop and the images promoted. And I remember very well that in our first draft of this report that like others had a very wide distribution before it would be released, that Jim Hall didn't like that focus on center cultures at that time. He did not want to – although Chickering did not mind – see a report come out that started to show diversity and different center development. For Jim, we were one college and he was very concerned. I did not have a direct conversation with him about this; this is my interpretation of what Ernie and the others had said to me. This part of the report had to be put on the back burner because of the "one college" idea and fact that mentors are mentors, and you don't want to start making these differences into a different kind of college or cluster of centers. It was believed that this would only create internal problems and future inequities.

There was also the fear that the State Education people could come in and say that the college's policies were not consistent. There was a lot of tension at that time with very strong-willed people. There was also a serious aspect of this in terms of the independent function of the research office. ORE staff had lots of debates among ourselves about how far we could push a given report. We were trying to do objective research. We were independent, going out and bringing back the message from the centers, whatever that might be. There was a strong sense that ORE should have the autonomy to be able to write that up as staff saw it, as you would do in any serious disciplinary and professional work.

But then there was the question that emerged when the review of a report becomes subject to top administrative concerns that the content might embarrass the college. Or, there might be a fight between Baritz, Chickering and Hall. Sometimes we had some of that. So, Ernie really took some strong stands to insure the credibility and autonomy of the office. In the case of the mentor report, we did not publish the center differences. But there were other things that we fought over in other reports that were published even though, as the administration saw it, they were not in the best interests of the college. We felt that it was our responsibility to report what had been found in our surveys, interviews and research in order to maintain a credible research operation. It is important to remember that, as part of a new college, the research office was also new, trying to establish its own strategies and procedures for doing studies. We had a lot of discussions to determine agendas, priorities and publications. We had a research agenda to fulfill.

"Whose knowledge are we studying? Why? Is there an official knowledge? Why? Are some people privileged by the knowledge we study? If so, who? If knowledge is socially produced, am I a producer or consumer? Why? If knowledge is affected by the socially constructed culture and the context from which it arose, then whose culture is being celebrated? If social knowledge is not objective, then how does that affect the way we conduct research? If objectivity is only one way of knowing, in what other ways can we know?"

– Phyllis M. Cunningham, "Let's Get Real: A Critical Look at the Practice of Adult Education."
Mountain Plains Adult Education Journal (22:1) (1993)

Scholarship, Mentoring and Wisdom: Mentoring Institute Reassignment Report

Lorraine Lander, Genesee Valley Center

One of the first challenges was to find I began my quarter-time reassignment for the Mentoring Institute in the summer of 2005 with three objectives. The first objective was to learn more about the general topic of faculty scholarship. The second was to learn more about mentoring (and how scholarship relates to mentoring at the college), and the third was to learn more about wisdom (and perhaps its connection to mentoring). It was a great deal to accomplish in one year, but I was eager for the challenges of doing this work.

One of the first challenges was to find the time to fit this work into my busy schedule of mentoring and other faculty responsibilities. In order to do this, I found it useful to be proactive and engage in discussions with my dean and fellow faculty about the difficulty of this challenge. I located a tutor who could work with many of the students that I currently mentored and arranged for that person to be available to students at the center. In discussing the financial arrangements of funding for my reassignment with my dean, I was also able to obtain a small amount of funding for a research assistant, who helped me through various parts of the year to find reading materials, assisted with the web site I was developing, assisted with my research work, and carried out other duties.

The last piece that worked well for me to make the time for the reassignment work, was the decision that Monday would be my Mentoring Institute day and I did not typically go into the office on Mondays. This allowed me the undisturbed time I needed to read, write and think about the topics of my reassignment work. Fellow faculty and students adjusted to this schedule quite well. I was successful in cutting my load to the three-quarter time for the reassignment through the cooperation of various individuals at my center, and I want to thank all those who helped me with this challenge. I think good communication with all parties was very important to make this work.

Probably the most important individual who assisted me to make my reassignment work successful was Alan Mandell. I can not thank Alan enough for all the time he invested in talking with me, reading things I wrote, and guiding me through various phases of this year-long project. It was a pleasure and privilege to work with him. One of the many benefits I think I obtained from this reassignment was the opportunity to work closely with Alan, to benefit in some ways from his long experience with mentoring and with Empire State College. His assistance was invaluable to me in this work.

The first piece of my reassignment work started during the reading period, in August 2005, when I began to consider the topic of faculty scholarship. I started with Ernest Boyer's conceptions of scholarship, and after reading the review of Boyer's work written by Chris Rounds (*All About Mentoring,* spring 2005, #29), and then Boyer's original publication, *Scholarship Reconsidered,* my initial goal was to review what had been written on faculty scholarship since Boyer's work was published. I was interested in finding out about the impact of his work and the current state of thinking on the topic. The results of these readings was an article I published in the fall in *All About Mentoring* (winter 2006, #30), as well as an annotated bibliography on the topic of scholarship which was published on Mentorsite in the fall of 2005.

I would like to share some of the things I learned from these readings on scholarship. First, the tensions and issues around scholarly activity that we face at Empire State College are not unique. They are present in many other institutions of higher education and throughout different types of academic institutions. For example, the question of what constitutes scholarship and

Lorraine Lander

scholarly activity is discussed and debated in many other locations. Issues of how to fairly measure intellectual activity and scholarship have also been discussed, debated, and much has been written on this topic. While my own scholarly interests are more related to internal motivations for scholarship, there has certainly been consideration of the external motivations for conducting scholarship, as well as the difficulties of publishing and presenting for new faculty leaving graduate school today. I would refer you to my annotated bibliography on the topic of faculty scholarship, if you would like to know more.

I would also like to add that any additions to this annotated bibliography on scholarship would be welcome. I believe the annotated bibliographies that have been developed on various topics such as adult education and development, faculty scholarship, mentoring, etc. are works in progress. Please consider sharing with others at the college when you have read something in these areas that interests you and might be of interest to others. Annotations for the bibliography on faculty scholarship or mentoring can be submitted

by contacting me, or annotations for any of the bibliographies by contacting Alan Mandell.

The next piece of my reassignment work was further investigation of the topic of scholarship as it impacts our work at Empire State College. Two activities assisted me with this investigation. The first was to arrange some one-on-one conversations with fellow faculty on the topics of both scholarship and mentoring, which I carried out with individuals around the college at various points in their academic careers and in different centers and programs. The second activity was to organize a one-day meeting on the topic of scholarship. This meeting took place at the Northeast Center in late January and involved a group of faculty also from various parts of the college and in various points in their careers. We engaged in a thoughtful intellectual discussion on the topic of scholarship. The culminating activity in the afternoon involved the group providing me with ideas for a survey I was constructing on motivation and faculty scholarship. It was invaluable to me to have the views of my colleagues to contribute to my thinking for the survey and I want to again thank all those who participated.

One of my goals for my reassignment was to try to understand the links between mentoring and scholarship in the minds of faculty at the college. In April of 2006, I distributed the above-mentioned survey on faculty scholarship to all full-time faculty at the college (144 in total). Sixty-six mentors responded. This is an excellent response rate and I believe it reflects the collegiality and cooperative spirit of faculty at the college. This excellent response rate may also reflect the importance of the topic for many of us. Thank you to all who responded. I believe the results of this survey will provide some answers to questions on scholarly activity of Empire State College faculty.

Analysis and evaluation of the results of the survey is ongoing at this time. I presented results of the survey at the All Area of Study Meeting in November 2006. I will be presenting findings from the survey at the International Self-Directed Learning Symposium in February 2007 as I discuss faculty scholarship as self-directed learning. I also anticipate writing a summary of my findings for a future issue of *All About Mentoring*. As I consider and learn more about faculty scholarship, the motivation behind it, and the topic of self-directed learning, it has become clear to me that faculty scholarship is clearly a self-directed learning activity.

At the same time I was working on constructing my faculty survey of scholarship, I was also reading and working on an annotated bibliography of mentoring. The annotated bibliography of mentoring is now included in Mentorsite. I discovered there are a wide variety of written materials on the topic of mentoring, as mentoring has become an important topic in recent years in the business world, in public schools in the mentoring of new teachers, in relation to mentoring youth, and also in the context of mentoring in higher education. I hope my annotated bibliography reflects some work on each of these topics, as well as a more extensive sampling of materials on mentoring in higher education and the mentoring of adult college students.

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I would also like to share a little of what I learned about mentoring. I confess that my background in psychology and human development led me to begin my search for theories of mentoring that were based on taxonomies and hierarchies. I found works on stages of mentoring, types of mentor relationships, aspects of mentoring, and even information on taxonomies and hierarchies from adult development that interact with mentoring (see for example, Daloz, 1999). I began to wonder about comparisons between the fields of therapy and mentoring since I had some graduate school preparation as a clinician. I thought of the lessons I was taught concerning the responsibility of a therapist to both consume scholarship in their field and to produce scholarship. We read of our responsibility to be a scientist-practitioner and to communicate what was learned in individual work with clients, in order to assist the field to move forward in improving practice and education of new therapists. I wondered if we, as mentors, could do more to both consume and produce scholarship on the topic of mentoring adult college students.

I also considered connections between education and mentoring. I encountered an interesting article by Lee Shulman of the Carnegie Foundation about a table of learning (Shulman, 2002). In this article Shulman wrote about the usefulness of taxonomies and hierarchies to provide us with a common language in discussion of practice in education. In consideration of Shulman's thoughts and what I know about the scaffolding of learning, I also wonder if taxonomies and hierarchies can become useful structures around which we can build the complexities of our real world practice in mentoring. While I see their usefulness, I am also in agreement with Shulman that there are limitations to such heuristics. I began to wonder though if there were other taxonomies that were missing from the field of mentoring. For example, could we take Shulman's table of learning and propose mentoring activities that would accompany each aspect of learning?

So I found some information on taxonomies and hierarchies and ended up wondering if there are more that could be created. I also discovered philosophies of mentoring, which provided me a different and useful look at the topic of mentoring. Texts that considered these philosophies, interwoven with case studies and examples of practice, include Mentor by Daloz (1999) and *From Teaching to Mentoring* by Herman and Mandell (2004). I found these philosophical approaches to be important sources of information in my reading about mentoring. So again, if you would like to know more, please consult my annotated bibliography of mentoring and consider submitting some of your own annotations.

The last piece of my reassignment work related to my interest in wisdom. My academic interests in graduate school centered on cognitive development and the impact of motivation on cognitive activities like attention span and learning. Since joining the faculty at Empire State College, these interests have led me to consider critical thinking and its development and adult college student motivation for learning (including the topic of self-directed learning). These interests have expanded to my current project on faculty motivation for scholarship, as well as a new project I began in fall 2006 related to motivation and student persistence. I continue to work also on a developing interest in the topic of wisdom, considering its connections to motivation, critical thinking, and learning.

Wisdom is a complex topic and difficult to study, as wisdom can be conceptualized in a variety of ways. For example, the three most common conceptions would include wisdom in relation to understanding the meaning of life and our place in the universe, wisdom in relation to understanding how to lead a good life that is compatible with our environments, and lastly, wisdom as practical knowledge in relation to expertise and performances at high levels of achievement.

Wisdom seems to be one outcome of cognitive development for adults and thus a topic I would like to learn more about and continue to study. In order to further my understanding of this topic, I led a session at All College in March of 2006 where we had a lively discussion. The starting place for my own reading on wisdom began with Robert Sternberg's *Wisdom: Its Nature, Origins and Development,* which is an edited volume of essays by psychologists on the topic. Adding to the psychological perspective, I have recently acquired *A Handbook of Wisdom* by Sternberg and Jordan, as well as Sternberg's *Wisdom, Intelligence and Creativity Synthesized.* Wanting to acquire more of a broad perspective on the topic I sought resources that reflected more philosophical perspectives, as well as some that represented eastern perspectives. Titles ranging from *Cosmic Consciousness* by Bucke, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by James, *The Perennial Philosophy* by Huxley, *The I Ching* translation by Wilhelm and Baynes, *Psychotherapy East and West* by Watts, and *Care of the Soul* by Moore all now rest in a pile near my reading chair. From the Native American perspective I acquired *Wisdomkeepers* by Wall and Arden and added it to books I already owned on the topic: *Voices from Our Ancesters* by Ywahoo, *Teachings from the Longhouse* by Thomas and Boyle, and *To Become a Human Being* by Wall.

I must report that reading about wisdom is not what I would call "light" reading. I find I must read and then spend time thinking about what I have read. I suspect it will take me some time to work my way through these materials (particularly considering the many other aspects of my work that compete with the time for this reading). I believe I will continue to refine my thinking and perspectives on wisdom as I work my way through this reading.

One portion of my reassignment work was to consider the relations between wisdom and mentoring, and I had several interesting conversations with mentors at the college about whether it was possible to identify certain mentors who possessed wisdom about mentoring. I had thought to interview these individuals to see if I could gain some information for my own scholarly work on this topic and hopefully find important and useful information on mentoring to pass on to others. As it turns out, I could find no consensus about who these individuals would be and so have not further pursued that goal at this time. Considering the complexity of the concept of wisdom, it should not be surprising that reaching a consensus on who possesses it might be difficult. This is a project I may come back to at some point in the future when I have gained a better understanding of wisdom.

I want to end by saying that I found my reassignment for the Mentoring Institute useful in many ways. I have learned a great deal. I have also been able to work on several pieces of scholarly interest and scholarly activities that will have positive benefits for my professional development. My reassignment has provided me a chance to get to know many of you better than I did before and that is also a positive benefit for me. I want to again thank all those who contributed and assisted me in making this reassignment for the Mentoring Institute such a positive experience. It was a wonderful opportunity for me and I would encourage others to consider proposing a project for consideration at some point in their careers at Empire State College.

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The Immigration Debate: All about Politics, Economics and the Resurgence of Nativism

Lear Matthews, Metropolitan Center

Introduction

The timing and furor over what to do about undocumented immigrants and how to protect the borders of the United States is by no means accidental. As one political observer argues, the current immigration debate "is fraught with the usual high-level intensity," heightened by the anxiety of mid-term elections, and the involvement of presidential candidates (Herman, 2006).

This debate has a well-documented history. However, what has been a topic of some national importance (even within the context of deep concerns about the Iraq quagmire), has become a significantly simmering social issue churned by political rhetoric, economic claims, and deeply felt cultural assumptions. An increase in the number of immigrants, particularly in states not known for sizeable new immigrant populations, has also fuelled the debate (Lyman, 2006). The perennial questions are often posed: Are "illegal aliens" (as I see it, already a disparaging term) actually displacing Americans in the job market and destroying the fabric of American society? Or, are they energizing the economy and keeping the American dream alive? (Hinojosa, 2004). Answers to these questions, however accurate or distorted they are, have become part of the escalating deliberations on a controversial issue, whose solutions have both domestic and international implications. My purpose here is to examine some critical dimensions of the debate and share some thoughts about various attempts to find meaningful solutions to it.

The Problem

For decades, immigrants (primarily Latinos) have been lured to the United States as agricultural laborers with little alarm about their immigration status from politicians, the American public or employers. Today, however, the presence of undocumented immigrants is blamed for many social ills and attempts to stem the influx of immigrants into the United States and to assess what is presumed by vocal critics to be the negative impact on American society of these new residents is unprecedented. What is often ignored is the fact that industrial exploitation among this group is quite common. As Frum (2003) notes, the undocumented often work off-the-books in low-level jobs and not protected by labor laws. They are exposed to detention and deportation, particularly since the World Trade Center tragedy. These workers are usually employed in a broad range of jobs as domestic servants, day laborers, and other employment categories that carry a high risk of physical and psychological harm. These industries – agricultural and service-based especially – desperately need workers and are seemingly unable to attract those that are American-born. Indeed, this situation has already led to competition and outright conflict between American working-class groups and new immigrants, in part at least due to the willingness of those most vulnerable to accept the paltry wages about which they have no choice.

PHOTO BY MEL ROSENTHAL

There may be strong arguments on both sides of the debate between those who seek to liberalize current immigration laws and those who want to further restrict the flow of migrants to the United States. In promoting each of these opposing views, however, advocates need to assess the effects on the host society as well as immigrant countries. The impact of lost human capital in the sending nations is seldom considered in this debate. That is, while many immigrants bring needed skills to the United States, the transition also contributes to the "brain drain" or "skills drain" in their country of origin. It must be reiterated that the vast majority of immigrants who are employed in the United

PHOTO BY MEL ROSENTHAL

States enter legally, by family sponsorship or work visas. Among the undocumented who may or may not seek employment are those who overstay their temporary visas.

Recent reports concluded that the terrorist attacks of September 2001 elevated the skepticism of the American public toward the country's relative openness to immigration (Farkas, Duffett and Johnson, 2003; Renshon, 2005). By extension, the threat of further terrorism, magnified by the media and by election-year political pandering, is compounded by the perceived or real threat of job displacement of American citizens by undocumented immigrants.

The political ideology and policies of the federal government, the rhetoric of public officials, as well as the expressed views of "think tanks" on the immigration issue, undoubtedly play a significant role in abating or intensifying the rejection or accommodation of new immigrants. In an attempt to represent, if not appease their constituencies, and thus gain political mileage, public officials have used "the problem of immigration" as a bedrock issue for their political campaigns, thus seeking to promote their own agendas. Excessively focusing on "illegal immigration" may also serve as a timely distraction from other serious, but unpredictable domestic or international issues perceived as threatening to many political reputations.

A closer examination of the immigration debate shows to what extent it is actually a battle over ideology rather than a serious discussion of commitments to any pragmatic resolution to an age-old problem. It invariably pits those primarily in favor of border security/enforcement/wall-building as a priority, against those calling for so-called comprehensive reform, thus adding fodder to what have become divisive verbal exchanges in formal and informal settings. Furthermore, today's debate is in part a battle among contending right-wing ideologues, who have found new political fortitude as "immigration restrictionists" (Barry, 2006). Ironically, some conservatives who are traditionally pro-immigration, favoring big business that relies on undocumented immigrants as a major labor supply, have been touting anti-immigrant slogans as a political strategy, aligning themselves with those who claim their interest is national security. Our post-9/11 era has forged an interesting link between immigration and the "global war on terror," which has emerged as a noticeable dimension of the debate.

Dissatisfied with the government's capacity or willingness to stem the tide of illegal immigration, particularly in the southwestern United States, citizen border-watcher groups, such as those involved in the Minutemen Project, have increased (Robbins, 2006). Whether participants of this controversial group are further motivated by patriotic sentiments or ethnic intolerance is not clearly understood. The extent to which the activities of such groups actually exacerbate the problem or contribute to its solution is open to much speculation.

Contending Policies: A Cause for Concern

The 1996 "Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act" gave sweeping powers to the then Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to determine admissions, detention, and deportation of immigrants who committed crimes. In addition, according to the law, even legal residents could be deported, and those who were seeking asylum could be denied humanitarian aid. As part of the current debate, some advocates for stricter regulations have espoused actions such as mass deportation of illegal immigrants and modification of the Constitution to prevent children born to undocumented immigrants (so-called "anchor babies") from claiming citizenship (Horowitz, 2006; Sugrue, 2006). No doubt, the wrangling over deportees between the United States and sending countries could potentially sour diplomatic relations.

As introduced above, over the past decade, seething tensions have prevailed among those involved in the debate about undocumented immigrants in the United States. Concerns have been expressed for what some refer to as "broken borders," and the act of "rewarding" persons for violating the immigration laws of the country. That tension has mushroomed into a major dilemma for lawmakers, while, at the same time, drawing attention to both the contributions and the plight of millions of undocumented immigrants. Two competing policies proposed by the House

of Representatives and Senate respectively, have been at the center of this struggle over immigration reform. Although both focused on regulating legal entry into the United States, their implementation raised a number of critical questions with regards to the treatment of immigrants and benefits to the host society.

The first was the Border Protection, Anti-Terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act (H.R. 4437), which strongly

supports enforcement, more border fences, and deportations. A series of massive protest rallies against this legislation was held in cities across the nation, signaling a high level of organization among the undocumented, as well as significant public empathy. However, in an apparent xenophobic response to the rallies, and out of concern about passage of the less restrictive immigration bills, a barrage of vitriolic assumptions and judgments about illegal immigrants were also voiced. Some public officials and talk show hosts engaged in unbridled diatribe, often referring to "the alien invasion." Undocumented immigrants were branded as the scourge of the nation, though exception was granted to those with certain professional or technical skills needed in the U.S. Protesting immigrants were dubbed uneducated, burdensome to the American taxpayer, jobs and benefits thieves, prone to criminality, alien to American values, and transforming – for the worse – the culture and character of the United States (Owens, 2006; Horwitz, 2006; Buchanan, 2006; Toburn, 2006).

Increased immigration over the past two decades may have affected the cultural and political landscape of the United States, but the above-mentioned vilification and public pronouncements, even in situations in which, at least in part, they could be justified, could ignite community tensions and derail any attempts at tolerance. They also reveal a revitalization of a 19th century form of nativism based on anti-immigrant views, sentiments and actions based on the threat that immigrants will undermine the economic, social and cultural interests of native-born people (Marger, 2005). Such thinking, as Horwitz further notes, "seems to have found new life among immigrants' strongest foes, whose rhetoric carries traces of both ancient Hispanophobia and the chauvinism of 19th century expansionism" (2006, p. 13).

This xenophobic trend was also reflected in the call for English to be made the "official language" of the United States. One Senate debate focused on whether to make English "America's national language or its national common and unifying language" (Gamboa, 2006, p.1). It is interesting to note that unlike the non-English-speaking pre-19th century immigrant, contemporary immigrants are viewed as "transnationals," simultaneously sustaining social relationships and often political ties to both the societies of origin and settlement. Consequently, retaining the home country's language/accent for many immigrants is desirable. This may raise questions about their allegiance to one nation or another, but does it necessarily make them less "grounded," less patriotic? Clearly this presumption has been part of the current "English-only" thrust.

There are those who have labeled the proposed language policy as racist, pointing to the assumption that most undocumented immigrants are poor Latinos. No doubt, one of the ironies of this language debate is what has been referred to as a "national amnesia," whereby we forget that "the early history of what is now the United States was Spanish, not English, and our denial of this heritage is rooted in age-old stereotypes that still entangles today's immigration debate" (Horwitz, 2006, p. 13).

The second, less draconian bill, the Senate's Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act (H.R. 2330) included the granting of temporary work visas to the undocumented, who must adhere to certain residency, tax and English language requirements. This legislation requires a thorough background check, but would create a "path to citizenship" for an estimated 12 million undocumented workers. Opponents of this bill decry the granting of what they view as "amnesty to illegals" (Caputo, 2006). An extension of the bill was the hotly debated guest worker program, which would allow millions of undocumented immigrants to work temporarily in the United States, while commuting back to their home country, and would allow some to even gain legal status (Herman, 2006). This extension, in addition to the debate on language, reflects the true nature of transnationalism, a much more common quality of millions of lives in the world today.

Although the focus in the debate appears to be on Mexicans, there are obvious far-reaching implications for immigrant families from various countries. For example, increased public exposure of immigration matters, positive or negative, will make some immigrants less inclined to openly involve themselves in humanitarian causes such as charity work and volunteerism, or support workers' rights activities at the national level. In this regard, an Empire State College student, who was violently assaulted during advocacy work with immigrant day laborers in New York City, vowed to "continue the struggle," but also expressed concerns about being deported (personal communication). Deportations create economic and psychological hardships for children and other dependents when guardians and breadwinners are taken away. Furthermore, the tightening of immigration measures preclude the sending of remittances, a primary source of income and essentials to many communities in countries of origin.

Possible Solutions

New entrants into a society often generate tensions and fears, but they can also be viewed as a significant revitalizing force with the potential to contribute positively to the society. Americans of all social strata in this nation of immigrants appear to be conflicted over what to do about the immigration problem. Whichever plan is implemented, the solution to "illegal" immigration must be informed by a rational, humane and pragmatic program, and awareness of both the short- and long-term consequences of reform. These include considering the demands of the labor market, the impact on social services, effects on family constellations, and the ramifications of any policy on international relations. Argumentation and demonstrations will and should continue, but despite the divisive positions taken, when the gavel finally comes down on this debate, participants need to emerge with a policy of compromise. As Batista-Schlesinger (2006) notes, such policy is as much about securing the American dream as it is the security of America's borders. Unfortunately, it is more likely that politicians, chief architects of the debate, will continue courting votes, including, interestingly, the immigrant's vote, but must realize that neither a blanket amnesty nor the construction of a "virtual fence" offers a reasoned solution.

It is difficult to stop the flow of determined individuals from developing countries. This is a worldwide phenomenon, and for many, an existential issue, one of survival

for individuals and families. As Michelle Wucker, senior fellow at the World Policy Institute eloquently puts it, the increasing influx of immigrants, especially from Mexico, Central America and Africa, is caused by economic inequality between those regions and the United States. Consequently, she notes, the solution "is not to tighten border security, but to equalize the economic and working conditions of those regions" (Paull, 2006, p. 1). Perhaps a good starting point is to acknowledge the existence and persistence of such global inequities and to develop an integrated market system that mutually benefits host and sending nations, but does not persistently exploit human capital.

Vigorous debate on these matters of international importance is inevitable. But whatever deliberations do occur must be conducted with dignity and mutual respect for those trying to find a better life, as well as for those attempting to preserve what they take to be the integrity of their nation. Thus, a number of critical issues must be considered in taking steps to ameliorate the problem of illegal immigration. Policy makers and advocates, regardless of ideology, must be cognizant of the contextual polemics in which they operate, i.e., a nation of laws, and a land with a tradition of voluntary as well as forced immigration. Such a historical reality, in addition to making us more aware of geopolitical considerations, should provide the backdrop for a workable solution that requires a combination of strategies. Effective planning and implementation should not be the exclusive domain of politicians, but must include those organizations containing professionals and activists with a track record of working with immigrant groups. A careful look at how other countries handle their "immigration problem" may also be useful.

Conclusion

It is clear that immigration reform, heretofore an incendiary social issue, is driven by economic, political, and nativistic forces at a time when there is also preoccupation with globalization, the effects of terrorism, as well as national security. The debate will undoubtedly continue, with its intensity varying according to the immediate political and economic exigencies in the particular country. My hope is that issues such as those raised in this piece can contribute to guiding policy and inform action, which will be beneficial to both the host society and to newcomers. Ultimately, as former president Bill Clinton suggested, "the future of America is not threatened by immigration, but the success of America lies in the future of immigration."

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Making Theatre, Making a Difference
Winter/Summer Institute in Theatre for Development

Lucy Winner and Katt Lissard, Metropolitan Center
Principal photography by Rik Walton

In June of 2006, in the bright, high mountains of Lesotho, Southern Africa, people from four different lands came together to make theatre, to try to make a difference. We were 22 students and eight faculty from four countries and three continents. Because our homes were so far apart and the seasons were reversed, we called ourselves the Winter/Summer Institute in Theatre for Development (WSI). Our goal was to challenge ourselves to create collaborative, issue-based, aesthetically provocative theatre. We wanted to empower both student and community participants with the tools and resources necessary to create similarly inspired work in their own communities and lives.

Mountains of Lesotho

National University of Lesotho Roma, Lesotho

FACULTY

Rethabile Malibo, Selloane Mokuku, Sele Radebe

STUDENTS

Lereko Lekena, 'Masoai Matala, Relebohile Mokone, Litšeo Mosenene, Mosele Peshoane, 'Matšepo Sethunya, Motjoka Ramonono

Empire State College, State University of New York, U.S.A.

FACULTY

Katt Lissard, Lucy Winner

STUDENTS

Tamu Favorite, Eric Feinblatt, Marjorie Moser, Jussara Santos, Melissa Shetler

University of Sunderland Sunderland, U.K.

FACULTY

Kath McCreery, Nigel Watson

STUDENTS

Jacqueline Cadger, Ufoma Komon, Neil Marshall, Bernie McLaughlin, Sara Owen

University of the Witswatersrand Johannesburg, South Africa

FACULTY

Alta Van As, Gillian Attwood

STUDENTS

Phumlani Dimon, Kim Hess, Ditchaba Lekaota, Thobile Mtsweni, Thembeni Phoseka

Malealea Project Advisors

Gillian Attwood, Moso Ranoosi

WSI students and faculty

In Lesotho

The Institute included students and faculty from the National University of Lesotho (NUL) (our host); Empire State College, State University of New York, New York City; the University of Sunderland, United Kingdom; and the University of the Witswatersrand, Republic of South Africa.

We worked together to create a piece of theatre focused on the role of gossip and silence in the spread of HIV …

In Roma, Lesotho, we worked together to create a piece of theatre focused on the role of gossip and silence in the spread of HIV, a play which would ultimately be taken into the rural communities of the Malealea Valley for further collaboration with local villagers. The focus of this first Institute was a response to the community health situation inside our host country, Lesotho. Along with most of sub-Saharan Africa, Lesotho has a staggering HIV infection rate – currently estimated at 37 - 50 percent, and disproportionately affecting young women between 18 and 24. We wanted to look at how gossip and silence, in Lesotho and in each of the cultures we represented, could lead to disempowerment and danger in the face of the most significant challenges of modern life.

Making the Play: Research, Presentations and Improvisation

Before we met in Lesotho, we read relevant material, like Catherine Campbell's *Letting Them Die* and University of Pretoria's Jonathan Stadler's work on rumor, gossip and blame. Once in Lesotho, the readings were enhanced by a series of presentations by National University colleagues on topics ranging from language taboos and gender inequities to the role of customary practices in the spread of HIV/AIDS. This established a shared platform from which our multicultural company could build creative group work.

Rehearsing in Roma, Lesotho

Improvising and scene-building

Winter/Summer Institute Presenters

As a crucial part of our creative process, eight presentations were given for WSI participants (June 22 - 27) on topics related to our dramatic theme. We wish to thank them.

SPEAKERS AND TOPICS

Ingrid Fandrych
Hlonepha and Human Rights

Selloane Mokuku Ê
Tu? Abuse of Women in Lesotho (film) Ê

Chris Dunton
Problematizing Keywords: Culture, Tradition, Modernity

Chris Chitereka
The Role of Customary Practices in the Spread of HIV/AIDS

Victor Nkiwane
The Work of Women's Law Groups on Sexual Abuse

Litšepiso Matlosa
Power of Language in Relation to HIV/AIDS

Makalo Marite
Application of Methods of Social Work to Problems in Discourse on Sexuality and HIV/AIDS

Mamotsamai Ranneileng
HIV/AIDS Counseling

Using ideas and inspirations from the readings and presentations as a starting point, the faculty devised improvisational "tasks" for students/actors, and functioned as facilitators as the work progressed. Creative work was structured and guided by faculty, but the core of the work was actor-driven, actor-improvised and actor-imagined – drawn from a rich and complex cultural interaction of stories, dreams, myths, songs, dances and lived experience.

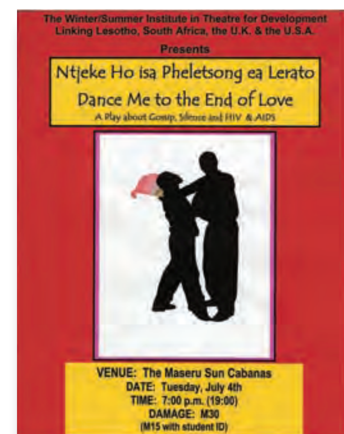
Dance Me to the End of Love

The resulting theatre piece, *Dance Me to the End of Love* (*Ntjeke Ho isa Pheletsong ea Lerato* in Sesotho), was a montage of scenes derived from the improvisational work that had been deepened and refined through the creative shaping and direction by the faculty.

Using a mixture of primarily English and Sesotho (with bits of Zulu, Portuguese, Tswana, Spanish, Xhosa and Afrikaans), the cast played multiple roles. Four Gossips (two male; two female) served as transitional commentators, scene announcers, and translators, and a silent Trickster assisted (or resisted) the Gossips, and helped define the flow of the play.

Performances: Roma, Maseru and Malealea

Dance Me to the End of Love was performed on the National University of Lesotho campus in Roma on July 3 and at the Maseru Sun Hotel's convention center in the nation's capital on July 4. After each



show, a post-play bilingual discussion with the audience was facilitated by WSI faculty member Selloane Mokuku of NUL.

Musicians from three continents rehearse together.

Dance was an integral part of the piece.

The "gossips" comment on the action.

Performance Programme Songs and Scenes

Opening Songs: *Tloho, Utlwa, Nko'usubenam* and *Dance Me to the End of Love*

Scene 1: Bohali Bo Tsoile *(The Cattle Have Been Paid)* Song: *Mama Tembu's Wedding*

Scene 2: Hoa Tantšoa Ntlo ea Cha *(Waltzing While the House is Burning)*

Scene 3: Kokoana Ha e Tšele Mohokare, kapa Banna ke Mekopu; Basali ke Likh'abeche *(The Virus Doesn't Cross the Caledon, or Men are Pumpkins; Women are Cabbages)* Song: *Amazing Grace*

Scene 4: Ke Moetlo; Ha Se Moetlo *(It's in My Culture; It's Not in My Culture)* Song: *Tula*

Scene 5: Monna Eo Ke Sa Mo Tsebeng Likobong Tsaka *(Stranger in My Bed)*

Scene 5A: Seotsoa Sea Bua *(Sex Worker Speaks)*

Scene 6: Boithuto ba ABC *(Learning Your ABC's)*

Scene 7: Bo Ntate ba Ratanang le Banana *(Sugar Daddy)*

Scene 7A: Pale Ea Ka *(My Story)*

Scene 8: Ha re Sa na Makunutu *(We Have No More Secrets)*

Scene 9: Ha a Re "Che" Seo a Hlileng a se Bolelang ke Hone "E" *(When She Says "No!" She Really Means "Yes!")*

Scene 10: U Ne U Ka Etsa'ng? *(What Would You Do?)*

Finale/Song: *The Rhythm of Life*

The play began with a procession of songs and movement. Music, played and sung by the actors, was woven throughout the montage.

The company then traveled to the Malealea Valley in southern Lesotho to connect to the locally driven community project there guided by Moso Ranoosi and Gillian Attwood, and based on Brazilian educator Paulo Friere's "REFLECT Circles."

After being revised and rehearsed (to translate as much of the play into Sesotho as possible), *Dance Me to the End of Love* was then performed for a Sesotho-speaking audience of Malealea villagers on July 6th. The outdoor venue, chosen for WSI by REFLECT Circle members, was in front of the community health clinic where HIV tests are given.

Performance at the Community Health Clinic, Malealea

Malealea: Passing it On

The health clinic performance was the first step in community dialogue and collaboration with village residents. After the performance, there was a bilingual discussion with the audience, again facilitated by Ms. Mokuku, and then 30 participating villagers began work with Institute actors and faculty. After dividing into three groups, each with enough Sesotho/English speakers to translate, the next five days were spent in intense rehearsal sessions. During this time, facilitating and directing roles were largely passed from faculty to Institute actors. Using a process similar to the one they had just experienced, Institute actors worked with village actors to improvise scenes based on villagers' responses to the performance. Together they created three new scenes reflective of village concerns.

Village women singing in rehearsal

Villagers and students use images to build scenes

Malealea Festival Performance

These new scenes were interwoven with several scenes from the original show and a new musical finale was created. This new drama, now almost entirely in Sesotho, was the centerpiece of the 20th Anniversary Festival of the Malealea Lodge on July 11.

Forty-nine mounted Basotho ponies led the procession of Institute and village actors in song and dance from the lodge to the festival grounds, where over 500 village residents and the village chief watched the show.

Basotho Horsemen lead procession

Procession to the festival grounds, Malealea

The idea, then, was that all of us would take the model of work that we developed and carry it on in our own lives, passing it on to our own communities.

Audiences came from surrounding villages

The final performance drew over 500 people

PHOTO: ERIC FEINBLATT

Passing it Back and Forth

There is one critical question: what is the point of engaging in a project of this kind, unless there is a way for it to sustain itself?

From the very beginning, we began with the notion of passing it on, handing over the reins. This handing over of responsibility, one step at a time, was built into the structure of the work. This first happened in Malealea when the students took on the role with the villagers that the faculty had played with the students.

The idea, then, was that all of us would take the model of work that we developed and carry it on in our own lives, passing it on to our own communities. We hoped, also, that the villagers who worked with us would incorporate what they learned into their participation in the Malealea Community Development Project.

"Eradicate Negligence"

Since we left, the villagers have formed a new collaborative theatre group. They call it Khalemang Bohlasoa, which means "Eradicate Negligence." They are focusing their work on issues of HIV/AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse, fighting and domestic violence, rape and theft. They have drawn up a set of plans and goals, which they developed and agreed to. Following are some excerpts of what they wrote:

- We want to use this drama as a means of communicating at village meetings where education can be done.
- Our objective is to see understanding and behaviour change in the community.
- We want to use drama as a way of bringing people together (men, women and youth). This is important because it's important to be neutral and not take the side of men or women or youth, as this will disunite people and we are all in this together. No one group is to blame.
- Once we have consolidated ourselves as a group and have a sketch ready, we will approach the chief and then perform our drama for the community at a meeting called by the chief. We want to visit many villages and perform drama so as to share important messages with as many people as possible.
- Performances should benefit the members who are performing. We want to see ourselves growing as a group, eventually making videos that might be sold. We also want to perform for TV Lesotho. This could even be a way of making some money for ourselves as a group.
- We want to support each other as members of the group, not only in the group, but also with daily life outside of the group. For example, helping each other to buy seeds for fields and community gardens.

Africa to New York

Since we returned from Lesotho, the Empire State College student participants have given a presentation at the Student All College Conference and performed part of *Dance Me to the End of Love* for the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative's (IAVI) commemoration of AIDS Day at the U.N. on November 30. On December 2 and 3, the student/participants helped run a two-day residency at the Metropolitan Center, called "Gossip, Silence and HIV/AIDS: Theatre for Development, Africa to New York."

Back in New York our Residency passed on the WSI model. PHOTOS: ERIC FEINBLATT

The goal of the residency was for the WSI participants to take a group of students through a very compact version of the work we did in Africa. Students who attended read many of the same materials that we read before our trip, and also listened to audio files of some of the presentations that we heard in Lesotho. The WSI students spoke about the project, showed video, and performed a scene from the play. Then they used the same model of work as we used in Africa, breaking the students into groups, giving them improvisational tasks, shaping the scenes, and finding a thread and a shape.

Everyone worked incredibly hard for two very full days, until, by 5:00 Sunday evening, we had developed an entirely new piece of theater. The new piece, about taboo and denial, wove responses to the readings and presentation with the individual and cultural experiences of the residency participants. Ultimately, all 37 participants performed a 40-minute piece, including music and props.

Next Steps

We have all learned more than we could have imagined – about the complexities and challenges, certainly, but also about the possibilities. In some respects, our learning was surprisingly concrete: we were there, we were doing, we found ways together, and we can see what we did ripple and transform, from the work of Eradicate Negligence, to a NYC Residency participant planning a similar project in her native Mexico. In other ways, we continue to be amazed at the layers of learning that are still forming, being learned, and those yet to come. We want very much to continue. Our immediate plans are to complete a short documentary film, and to begin planning for the next Winter/Summer Institute in Lesotho, slated for 2008. In the meantime, we hope that all participants in this project – students from four countries, villagers, audiences, faculty, and residency participants, will continue to make theatre to make a difference.

The following foundations, institutions and offices have supported this project:

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

The Heidtke Foundation

The Margaret Reuss Trust

The Unger Foundation

National University of Lesotho

Empire State College, State University of New York (Student Activities Fund, The President's Office, Empire State College Foundation, United University Professions)

University of Sunderland

University of the Witswatersrand

and over 30 generous individuals.

Global Risk, Hard Power and Democratic Imposition

Andrew Arato, Dorothy Hart Hirshon Professor of Political and Social Theory,
The New School for Social Research

The following essay was presented on October 15, 2006, as the opening keynote at this year's All Areas of Study Meeting, whose theme was "The Risk Society: Realities, Fears and Opportunities." Thanks to Andrew Arato for his care in reviewing and editing the text and to Sandra Coulter for her initial transcription of the talk.

I intend this presentation as either an exercise in the philosophy of history or as prolegomena to a future democratic foreign policy. In recent theories of the subject, "risk society" is a type of modern society where the main risks faced by human existence are "second order" risks produced by the attempts to deal with "first order" ones – that is, the ones which have to do with our problems facing nature – where our own strategies and their side effects are themselves the greatest source of risk.

The transition from the problem of natural scarcity to the ecological problem we face today was the classical context in which the theory of risk society was developed. But now, to an important extent, even poverty can be seen as a fundamentally second order problem of risk caused by our attempts to deal with issues of wealth and perhaps even with schemes of poverty redistribution themselves.

Andrew Arato

While for classical capitalism, non-interventionism was the fundamental problem, for risk society, intervention itself becomes the main issue. We cannot do without intervention. A return to classical capitalism has always been an illusion. That, however, is not my topic.

What I want to argue is that, in general, there are two ways to address the dilemma of intervention: the idea of reflexive intervention and the idea of soft power. Reflexive intervention (and this is the side that has been developed by the theorists of the risk society such a Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and others) involves the intervention upon intervention itself – in other words, a process that intervenes in the process of intervention, and also tries to control for its side effects. It attempts to put autonomous agents in a position to intervene in their own processes and tries to avoid the direct attempt on the part of the planner to deal with the outcomes.

On the other hand, soft power, which can be the tool of reflexive interventionism, tries to act on the motives of actors by cultural or moral persuasion, rather than by positive or negative sanction, promises of money, or threat of military force. Rather than going along with Beck or with Joseph Nye, the main theorist associated with the idea of soft power, I would argue neither reflexive intervention nor soft power are in themselves positive. For example, both reflexive intervention and soft power can be in the service of imperial penetration and the suppression of political autonomy. On the other hand, there is a certain "elective affinity," as Weber would have called it, between reflexive intervention and soft power, and moral universalism because the indirect forms of intervention as well as moral persuasion are both enhanced by the power of a moral universalist structure of argument. Unfortunately, even the latter can be used strategically or inauthentically. But when so used, democracy and human rights become available to be used by the victims of inauthentic strategies.

What I have introduced so far is the methodological context of what I wanted to discuss, but mostly I don't want to focus on methodology.

When it comes to international affairs, ever since the invention of the atomic weapon, we have been in a kind of risk sub-society of the international world society. Beck and others date risk society much later, and think of it as an entirely contemporary problem, perhaps as only a full-blown historical potential in the future. But I think it is a mistake to see things developing in an even way with respect to different domains of social life. And especially with respect to issues of war, diplomacy, and international relations, it would seem to me that with the end of the Second World War and the invention of atom weapons, we entered a situation in which risk in Beck's sense became a fundamental problem.

In a famous set of conversations with Milovan Djilas, and collected in a volume called *Conversations with Stalin,* Josef Stalin said the following: "This war is not as in the past – whoever occupies the territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach; it cannot be otherwise." We all know of course, roughly, that this actually happened after the Second World War to a significant extent. On the one side, the Central European countries, some of which began having constitutional governments at the end of the war, had Soviet-type systems imposed on them, my native Hungary as well, in

the mid- or late 1940's and culminating in uniform dictatorships at the end of the '40s. But similar processes have occurred in the American sphere of influence. Here I would stress more Asia than Europe, where to an important extent, the developments were restorational or autonomous. But Japan certainly had an imposed American constitution, and Korea, the American-occupied part of it, had an American imposed authoritarian regime for decades.

So at least to some extent, Stalin's prediction to Djilas made in 1942 or '43 turned out to be correct, but really only up to a point, because the invention of the atomic weapon foreshadowed by its use in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Soviet rediscovery of this weapon, put an end to the process. One could not simply proceed militarily to Sovietize or Americanize the world without any further limits. The superpowers would have clashed with one another and done so in a world-destructive confrontation. And so the process had to end. The whole problem of the so-called "third world," the whole problem of the non-aligned world became possible and plausible because the two then-superpowers could not continue the war with the same means that they had fought the Second World War and perhaps, arguably, even some of the Korean War. Think, for example, of where MacArthur was forced by President Truman to stop: at the boarder of a hot, perhaps nuclear war between the powers, which the general was ready to risk, but which the American government was no longer ready to risk at the particular moment.

What was now possible were proxy wars, but these wars, as long as they were proxy wars, turned out to be particularly destructive for the superpower in question. Think of Vietnam and think of Afghanistan to the extent that the direct strategy, the pre-risk society strategy, of direct conquest, the one that Stalin was talking about to Djilas, was carried out by either the Americans in Vietnam or the Soviets in Afghanistan. Now there was the possibility of a really dramatic defeat, which caused the other side relatively little (what did the Soviets lose with respect to Vietnam? What did the Americans lose in respect to Afghanistan?) – Or, each had only to gain when the other side was willing to play that kind of game. These strategies were potentially bankrupt. The Americans had a chance to learn from their experience; the Soviet imperium, however, came down because of it.

My interest now is in the history of the American imperium. And that brings me to the post-Vietnam strategies, which is when the risk society strategies were really developed under a lot of headings, but I just want to stress two: The Nixon Doctrine, the reflexive strategy, and The Carter Human Rights offensive, the soft power strategy. One of them I would normatively be very critical of and the other I would normatively be in favor of, but I don't think that these strategies are, in themselves, positive or negative. It all depends. But these were the two major risk society strategies developed by the United States after Vietnam.

Certainly the issue of democracy didn't enter the conversation. On the contrary, the reflexive strategy was pretty well connected to people who wanted to control the oil, who had little objection to dictatorships.

Think about really about what is involved. The United States still wants to fight the Soviets, it still wants to expand its influence over the so-called "third world." In fact, both the Americans and the Soviets are interested in their power, but they cannot do it directly; the pre-risk society strategy leads to confrontation between them. The U.S. realizes that if the other side uses a proxy and they are there directly, untold disasters can result. So the Nixon Doctrine is generated, and the Nixon Doctrine, which is already a response to the beginning of the withdrawal from Vietnam, says that we must everywhere use surrogates or proxies. We cannot do the thing directly. We are a kind of imperium, a kind of quasi-imperial power, reluctantly so perhaps, but we cannot do that kind of work directly. We had just learned in Vietnam what happens when we try that, so we must use proxies, surrogates, others whom we can influence either reflexively with money and power, or perhaps through soft strategies, or through a combination of both. But in any case, what is important is that they do what we want them to do in our place.

Vietnamization was the name of this in Vietnam, and of course it was a hopeless, dying strategy because it could not succeed after the direct strategy already had already failed. But this is not the only place in the world where this strategy was tried. The same reflexive strategy was adopted with the coup in Chile. In other words, Pinochet would be the right kind of surrogate to play that role in the Latin American context, perhaps helping other bureaucratic authoritarian dictatorships emerge.

There are other examples, but what is immediately relevant today is that in 1967, the English announced their intention to leave the Persian Gulf. They no longer had the desire to play a direct or the main indirect imperial role, and they were going to leave by 1971. This meant that this extremely important part of the world because of its oil resources – and not just the actual, but even more the projected oil resources – was going to be in some kind of jeopardy. Remember, these were the days of Arab nationalism, of Nasser and the Baath. So what is going to happen? An indirect strategy had to apply there too. There were three choices: the U.S. could go in there directly, but this was just a tremendous failure in Vietnam; it could do nothing, but then the Soviet Union might do something – it could apply its own indirect strategy or who knows, even direct strategy, because the terms were not yet so clear. Or, third, the U.S. could apply the indirect strategy, and this is what was adopted. It was openly admitted then that this was for oil, so at the time the reasons were not so mysterious. Certainly the issue of democracy didn't enter the conversation. On the contrary, the reflexive strategy was pretty well connected to people who wanted to control the oil, who had little objection to dictatorships.

Appropriately, the "two pillars doctrine," as it was then called, was connected to the Saudi Arabian monarchy and the Shah of Iran. They were reliable, they could control

their own countries, they had a lot of oil, and the Shah had a very large army. He had 150,000 very good troops, and this was after the end of the Mossadegh affair, and Iran was reliable and economically dynamic. And so the strategy adopted was this one, and the idea was that it was going to work. But this was not the view of the whole world, and the United States is not simply a country that is in love with dictatorships all over the world. There are other things here we like and are interested in, and in any case, the authors of this particular doctrine wound up doing things at home that turned out being disastrous for them: thank God. But in any case the authors of the Nixon Doctrine also had Watergate and they were in part replaced, and the next strategy was Carter's.

Carter's Human Rights Doctrine also, of course, had something to do with American power in the world. Foreign rights policies are never developed just for altruistic reasons. But, nevertheless, this doctrine was different. First of all, its stress was on soft power and not on hard power, and secondly in some respects, it cut across the Nixon Doctrine – in some places it reinforced it, in some places it provided oppositional energy to it, and in some places it acted ambiguously.

The Carter strategy was extremely important and successful in building human rights in places where there were autonomous movements. It had a very important role and influence in the democratization of those countries. I certainly don't share the view that American promotion of democracy had the primary or even a very significant role in the transformation of those places, but a least the human rights policy contributed some and it certainly didn't contribute by any direct interventionism.

I think the Latin American one is already a somewhat more mixed picture. Where the bureaucratic and authoritarian regimes that were the result of the reflexive strategy were in place, the Carter Doctrine helped – even in Chile – their liberalization, or partial liberalization, eventually transformation. But in Central America, the two doctrines came to collide and resulted in extended periods of civil war.

Finally, in the area that we are most interested in here, where there were no democratic, civil society based movements, the human rights part only helped to loosen the authoritarian system, but had no human rights consequences. The result was the destruction of the pillar of the Nixon Doctrine without having a clear replacement for it. Iran had its Islamic revolution and the key pillar, the more important pillar of the Gulf strategy, collapsed. This led to the most interesting set of events that we should recall as Mr. Gates, today, is in the process of being confirmed as Secretary of Defense, because once Iran had its revolution, the realist advocates of the Nixon Doctrine had desperately searched for a replacement, for a new pillar, for a way of representing indirectly but efficiently America's, and through America, other Western interests in the Gulf.

The only candidate for it was Iraq. Everybody talks about the Rumsfeld-Hussein handshake; and everybody now talks about Gates being the boss, a very different one. At the time of the handshake, they were however in the same realist camp. It was a realist, and not a neo-conservative handshake, a reflexive realist and not a hard realist one. In any case, the so-called realists then discovered Iraq because it was not only the only candidate, it was also a very logical one because Iran represented a threat to them as well, because of the large Shiite population in Iraq itself, and because of the dynamic nature of the Iranian regime next to what was already becoming a kind of patrimonial clientalistic deformation of Arab nationalism in Iraq. Remember they came to power in 1968 and this was now 1979. They could have done wonderful things with all the wealth, the power that they had; Iraq is a rich country. Don't blame it all on Israel and the United States. They were making a horrible mess of it even before the Iraqi/Iranian War – a mess of it not on an economic level, there was a lot of money because of the oil for hospitals and education, but on a political level, for example, banning the Communist Party, which was actually a multicultural force, and destroying the remaining elements of representative institutions and legality, and eventually even worse things. In any case this Iraq, with all its warts – including its state socialist economy – became the candidate. So arming Iraq became a huge and important proposition. You've had to try to put Iraq in the place where Iran once was.

So, the Nixon Doctrine helped to create Saddam and all the people we now see in power – not all the people, but Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Gates for sure, were a part of that. This was the realist idea and so Saddam Hussein was a dictator, but that's what the doctrine required because democracy is messy, unpredictable; you know "stuff happens," you don't know where democracy goes, and this is not what you want. Some Israeli politicians now say we prefer the "old" Middle East to the "new" New Middle East. Well the "old" Middle East was like that, full of authoritarian regimes, and so that's what they wanted. It was not a problem. "Axis of Evil," well, yes, they're evil, but on the other hand, they understood *quid pro quos*. The idea that they're crazy is a late invention. Democracies are crazy. Dictators are rational. That was the fundamental assumption. Of course, dictators could be occasionally crazy too. But they were more easily purchasable than a whole electorate. Personally, I don't doubt that, and Aristotle is right, democracies can be rational. I'm not suggesting who is right. I'm just talking about the assumptions of the doctrine itself.

So there it was. Iraq was armed to the teeth and supported through most of the Iraq-Iran war, except for the Iran-Contra episode that was only good to earn Saddam's secret enmity. But, of course, he was never a very good bet. "Realism" was a terrible failure in the Gulf. We do have to remember, and it's been mentioned a thousand times, Saddam Hussein gassed his own people, he also used gas against Iran, and it was he, not Khomeini, who started that war. It produced no good for either state. In the process, he created an awful regime at home and also made the region much less stable. This would have been still OK, but either through misunderstandings or stupidity on the part of the American ambassador, it's hard to know now, Hussein also proceeded to attack the other pillar. It's OK for him to be the main pillar, but to attack the other pillar and to become a regional superpower – that was not OK. He attacked Kuwait, but that of course means that he was ready to attack or gravely threaten Saudi Arabia too, with its own unpopular rulers. That was unacceptable. He could have had a part of Kuwait, and maybe the misunderstanding was they thought he only wanted some of

the wells and some of the ports, but in any case, he invaded the whole country and this was completely unacceptable.

The point is not to provide all of the details of the history, but to point out that "realism" then produced something that was entirely untenable because, in fact, the dictatorship could not be controlled. And then the third thing, which Chalmers Johnson wrote about before it happened, was that dictatorships produce "blow back." I saw it because I only lived four blocks from it. I was evacuated for over six weeks, but I think all of us felt it. The idea that Arabs just love dictatorships and this is really the kind of system they all want to live under and they are happy about the fact that the west helps to impose them, and that there will be no consequences for that – all of this turned out not to be true. I hate to say that the neoconservatives have emphasized this point, thought they were neither first nor alone. You know we have to go through everything that has been said over these miserable five years and not automatically eliminate everything that anybody has said. The realists have been right about some things; for example, they said the Iraq War would be a disaster and they were right about that. And the neoconservatives have said that supporting dictatorships is a disaster too, and I think they are also right about that.

The central point is that the Realist Doctrine has produced unpredictable dictatorships that have their own agendas and not just our own pillars and our own proposals and our own reflective doctrines, which they will pursue for us. Pinochet didn't do anything that was particularly bad for American geo-political interests, but Saddam was different; he was also his own person. When you read John Burns in *The New York Times,* "Looking for Another Strongman," just this week, everything I've been saying is there. We need to start from the beginning; the only thing that can pull the Arabs together is a new strongman now. But what if this new strongman is so strong that he won't follow our agenda and develops his own? Why would this new strongman not think, as Saddam and indeed many members of the Iraqi government have thought, for example, that Kuwait is just another Iraqi province? This is not something that Saddam invented by any means. This is something that many Iraqi nationalists and Arab nationalist have sought, so it is useless just to blame one man.

The realist doctrine, the reflexive doctrine collapses, so then we get to the Bush Doctrine to replace it. This is what we all live now. Most of us in this room have lived through the whole thing, but if we were dreaming that the realists could now put order back into the world, I wanted to show that they have contributed mightily to the disorder themselves.

Let me just mention the main lines of the movement from the Nixon to the Bush Doctrine, which, for me, really represents a return to a pre-risk society-strategy. Instead of indirect intervention, it will be direct intervention. We can't trust these proxies; the thing that was not done by Nixon with respect to the Gulf, we have to do it ourselves. Look what happened in Iran, what happened to Saddam: we are a superpower; we can and have to do it ourselves. The Risk Society is for chickens, it's not for a true American cowboy. We can do it ourselves. That's our current president's point of view. He's the least important thinker in all this, but he was "the decider" (even my grammar check did not know the word) and indeed Bush did have to decide the matter, given that there was significant disagreement between the realists and the other people. I won't mention all the specifics of the realist-argument of a Brent Scowcroft now because you can all imagine what they were. They thought that if you go in to Iraq you will inevitably destroy the balance of power and you will give all the power to Iran. And that is basically what has happened. And now we have the disastrous choice of accepting defeat, or trying to provoke another war with Iran!

What spoke for attacking Saddam? Well one argument, and it's really a radicalization of the human rights posture that people like me have to be serious about, is that there are places where the soft strategies of Joseph Nye just don't work, where you can't persuade enough people who have significant influence in society to transform society from within, or where there is so much oil money around that the forces of oppression can just keep civil society down. So either way – either because you cannot persuade them for cultural reasons, or because they have too much oil money and too many instruments of repression – they need something extra. It is going to have to be something more direct than this "soft" thing; it has to be hard. Someone like Norman Podhoretz, who was never particularly interested in soft power anyway, says this much more openly. Podhoretz went from left revolution to right revolution to hardline neoconservatism. Unfortunately, I think many who are much more to the left have also gone for this kind of argument. They all forget that human rights and democracy are the sorts of things that people have to struggle for themselves, and when there is an attempt to impose them by force, the principles themselves are compromised.

There is also a kind of strange kind of "new Wilsonians" that support this argument. I would say that in some respects I am an internationalist too. Wilsonians believe in an international order with an international law. But what if the current organization of the international order is systematically blocked, and that there is always some awful country, whether it is the Soviet Union or France that just always blocks the kind of action everybody else in the world would undertake if it just weren't for these terrible people like or Khrushchev or Villepin or whoever it is that is the candidate for "Freedom Fries." People can say that's the United Nations today. So, the arguments goes, we are for international law, but first it has to be changed, and until it is changed, we will only accept unilateralism. The advocates forget, that a new international order must be at all stages different than imperial law, and only a wide and legitimate agreement among states can be the basis of future legal construction of an international order. Certainly, the violation of the UN Charter on some of the most important points is a bad start.

And then the strangest case: Cheney and Rumsfeld were heavily implicated in the realist policy themselves. The question is: how did it happen? And I think one really has to see that from their point of view, the old realist doctrine shipwrecked and they really then wanted to have something new, and given that the old realist doctrine was developed at a time when the Soviet Union existed, they now felt there was no

need for it. The old realist doctrine was needed because of the Soviet threat, which was completely formative for these kinds of people. But because the Soviet threat doesn't exist, we aren't really bound by the doctrine. A country like the United States doesn't have to worry about an Iran, doesn't have to worry about guerillas. For them, we lost Vietnam because of the Soviets. They have drawn all of the wrong lessons even from Vietnam.

Things are different now, and I think this is why they were able to shift from soft realism or reflexive realism to hard realism. But these are the forces, a kind of corrupt Wilsonianism, a kind of absolutism of human rights, a kind of muscular interventionism. I would have thought that Henry Kissinger himself would have stayed with the old realist doctrine. Not so. He has been a top advisor to the Bush group at least through a good part of the current enterprise. So he too, the granddaddy of the Nixon Doctrine (when you say Nixon doctrine you basically say Kissinger Doctrine), actually became an advocate of the Bush Doctrine. Because he thought, confusing radical Islam and Saddam, attacking Afghanistan was not enough of a response to the attacks on September 11 to deter future ones. So they shifted, and they produced the Iraq war today, in the process creating a far greater threat than we faced back in 2001.

Not only did they undertake a war in the name of an overall strategy that, from the point of view of discussions here were obsolete, mainly that one country could directly impose its will on the world through force, but they also made fundamental errors every step of the way, which are reconstructable from the confusion of the prewar planning, to the number of troops that they have used, to the kind of authority they gave to Bremer, to the type of constitution-making process they organized, to the way they have included Iraqi actors in the work. There was almost nothing about the process that was done right. The kind of detail that Rajiv Chandrasekaran provides in his *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* seem almost impossible to believe, but it is all so true, and much worse than what people already know. The United States is full of experts in almost every conceivable area, but for almost everything that was done, the administration recruited people who knew almost nothing and very young people at that, the main qualification being whether you favored the reversal of Roe v. Wade, or if you worked for the Bush campaign in 2000. These were the questions asked of the people who were candidates for the jobs, and if they had expertise that was not good because then you were not going to believe in the democratization of Iraq anyway. This is the way they approached the work and this is the way it failed.

But the point I want to make is that the very project itself is obsolete in terms of the kinds of concepts that I have tried to introduce here. The old realist, the soft or the reflexive realist, is not on the same sands that this new strategy has been, and that's why one sees Gates and Baker today (or, if you want it in biographical terms, the old Bushes against the new ones). That's why some have said, rationality has returned. But I think it is important to acknowledge that this is also the team that has contributed to the problem through the kind of normative notions that have led their realism, that have led their reflexive strategy. Bringing them back is perhaps good antidote for what has happened in the last couple of years, but not a sign for a progressive or a constructive role for the United States in the future. In this sense, the way that Maureen Dowd of *The New York Times* has written what she sees as our choice between the idealism of the neocons and the realism of the current Bushes, are wrong choices. I think that we need to take reflexive strategies further – something we need to take from the realists, but we have to understand that reflexive strategies cannot be free of normative guidance. And the kind of normative assumptions that they have made, namely the kind of neutrality with respect to the political regimes that they would establish in order to pursue their strategies were disastrous, whether it was the Shah of Iran or Saddam or Pinochet. In almost no instance did those people promote political democracy.

> *There is no way to impose liberal democracy by military force. It has to be based on the aspirations, movements, and political activities of local people themselves.*

On the other side, the side of idealism, I think we have to understand, and this is a clear lesson from the current experience that I would hold, that as valuable as liberal democracy is, even universally speaking, this idea cannot be understood as a single political system, which exists in only one fundamental version. We have to understand that this kind of system would have to exist in different political and cultural versions. (For example, saying "separation of church and state" just doesn't do it.) Obviously such a strategy, like the one we have seen in Iraq, has very little chance of public political acceptance.

And secondly, perhaps an even more important lesson, to whatever extent one can pursue a liberal democratic strategy, one can only pursue it by way of soft power. There is no way to impose liberal democracy by military force. It has to be based on the aspirations, movements, and political activities of local people themselves. Of course, the older American idea that "example helps" remains right. I suspect that our recent election has done more for democracy in the world than all of Bush's interventions. And don't think they're not watching. Don't think that in Iran or in the Arab world this is not seen in very precise terms. If you watch the announcements, even the official radio and television news in the Arab world, they were rather positive about just this thing, these elections, this exemplary defeat of Bush by the American people when given a chance. It was impossible not to approve because the populations approve, and probably would like to do something similar, for themselves, but hardly under foreign guns. So in fact, I think we should worry about being democratic ourselves, something we have not been in these six years. That's the first step in any future democratic foreign policy.

Short Circuits, or Refashioning the Scholarly Self Version 2.0 [1]

Eric L. Ball, Center for Distance Learning

We get the distinct feeling that we will convince no one unless we enumerate certain approximate characteristics of the rhizome.

– *Deleuze and Guattari in A Thousand Plateaus*

Perhaps the most sincere, if banal, way I can introduce the reflection that follows is by saying this: One of best things for faculty about Empire State College is that it remains possible for all kinds of connections to occur in one's mind and in one's life, inevitably short circuiting the dichotomies and hard boundaries and distinctions that modern faculty often become accustomed to, and comforted by. Sure it can mean that it's extra difficult to figure out where to categorize this or that activity in one's review portfolio essay, but isn't it worth it? What follows is one example that happened to me recently.

In graduate school, studying Modern Greek culture, I got caught up for a while on a side project that had to do with Greek cookbooks and the construction of cultural identities, and it even yielded a dissertation chapter and a publication. Sure, it was on a timely and (in the parlance of the profession) sexy academic topic, but I stumbled into it accidentally when I ordered a cookbook from Greece that dealt with traditional recipes of Crete. I hadn't even ordered the cookbook for academic purposes; I just wanted it for the recipes. But, as one thing led to another, I found myself living two separate but parallel food lives. On the one hand, I was doing more and more academic research into such topics as food in film and literature, the anthropology and sociology of food, and critical folkloristic studies of food and tradition. On the other hand, I was learning a lot of practical stuff about cooking and other related topics (like breadmaking with wild sourdoughs, how to forage wild greens, ways to manage fermentation, how to interpret labels in light of deceptive FDA regulations). At the time, I was mostly doing all this food-related stuff, both the "academic" and the "practical," for sheer pleasure.

Eric L. Ball

Upon arriving at Empire State College, I got lucky in that my scholarly food self was able to contribute something to my mentor self. Many of us in the Center for Distance Learning were faced with the problem of figuring out how to create online learning opportunities for students that would both fulfill the newly imposed-by-power SUNY General Education requirements and respond meaningfully to the unique contexts of an especially diverse group of students of almost any age and from almost any country (an especially perverse version of what I suspect physicists could only call the "one-size-fits-all-bodies problem"). My foodie background provided me with an angle for creating a potentially interesting "opening" for students into some of the concerns of the humanities (one of the SUNY boxes) that would draw on each student's unique experiences and curiosity without coercing them into a traditional disciplinary or textbook approach. Meanwhile, in my parallel food life, my partner and I bought a house and continued extending our practical knowledge of food, for example into vegetable gardening. I also spent time teaching home cooking to interested family members. So at some point it occurred to me: *Why don't you write something new related to food? You obviously enjoy the topic immensely and you seem to know a lot about it, so what's stopping you? Besides, the academic economy is mostly one of publish or perish, better safe than sorry.*

I thus spent some time catching up on the growing scholarship in the emerging field of "food studies," revisited many of the classics (Claude Levi-Strauss, Mary Douglas, Sidney Mintz, Jack Goody, Luce Giard, films like Babette's Feast, novels like The Debt to Pleasure), and started mapping out some timely research questions that I was especially well-positioned to address given

my academic orientation (putting aside for the moment that taking these questions on from within a teaching-centered college might be especially difficult, or at the very least s-l-o-w). During the same period of time, I received an invitation to attend a Mentoring Institute-sponsored event on scholarship that was created and led by Genesee Valley Center colleague Lorraine Lander. One of the things that stuck with me from the meta-discussions of scholarship on that fine afternoon was a series of basic questions about scholarship that any scholar might ask himself or herself, such as: *Do I have a particular question that I am trying to answer? Where does this question come from? Why am I taking on this question? To whom is it potentially relevant and why?*

In the weeks subsequent to the workshop, as I kept hearing the chorus of these questions playing over and over in my head, the gradual mapping out and articulation of a food-related writing project was suddenly *short circuited* as I came to realize something: Even though I was confident that "my question" was relevant to both to food studies and to my own sense of social and political responsibility, and that it was exactly the kind of thing I might pursue if I were in a research-centered institution, it was nevertheless almost completely unconnected to my parallel practical interests in the kitchen, in the soil, and around the table. Then I began to wonder if there might be a substantive connection between my academic questions and my everyday passion for food-related know-how. And if there was, I wondered if this might eventually yield an even more interesting writing project than what I had so far conceived. I also thought to myself: Isn't this one of the benefits of being at a place like Empire State College – that I have more room to breathe and grow as a thinker, even if this risks taking me away from what is currently recognized as legitimate by disciplines, fields, or departments at other institutions?

So I closed the Microsoft Word file that I had been writing in up until then and started over. Having stepped out of the familiar scholarly territory of "food studies," I no longer had a "research question" in the conventional sense, only questions of bare-naked curiosity: *What connections might there be between my academic and nonacademic interests in food? Is there something in common driving both my academic agenda and my goals and principles as a home-cook, forager, and food shopper? Assuming I figure out what some of these connections are, will there still be a writing project left in all of this? What kind?* And so, with questions like these in mind, I began working on a new Word document, which was more like a journal than an outline for an academic paper. I described significant food-related events in my life over the years – learning how to bake from my grandmother, the first time I realized how naive I was about ingredients, wine-making in Crete, learning to identify wild greens in Ohio. I was trying to make sense out of my own relationships with cooking and eating over the years, and I was on the lookout for patterns. I brainstormed and catalogued themes of particular interest (the environment, exposing and critiquing industrial food interests, hospitality). I constructed what I thought would be clever opening sentences for an as yet undetermined writing project: "The pursuit of socio-ecological pleasure through food and drink is as complex as it is worthwhile," and, "People who think they know me often comment about how I like to cook, a characterization which invariably provokes me to object on the grounds that it misrecognizes one symptom of a passion for the passion itself … No, I don't like to cook, I like to *eat,* and I like to eat *well,* so I usually have to cook whether I like it or not."

As I continued writing in this journal, I started to suspect that I was struggling to formulate a "philosophy of eating" but couldn't yet articulate it in writing because there were still so many issues I hadn't sorted out carefully enough, not to mention that I was suddenly bumping into all kinds of new areas where I essentially had no formal intellectual or academic knowledge (topics like pleasure, leisure, and conviviality). But the more I kept trying to sort out the food-related issues the more I kept being pulled outward, and my journal-like Word file evolved into a Socratic dialogue between me and me:

> *Given what you are learning from scientists about the environmental crisis related to food (e.g., genetically modified organisms, the depletion of topsoils) and from social scientists about food politics (e.g., Marion Nestle's work on nutrition), how can you carry on like this about everyday domestic pleasures? Do we really have this luxury? Aren't you degenerating into an academic version of consumer society's Food Network? Have you forgotten your admiration for Kazantzakis's celebration of those who struggle-to-the-very-end – his "modern" Odysseus, his Captain Michales, his Saint Francis and his Christ? Is this what a steady job and a mortgage have done to you?*
>
> *Perhaps. But aren't* **you** *sliding back into the dangerous assumption that every struggle has to be a strictly ascetic affair? Don't Deleuze and Guattari, who you also admire, make joy and desire central to their revolutionary project? Wouldn't Kazantzakis's Odysseus wear his cap playfully tipped to the side? ("O Sun, great Oriental, my proud mind's golden cap/I love to wear you cocked askew, to play and burst in song throughout our lives, and so rejoice in our hearts.")*[**2**] *Can't people pursue their own desires and pleasures* **and** *work toward a greater good, without necessarily buying into the mythology of the invisible hand?*
>
> *So maybe the question is really* **when** *should we be willing, or better yet, when might we desire to sacrifice the pursuit of our own intellectual, bodily, and spiritual pleasures in the name of some collective well-being? Or maybe this is it: Might we discover or construct particular paths on which the dogged pursuit of our own pleasures seamlessly contributes to the cause of a greater good?*

In attempting to get at my "philosophy of eating" I found myself coming face-to-face with many of the "big questions" of philosophers, artists, and intellectuals ("How should I live?" "What is happiness?"), questions that I wouldn't presume to have answers to, and which themselves generate more and more questions. I had begun to stray from questions related to food per se.

But then, as I began to reflect on the fact that I had inadvertently wandered away from the topic of food, another occurred, this time between my scholarly short circuiting self and that part of me that desires to understand mentoring. "A single question, so long as it is important to the learners, can open the world," I remembered from colleagues Lee Herman and Alan Mandell's *From Teaching to Mentoring* (p. 16). "[O]nce [adult students] are assured that the content and organization of their learning will suit […] practical needs, our students also want to address the more contemplative issues which almost invariably underlie, suffuse, and trouble the daily business ordinarily consuming their attention: Who am I? What sort of life do I want to live? How can I be free?" I recalled (ibid, pp. 1 - 2). In other words, I recognized a certain correspondence between what can happen to students through mentoring – that is, if mentoring hasn't been reduced to mere degree-plan-engineering – and what can happen to scholars during the leisurely pursuit of their learned questions: In setting out to accomplish a particular goal thoughtfully and critically – and with wonder – sooner or later one comes face-to-face with "contemplative issues." Indeed, as Herman and Mandell argue in their discussion of two of their students:

> More or less eagerly, [Doris and Alex] will do what is necessary to obtain the support, certification, and post-academic opportunity they desire. Like Thrasymachus, they expect to find happiness (including a kind of economic justice) in power. But Doris and Alex *also sense that such a view of life is insufficient;* they are also inspired with wonder. They are curious, even passionate, about learning which will help them understand the meanings of their own and others' lives, regardless of its "use value." (p. 23, my emphasis)

So, whether it's a student seeking a degree in business management or me trying to figure out what I want to write next about food (or to cook for dinner), life's most contemplative questions are always *right there in front of us … Look out!*

Feeling like I was getting carried away by all this mentoring business again, I made one last valiant attempt to stay on track with my food project. One of my selves dutifully reminded another self:

> *Hey, this contemplative business is all well and good, but keep in mind that you (and your colleagues) live in multiple contexts, and this includes the hard reality of "publish or perish" and the CV-fetish of faculty and administrators across the nation. If you allow yourself to become bewildered by all this talk of pleasure and desire and good," you'll never get anything written … then you'll be sorry!*
>
> *Indeed, my good sir, and I'm the first to admit that we faculty have to negotiate the tension between our own individual desires as thinkers and the political economy of academia that is beyond our immediate control. But may I also remind you that conflicts between individual desires and the political economy of academic credentials and worlds of work are* **exactly** *what many of your mentees experience and have been learning to negotiate as nontraditional students, and with which you as a mentor claim to "help them:" "[A]s university faculty, [mentors] are responsible for counseling our students and for helping them learn not only what they individually desire, but also the content and skills typically expected of a university graduate. Our role is to help our students, each one, learn to integrate and manage the complexity and tension of these multiple contexts – their own and ours – within which they seek academic degrees and a 'higher' education" (Herman and Mandell, p. 7). And might I also point out that you are constantly trying to "help them" in this regard even though you are never certain that you exactly know how to help* **yourself** *when it comes to the very same issue, and that this is* **precisely** *one of the reasons why as a mentor you should "concentrate on learning* **from, with and for the sake** *of [your] students, each one, individually?" (ibid, p. 140). Don't you, Mr. career-protecting, tenure-track professor with your philosophy of eating, see that you have something in common with that student of yours who is trying to get a bachelor's degree to get a promotion to help his family, all the while working full time?*
>
> *Don't exaggerate! Okay, so that student and I happen to have something in common, but there are also so many differences. Each of us is enabled and constrained by our respective contexts in very particular ways, and we each have to go forward with our lives, prioritizing our responses to the specific contexts and forces that are beyond our immediate control. And in my case, this includes protecting my scholarship from being short-circuited by too many mentoring-related ideas and questions!*
>
> *Wait a minute! I wasn't suggesting that you focus on something you might happen to have in common with a student in order to erase your differences. What I was trying to show you was that things may begin to look differently if you take the dialogues between you and your students as a "starting point," or better yet as a useful frame of reference, instead of making a fetish out of categories like "teaching," "scholarship," "mentoring," "course development," "cooking and paying the mortgage," and so on. From the point of view of "the small and diverse communities students and mentors create together" (Herman and Mandell, p. 8), maybe these categories are little more than provisionally useful fictions that, when taken too seriously, start getting in the way.*
>
> *In the way of what?*
>
> *Well, that's a good question, and I'm not sure I can articulate this well enough yet, as I am still trying to make theoretical sense out of it myself. What I think I am getting at is this: Maybe the reason that the things you have been describing feel like instances of "short-circuiting" is because you have overly privileged, or naturalized, all these different categories, and so you wind up experiencing the sudden and forceful connections of one to another – from "the academic" to "the practical," or from "the scholarly" to "the mentorly" – as potentially destructive and undermining of your*

well-calculated and intelligently laid plans – plans, that is, which were predicated on your already having completely bought into these categories as ontological realities. What if you look at it differently? Like the flows of wonder-electricity passing through an incredibly complex circuitry – passing here, then there, and then there, and then there … Only after the fact, in retrospect, are particular instances of these flows being pigeon-holed by an historically contingent system of representation: "That was about scholarship!" "That had to do with mentoring!" "That was a matter of dinner!" But these aren't short circuits. They are just the free flows of wonder through rhizomatic circuits.

*So you're saying that by overly buying into categories like "scholarship" vs. "mentoring" or "academic" vs. "practical" I am having a hard time recognizing flows of wonder? And maybe even worse, that I am misrecognizing them as "***un***healthy"?*

Yes, and maybe even that your belief in these categories as privileged or ontologically prior, contributes to generating the **real** *problems: not by creating short circuits, but by cutting off whole segments of the circuitry of wondering-production from one another, by conditioning and restricting the flows of wonder in ways that are unnecessarily repressive.*

"Wondering-production"? What are you talking about?

I'm sorry. I've been drawing on Deleuze and Guattari's materialist ontology of desire in Anti-Oedipus (which talks about "desiring-production") in trying to articulate all this to you. But to be honest, I still have a lot to learn about it.

Well, it sounds to me like you need to spend a lot more time just learning what those two are saying if you ever hope to translate it to somebody like me! But I am *intrigued. And you know what else? Even though according to my current way of thinking it is probably a long-term career-risk, I think I am going to put my writing project on hold for now and go back to re-read the Herman and Mandell book about mentoring, and focus in particular on what I can learn about taking the "mentor-student dialogue" as one's point of reference. And I also want to think some more about some possible studies I could enter into the new Learning Opportunities Inventory, having to do with a number of the different themes that I found myself bumping into when I thought I was working on a food project.*

And I'm going to do what you recommend and spend more time just reading Deleuze and Guattari on desire. And you know what else? I received this invitation from Lorraine Lander the other day to a follow-up Mentoring Institute-sponsored gathering for meta-discussion of scholarship. With the sudden jump in enrollments this term, and the ANGEL conversion project coming fast, I was thinking I'd turn this one down, but now I think I'm gonna go!

Me too!

Notes

1. Eric Ball's "Refashioning the Scholarly Self for Higher Education: Reflections in Progress," was included in *All About Mentoring* #31, summer 2006.
2. Translated from the Modern Greek by Kimon Friar.

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The Independent Learning Situation Audit

Chris Rounds, Central New York Center

This audit was first designed for use with students engaged in a Central New York study group that, in its first incarnation, was called "Making Sense." It later became "Independent Learning Strategies," and was eventually redesigned as a Center for Distance Learning course. I saw this primarily as a transitional study, helping students new to Empire State College to navigate two substantial transitions: from classroom-based to independent study, and from introductory to advanced level work. The group also created an opportunity for students to meet other students going through the same changes in their lives. I am confident that the group experience was at least as helpful to these students as were the materials presented.

I've used this piece in conjunction with a variety of additional readings over the years. Currently, I'm using a writing of my own called "Independent Learning Strategies: The Basics."

The "audit" is designed to get prospective and newly enrolled student students thinking about the various dimensions of becoming an effective independent learner. (For example, I have used this as a part of educational planning.) Some of the topics covered are quite predictable, including reading, writing and critical thinking skills. Other topics are more environmental than academic. These questions get students thinking about managing their time, creating a space or spaces in which to study, and developing a network of supporters.

The audit has proven useful to me in ways that I hadn't anticipated when it was developed. It helps me gain insight into the particular situations from which my students are coming. It flags topics that students are worried about. And it highlights what they perceive to be their strengths. Students tell me that it has helped them think through some of the challenges they're likely to face as they re-enter the learning environment. It also puts some topics "on the table" between mentor and student that I believe are crucial to their success in the college.

What the audit does not do is solve any of the problems it may raise. It doesn't improve a student's writing skills or solve the problem of creating a place to study in a crowded apartment. But by raising these issues, it does create opportunities to begin addressing them.

This audit is intended to help you think through the implications of your decision to return to college as an independent learner. It should get you thinking about some of the challenges you will face in becoming an independent learner, and it will suggest some ways in which you can respond to those challenges. It may also prompt you to discuss your decision to return to college with other important people in your life. By returning this form to your mentor or tutor, you will also help that person get to know you better which, in turn, will enable him/her to respond to you more effectively.

You have received, with the audit, a handout titled *Independent Learning Strategies: The Basics*. You are encouraged to read it before completing the related portion of the Audit.

This Audit can be used in many different ways. Guidance concerning where to send it, or who to give it to, should be provided with the audit.

Please complete the following form, including comments and observations. Send the original and keep a copy for yourself.

Your Name: ______________________________

Address: ______________________________

E-mail: ______________________________

Telephone: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

Finding/Creating the Time to Learn

Fill out the weeklong calendar below and then complete the questions about finding the time to learn.

- Fill in the time commitments you have that can't be changed (work, travel, family, community commitments, sleeping, eating, etc.).
- Circle the commitments that might be modified or eliminated.
- Calculate from this the number of hours potentially available for study.

Be realistic. This exercise will be useful only to the extent that you are honest with yourself.

Hours	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
5 a.m.							
6 a.m.							
7 a.m.							
8 a.m.							
9 a.m.							
10 a.m.							
11 a.m.							
12 p.m.							
1 p.m.							
2 p.m.							
3 p.m.							
4 p.m.							
5 p.m.							
6 p.m.							
7 p.m.							
8 p.m.							
9 p.m.							

Hours	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
10 p.m.							
11 p.m.							
12 p.m.							
1 a.m.							
2 a.m.							
3 a.m.							
4 a.m.							

Number of hours potentially available for study: ______

Assuming that you will need about 10 hours per week to study for each 4-credit study in which you are enrolled, do you have a problem?

______

How serious is that problem? ______

Can you identify some strategies that you might use to resolve the problem? (e.g., delegating responsibilities, reducing social commitments, sleeping less, working fast! studying fast! driving fast!) ______

______

______

If you commit yourself to these changes, do you think you will stick to them? ______

______

Given the limits on time available to study, name some strategies you think you can use to go about learning to study as efficiently and effectively as possible. ______

______

______

Finding/Creating a Place to Learn

How would you evaluate your situation regarding a place to study?

- ❑ No problem:
- ❑ Potential problem:
- ❑ Serious problem:

How critical is the issue of space likely to be for you?

What are you going to do about it? ______

______

Supportive Learning Network

Who are the important "players" in your learning environment? (consider spouse, children, parents, siblings, friends, employer, and co-workers, among others) ______________________________

Do you have critics among those players? Why, do you think, are your critics hostile to the prospect of your continuing your education?

____

Can you think of strategies you might employ to "win over" some of those who seem skeptical or critical of your plans to complete a college degree? ______________________________

If there are people whose hostility you can't overcome, how can you protect yourself from their influence? ______________________________

____

Are there people in your community whom you don't necessarily know well but who might prove to be supportive? Your list might include other adults returning to school, alumni of the college interested in helping current students, people at work who have strongly supported the concept of continuous learning, religious and community leaders, previous teachers with whom you have lost touch, etc. __________

____

In general terms, how supportive do you think your learning network is? ______________________________

____

What can be done to improve and expand it? ______________________________

____

____

Defining and Expanding Access to Learning Resources

The following is a checklist of learning resources available in many communities. Evaluate the degree to which each is accessible to you.

Resource	Availability	Limitations
Small public library		
Large public library		
Two-year college library		
Four-year college library		
University research library		
Corporate/private library		
World Wide Web at home		
World Wide Web at work		
World Wide Web at library		
Bookstores		
Community organizations		
Government agencies		
Nongovernment organizations		
Public officials		
Individuals with special knowledge		
Other:		

The World Wide Web has the potential to provide you with access to an incredible range of learning resources. But using the web requires experience along with access. How would you evaluate your level of experience in using the web for research?

- ❑ I have no experience:
- ❑ I have access but little experience:
- ❑ I'm an accomplished web user:

Do you know someone who would be willing to give you a hand in getting started with the web? (One of your children, for example!)

____

Are there "short courses" on using the web available locally? Be sure to visit Empire State College's Library and Learning Resource Center, where under "Learn More" you can complete a range of training exercises. ______________________________

____

In light of your circumstances, how important do you anticipate the web being as a learning resource for this and other courses?

- ❑ Not important:
- ❑ Of some importance:
- ❑ Very important:
- ❑ I don't know yet:

Do you think of your local learning environment as resource rich or resource poor?

- ❑ If it's resource rich, what strategies can you use to capitalize on those resources? Are there specific tools you will need or contacts you ought to make? ____

  ____
- ❑ If it's resource poor, what efforts might you make to expand the resource pool or expand the boundaries of your environment? Ê Are there unchangeable limitations within which you will need to learn to work? ______________________________ Ê

  ____

Independent Learning Skills

Discipline:

How would you characterize your ability to set tasks for yourself, carry out those tasks, and resist distraction while you're engaged in the task?

Ability to Complete Tasks At Home	Ability to Complete Tasks At Work
❑ Very good	❑ Very good
❑ Pretty good	❑ Pretty good
❑ Okay	❑ Okay
❑ What was the question?	❑ What was the question?

Concentration:

Do you expect that your ability to concentrate on a reading or writing project will be a problem in your efforts to complete assignments? Explain. ____

____

Writing Skills: **(please place an X next to your response.)**

How would you characterize yourself as a writer?

- ❑ I love to write!
- ❑ I've done well at tasks requiring writing in the past.
- ❑ I didn't mind 'writing-intensive' classes in the past, but don't use it much.
- ❑ I haven't had much exposure to writing.
- ❑ I see writing as an academic skill area I need to work hard at.

How much writing do you do?

- ❑ I write every day, both on the job and off. Ê
- ❑ I write occasionally, but not a lot.
- ❑ I don't write very much, or don't feel comfortable writing.

Given the academic and professional goals you have set for yourself, how would you characterize the challenge you face with regard to writing?

- ❑ I think the abilities I now possess will serve me well.
- ❑ I think my skills need some polishing.
- ❑ I think I'm going to have to work hard to rise to the expectations inherent in my academic and professional goals.

Reading Skills:

How would you characterize the reading you normally do at home?

- ❑ I read only occasionally … newspapers and popular magazines.
- ❑ I read books, but for personal enjoyment.
- ❑ I read "serious" books and think of myself as a reader.

How would you characterize your work-related reading?

- ❑ I'm not required to read much at work.
- ❑ I read a good deal, mostly technical stuff.
- ❑ I read a lot, including reports and professional journals.

How would you evaluate yourself as a reader?

- ❑ I'm very confident that I'll be able to read and learn effectively on my own.
- ❑ I enjoy reading, but haven't done it very seriously in a while.
- ❑ I'm not used to doing much reading, but it hasn't posed a problem before.
- ❑ I'm concerned about my ability to keep up, and to absorb information and to remember what I've read.

Levels of Reading:

Read the observations on Levels of Reading first before answering the following:

How would you characterize yourself regarding reading for understanding?

- ❑ I have not engaged in reading in this way.
- ❑ I have read for understanding, but only occasionally.
- ❑ I'm comfortable with this concept and read for understanding often.

How would you characterize yourself regarding critical reading?

- ❑ I can't think of a time when I've engaged in critical reading.
- ❑ I read critically as an aspect of my job.
- ❑ I have read critically in previous college courses.
- ❑ I find myself reading critically both at home and work … I'm comfortable with it.

Can you describe a situation in which you have engaged in comparative reading? ____________________________________

____

Can you imagine a situation in which the skills required for comparative reading would serve you well in your community or at work? ____

____

Analytical and Critical Thinking:

Can you describe a situation in which you have been obliged to think critically about a problem or issue? ____________________

____

Is critical thinking a skill you feel comfortable with, or does it make you uneasy? Explain. ____________________________________

____

____

Can you identify someone you know well whom you would characterize as a critical thinker? Why? ______________________

____

____

If you were asked to place yourself at some point along this continuum, where would it be? Explain.

- ❑ I'm already a critical thinker.
- ❑ I engage in critical thinking sometimes but not often.
- ❑ I want to learn and I understand the need for critical thinking.
- ❑ I haven't done it and don't see the usefulness of ever doing it.

Words and Worldviews: Narrative Facts and Fictions

Marie Tondreau, Hudson Valley Center

I want to talk today about the narrative construction of worldviews, so perhaps I should begin by stating what I mean by that. A worldview is a belief system, a perspective about the world, how it works, and what our place in it is, or should be. A narrative worldview is that perspective clothed in the language or form of a story.

Literary insights have long been utilized to enhance our understanding of lived experience in diverse disciplinary domains, but this is only one dimension of their value. The other dimension concerns the appropriation of "story" (in its magnificent coat of many colors) as a "root metaphor" or organizing framework in the human sciences and in education. Metaphor is a way of seeing that provides a powerful vantage point from which to attempt a diagnostic reading of the twists and turns of human existence, to understand what is and visualize what could be in human lives and cultures. Narrative as a metaphor is about composing worlds–the narrative construction of self, society, and structures of knowledge. It is not the only way to compose a world, but it may be one of the best ways to understand how human realities are constructed. As psychotherapist Susan Baur (1994) says:

Narrative – the stories we tell about ourselves and our worlds – is becoming the root metaphor for knowing. As each of us constructs a personal reality, it is organized as we put it into words. It is as if we construct a world for ourselves from the fragments of information at our disposal and then find we are held back or pushed ahead by the very constructions we create with our stories. (p. xiv)

I am especially interested in life stories, and how they may contain embedded worldviews of which we often remain oblivious. I was once at a seminar that dealt with problems of narrative representation, and participated in a small group discussion about life stories. One of us (perhaps me)

Marie Tondreau

said that a life story is a chronicle of what happened in an individual's life, usually told from their inside perspective, usually told in chronological form (beginning with "I was born" and ending in the present). One of the other group members was a Native from the Okanagan tribe in British Columbia, and he smiled gently and spoke his own understanding of what a life story may be. He stated that his people, if asked to tell their life story, would likely not understand the request, and that if pressed, they would start with the lives of their ancestors, seven generations back, ending with "I was born." He said they believed that a life could not be a story until it was ended, and that the telling belonged to those who came after. I thought about this long after the seminar was over, as it disturbed part of my own narrative worldview – my own assumptions about the centrality of self in the stories we tell about our lives, and the importance of internal reflection on the meaning of those lives. It was an alien concept to me, that my life story might have nothing to do with me, that telling it might belong to the others who shared my time on earth, that others might determine what it meant. I wondered if that would be freeing, or constricting, and suspected that the question would never occur to those who had grown up with a very different internalized worldview than mine. Since I believe that our narrative worldviews (which are coded in our stories) guide our actions, I wondered what guide there would be for someone who did not own the right to tell their own life story. Then I thought that perhaps their actions would be guided by stories nonetheless: stories about other people's lives, and perhaps by a desire to have their life represented in a positive way by those who would tell it later. I am still pondering the implications of that simple difference in perspectives on what a "life story" is, and I hope I have learned to always consider context, which may turn "facts" into "fictions" before my astonished eyes.

Emotions and actions stem more from the stories we believe than from any simple set of facts, so fabrications and fictions may rule the life experience of many people, at least some of the time. Our emotional realities are shaped by what we believe, not whatever consensual "truth" may be, and we act in accord with our narrative worldviews, however distorted or embellished they may have become over time. Narrative therapy works on the premise that stories can change (although the facts of a life, to whatever extent they can be determined, do not). This is sometimes taken to mean that all one has to do to be happy is to make up a new story. Not true! We cannot so easily fool ourselves as that, most of us, most of the time, and trying to do so is a dangerous endeavor. Still, interpretations can change, new facts may be discovered and incorporated, and stories can change. When they do, the emotions and actions that derive from them usually change as well.

The exploration of a life story (whether undertaken for purposes of research or in the context of therapy) occurs at a given

point in time, a present moment that is suspended somewhere between past and future and in which both participate. Often, the past is viewed as that which has already happened and cannot be changed, a story or history already written which may be excavated by eliciting memories, a chronological recitation of happenings that constitute "reality" apart from any interpretation placed upon them. Theories of human nature often define normality as being in touch with reality, being able to perceive and understand and accurately remember what is true and verifiable by so called "objective" investigation. Mental illness then becomes synonymous with being "out of touch" with reality – perceiving, understanding, remembering in ways that do not correspond to the "real" world – or experiencing emotions that are not comprehensible to self or others as "appropriate" responses to external "facts." Postmodern paradigms challenge this view of reality, and thus invalidate this way of defining normality and illness: if reality is a social construction, normality and illness reflect one's degree of conformity to normative standards rather than absolute categories that can be separated from the context in which they occur. However, human beings, as authors, do not have complete creative control, and cannot simply imagine whatever life they want into being. Like the authors of literature, human beings cannot ignore the boundaries of possibility without becoming unintelligible, to self and others, and in that way lies madness. As Wayne Booth (1990) notes:

Many of us … [live] so much of our lives in stories that we must wonder what to call primary, the plowing and planting or the stories about plowing and planting. And when we go too far along that line, or when we embrace certain kinds of destructive "realities," we are rightly declared deranged. (p. 15)

Autobiographical memory is keenly involved with the issue of fact versus fiction – in much the same way that the writing of any history demands a judicious mingling of fidelity to events as they happened with a literary sensibility in the crafting of the tale when it is told. Memory is necessarily selective; human beings do not have an infinite capacity to process, let alone store, all that occurs within their sphere of awareness. So, what we attend to is the first way in which we story our experience. And what resonates for us, what we notice, is often (consciously or not) influenced by the stories we already possess, and which "prime" our limited attention to notice certain things and not others. John Kotre (in a wonderful book called *White Gloves: How We Create Ourselves Through Memory*) states that there are two opposing elements in the functioning of what he calls "the remembering self." The first is to act like a librarian or the keeper of an archive, filing pristine facts away in neat, ordered categories – cross-referenced and ready for retrieval at a moment's notice, in its original form. He writes that: "Memory is supposed to distinguish between what is true and what is false, between fact and fantasy … It is supposed to strive for accuracy and revise itself to conform to historical truth" (p. 116). However, says Kotre, the remembering self also plays a different role:

> *Lifewriting … provides a window into the world of other times and places, an opportunity to learn from immersion in the stories of lives, to vicariously enter other worlds and share other experiences.*

Memory's archivist by day has a secret passion by night: to fashion a story about itself, a story that some of us call the personal myth. A myth, in the sense that we use the term, is not a falsehood but a comprehensive view of reality, a different kind of reality than a librarian knows. A myth is a story that speaks to the heart as well as the mind, seeking to generate conviction about what it thinks is true. (p. 116)

Lifewriting (such as autobiography and memoir) provides a window into the world of other times and places, an opportunity to learn from immersion in the stories of lives, to vicariously enter other worlds and share other experiences. However, it is a quixotic window, often rose-colored or carnival funhouse, shifting what is seen through its bracketed framing. Lifewriting is constructed from fragments of memory, in the shifting weather of moods and motives that swirl within the storyteller and shape the telling of the tale. If "truth" lies within, it is a "narrative" rather than a "historical" truth (as Donald Spence contends), molded by a "narrative" rather than a "paradigmatic" or scientific mode of thought (as Jerome Bruner asserts). This does not invalidate the worth of such tales, nor does it relegate them to the category of fiction; however, it provides a context for understanding what is there. Memory is always a dynamic process of interpretation, rather than a static retrieval of stored facts. According to Burr and Butt: "The 'facts' of the past are not like mushrooms, waiting to be collected; they are picked out within shifting narrative searchlights. When a new story emerges, new facts are remembered" (p. 201).

And as The Personal Narratives Group puts it:

> When talking about their lives, people lie sometimes, forget a lot, exaggerate, become confused, and get things wrong. Yet, they are revealing truths. These truths don't reveal the past "as it actually was," aspiring to a standard of objectivity. They give us instead the truths of our experiences. They aren't the result of empirical research or the logic of mathematical deductions. Unlike the reassuring Truth of the scientific ideal, the truths of personal narratives are neither open to proof nor self-evident. We come to understand them only through interpretation, paying careful attention to the contexts that shape their creation and the worldviews that inform them. (p. 261)

For example, Neruda's poem titled "The Me Bird" is an elusive portrait of the inner life of the poet, a self story that offers only provocative glimpses of muted emotion and hidden meanings, disclosing no details of time or place or circumstance, an intimate lifewriting that touches deep resonant chords without revealing more than a shadowy silhouette of a life:

I am the Pablo Bird,
bird of a single feather,
a flier in the clear shadow
and obscure clarity,
my wings are unseen,
my ears resound
when I walk among the trees
or beneath the tombstones
like an unlucky umbrella
or a naked sword,
stretched like a bow
or round like a grape,
I fly on and on not knowing,
wounded in the dark night,
who is waiting for me,
who does not want my song,
who desires my death,
who will not know I'm arriving
and will not come to subdue me,
to bleed me, to twist me,
or to kiss my clothes,
torn by the shrieking wind.
That's why I come and go,
fly and don't fly but sing:
I am the furious bird
of the calm storm.

(Neruda, n.d.)

This is a metaphorical lifewriting, a poetic fiction which evokes inner experience that tantalizes but provides no clarification. This is an impressionistic self-portrait or an jazz improvisation, not a photograph or a historical chronicle. I picture the poet writing at a desk before a window, in a small circle of lamplight, surrounded by the black shadows of midnight, struggling to reconcile the wild exuberance of flight with the dark weight of pain and loneliness. His poetic fiction may not hold facts about his life, but it does convey deep truths about his inner experience.

All literature is a web woven of words, language in rich and textured costumes that reflects the very world it seeks to create anew. However, even imaginary worlds contain an implied cosmology and cannot ignore the boundaries of possibility without becoming unintelligible to readers. Literary theorists are certainly not alone in the elusive borderlands between the actual and the imaginary: exploration of the parameters of reality (of what is "out there") and to what degree it corresponds to our perception of it (or is a construction of the mind) is perhaps one of the most fundamental issues that face the (post)modern world. According to Michael Roemer (1995): "Like quantum theory, traditional story acknowledges that we cannot observe the 'real' accurately or directly … Stories, like most physicists, take a realist position. They acknowledge that what is 'out there' cannot be known, but their very form commits them to its existence" (p. 84). Marie-Laure Ryan (1992) concurs, in harmony with philosophers who refute the notion of mind as a "mirror" of reality (like Richard Rorty), and historiographers who insist that all accounts of historical events are "emplotted" by those who tell their tales (like Hayden White). Ryan claims that "reality does not present itself to immediate experience in narrative form … Narrative is form – and form is imposed by the mind (or in a more radical version, by language)" (p. 258). However, not all would agree that stories "take a realist position." For instance, Jonathan Culler (1997) contends that "literature … takes its place among the acts of language that transform the world, bringing into being the things that they name" (p. 92). Our stories (whether rooted in actual or imaginary realms) shape our world in words, and thus shape our worldviews.

Narrative worldviews are not only important for individual life stories. Stories shared by people in groups (such as families, religions, societies, or countries) affect life on every level, with sometimes devastating effect. Burr and Butt (1999) remind us that:

Storytelling is not a simple individual-level phenomenon. The stories we inhabit belong to a particular time and social context … Though they require a basis in the lives of tellers, they also need encouragement and the articulation of others to produce them. It is also necessary to have audiences willing to accept them, and perhaps recognize their own experiences within them. (p. 201)

Whether the attack on the World Trade Centers in New York City is the story of a terrorist attack or a holy war depends on whether you were inside the towers or flying one of the planes that crashed into them. This doesn't mean there are no valid grounds for making moral determinations about the actions of others; however, without consideration of the blurred lines that comprise the facts and fictions of the narrative worldviews that guide people's actions, there can be no true understanding. Education (like life) is not a journey with a defined destination. My passion for narrative derives, in part, from my awareness of multiple paths and possibilities, from my belief that there is no one road and no single destination in life, and from my desire to honor context and diversity in human lives and in the quest for knowledge and understanding.

The relevance of narrative for education pertains to broad issues of educational philosophy and curriculum design – what is taught, and how it is taught. Stories have been a tool of socialization and acculturation for centuries. Tribal knowledge was expressed in myth and song, and passed down through the generations orally. Later, written stories captured such tales, becoming independent of individual or collective memory. Stories are still the way we learn to negotiate our way through the world. Families tell stories so children will learn what it means to be a person, a member of a particular culture or religion, an adult, a man or a woman. Children learn how the world works and what behaviors are accepted or shunned. People communicate in storied form as they move through the minutes and hours of their days. Western society has devalued stories in education, relegating them to the realm of recreation or quaint folklore, dismissing them as peripheral distractions with no legitimate place in the "serious" scholarly communities of scientific and social science disciplines. Stories of personal experience have been marginalized, leaving many students with an education that provided access to a vast library of facts and figures and information, but little guidance on how to integrate it into their past, present, or future lives. Furthermore, there has been little (if any) acknowledgement of the storied contexts that shaped the creation of the facts and figures and information taught; many (if not most) students have sought evidence of their existence in the world in vain. The canon of "dead white men" dictated what mattered: what must be taught, what must be learned. Story in teaching and learning is not just about literature and storytelling: it is about the construction of self, society, and structures of knowledge; it is (all at the same time) process, product, and paradigm. We are storied creatures. We learn by the stories

we live, and live by the stories we learn. It is my contention that educators should utilize this natural propensity to enhance the learning process, and provide an expanded repertoire of stories to supplement those we acquire on our own.

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Two Poems

Matt Sanders, Verizon Corporate College Program

Dear Student

The CBE
in your DP
is BME,
not SMT
    (your AOS)

and we have the LC
from the LOI
at GVC,
but we need a CE from CDL –
OK?

Sincerely,
Your DAR

    cc
OCAS

*

Dear Mentor

I thought you'd have my work by now
But I was on vacation in Curacao
Sitting with my laptop at the water
With my spouse, the triplets, and our infant daughter,
When Rex (our Chihuahua) began to bark
And then – we saw – this Enormous Shark –

Well, we pulled all the children out of reach
And ran for safety up the beach,
But while I was using the lifeguard's phone,
My hard-drive got clogged with Coppertone,
And every time that I press "Enter" –

No! I can't lie to my mentor!
We're both adults, so I'll just tell you
The reason my paper is overdue:

The kids ate my homework.

No Place to Hide: An Interview with Anne Bertholf

Alan Mandell, Mentoring Institute

Anne Bertholf came to Empire State College's Niagara Frontier Center in 1984. She served as part-time mentor, as associate dean, as dean, and then as advisor for new deans in her role as "special assistant to the provost." She left the college in December, 2005.

Mandell: Your first experiences at Empire State College were as a mentor, weren't they? What actually attracted you to this kind of work?

Bertholf: Yes, I was a part-time writing mentor. Early on, I worked with a man who was a high-level manager at the local Ford plant. He was very smart, but with spotty formal education – a sharecropper's son who had grown up in Mississippi. I asked him to do what I usually asked students with technological backgrounds to do: write a "how to" paper. He didn't know what to write about, so after we talked a while, I asked him to tell me how to plant cotton. He wrote his paper in a sequence that made no sense. We went through the paper, and I told him that some of what he wrote was clear, but he hadn't thought about "me" – he hadn't thought about writing to someone who knew nothing about cotton. After we'd talked about how to give someone step-by-step instructions, he came back with a new draft. I couldn't believe the improvement! I was knocked out. When I asked him why his second draft was so much better than the first, he responded, somewhat impatiently, "You told me what to do!" Well, over the year I had told many students how to improve papers, but it had never worked quite this well! This student had come to Empire in large part because poor writing skills were an impediment for him: rather than the tedious and routine speech explaining to a class of 18-year-olds why they needed to be better writers, I had finally met a student telling *me* why he needed to write better. His background and his mind-set meant that our discussion opened the door for him. It helped him see something that he hadn't understood before, that writing is actually about communicating with another person. I was immediately converted by the excitement of working with a smart, highly motivated grown up: I was hooked on the Empire State College student.

Anne Bertholf

Mandell: So it was the "opening the door" part that was appealing?

Bertholf: Yes. As a part-timer, I saw that the college's processes made me impatient. I'm a results-oriented person. I want to get the task done, and complying with the "paperwork" requirements sometimes seemed like obstacles to "getting the task done." Having the luxury, as a part-time instructor (not a primary mentor) of learning only what had to be done immediately for the students I was working with, rather than trying to understand the entire flow of paper, meant that I could absorb the "rules" in fairly leisurely fashion. So the system – the paperwork didn't get in my way. I found it exciting that I could help students structure learning tasks, and that this skill could be incredibly useful. Students could then go off in lots of wonderful directions on their own. But I also remember discovering, in the one-on-one format, how impossible it is to hide at Empire State College. Students cannot avoid direct confrontation with ideas, with opinions, with mentors. As associate dean, I did hundreds of orientations over the years. I always warned incoming students that their Empire State College experience would be different from sitting in a 400-person lecture hall, where you could easily keep your head down, avoid eye contact, and never have to participate. At Empire State College, all students get called on!

Mandell: And for the faculty too.

Bertholf: Yes. In the same way that students cannot avoid interacting with the mentor, the mentor cannot avoid dealing directly with students and with their difficulties. In my experience teaching writing at Kent State University, typically to classes of 25 - 30 students, there were certainly students in those classes whose thinking was disordered, but that state of disorder could easily remain unaddressed in classes of that size. I believe that "received wisdom" suggested that simply having students complete more and more essays would remedy the disorganization. Talking with students far less frequently than in the Empire State College mode, instructors might never recognize or address serious limitations. Here you cannot avoid dealing with the problems. Because you talk with the student about what she did in her composition and what was or was not communicated, there is no escaping the student's limitations. The process strips you, just as it does the student. Students can't hide from faculty, and faculty cannot ignore students' needs.

Mandell: There is the question of acknowledging to ourselves and to our students that there is a problem or a limitation, and then there is the question of whether we know what to do about it or

whether we have the resources to do what we wish could be done.

Bertholf: The resource question is very important, and there are other questions, too. At Kent State, there was a student who scared me. She was a single mother living in a remote rural area. She wrote a paper about extraterrestrial beings in which she described running out into the fields in the middle of the night with her children and welcoming these visitors. This unnerved me: I felt concern for her and for her children. So I took her paper to the director of freshman comp and he read it and said something like, "I don't see a problem here. She writes pretty well and the sentences are OK." He didn't get the point. He didn't see that I had any business being alarmed by her content given the little that I knew about her. I'm sorry to confess that I don't know the outcome. I referred her to the counseling center, but I had no strong sense that she would follow through.

Mandell: I guess this also gets to the issue of what mentoring is – does it mean being more attentive to student skills than if we were in a situation with many more students? Does it mean listening to the individual student's voice? Does it mean being concerned about a person's entire worldview, as you seem to have been with your Kent State student?

Bertholf: I think that it means all of those things. When we get to "worldview" issues, however, we must worry about the fine line between being a mentor and being a therapist. I think that mentors in human services deal with this all the time, and it's probably not anything that can be ever be perfectly resolved: where does the counseling begin and where does the mentoring begin? If you have a student who is so distracted by the pressures of her life that she seems unable to concentrate, do you spend valuable time talking about these things, or do you say something like "My job is to teach you philosophy, and I'm sorry you are having a bad day, but we've got to get going," even though you know the student can't "get going." Empire State College mentors are all over the map about this. Some of it has to do with academic discipline – some disciplines invite more personal disclosure than others – and some of it has to do with you as an individual, with how comfortable you are with the disclosures that students make to us.

Mandell: This gets right to the question of who our students are and who the college believes is a "good candidate" to succeed here. We may have an ideal of a person who comes to the college very focused and very disciplined as a learner, but, it's my experience at least, that most of our students do not have those skills and that sense of themselves when they begin here.

Bertholf: For me, what you're asking hugely is about the changes that have been taking place in the college. One of my concerns is that many of our successful students would not have made it in a traditional institution – in a classroom-based institution. We need to concern ourselves with these students and provide what they need, allowing the luxury of taking time with that student to build the skills and the confidence that she needs to be successful. It can be a very time-consuming process. For example, I've never directed introductory-level writing studies in four meetings. Not possible. I never did it. Not once. I never even tried. I always assumed that the student and I would meet frequently, and I would have been surprised to finish "on time."

Mandell: This "luxury of time" question is so significant.

Bertholf: And it affects the issue of our mission and who we can serve and who we should be serving and whether we have the resources to respond effectively to them.

Mandell: With all of these issues about the range of mentoring styles and student skills, and learning resources, and with what is certainly a really very private world of mentoring – there is no one who is sitting in on our one-to-one sessions with our students – how do you get at questions of academic quality? As an associate dean, how did you even begin to address these "academic quality" issues?

Bertholf: Honestly, there were times where the crunch of the work and the pressure of the work meant that the absence of bad news was good news! I think that the community developed at a center is extraordinarily important. The conversations we have with each other – about everything – are crucial. That means what happens in faculty meetings and other meetings, as well as how we talk informally about students. One of my jobs as associate dean was to assign new students to primary mentors. I felt like a matchmaker! To be honest, a lot of my decisions were gut reactions. Did I think this student needed a mentor who was more nurturing? Who would treat this seemingly fragile person with the utmost respect, or who would help this "off-beat" student develop a degree program that could be approved? Mentors who seemed to me to be not particularly diligent about the details were not assigned people I judged to be "high-needs" students. I sent these mentors students who appeared to be competent, students who appeared likely to succeed here no matter who their mentor was. And this, of course, led to inequity in mentor loads. I was very aware of that, and I never found a creative solution to that problem.

Mandell: And, for you, this was one way in which you responded to academic quality?

Bertholf: Yes. I think the academic quality issues had a great deal to do with what I knew about individual mentors and what I had learned about their sense of professionalism, about their mentoring styles, and about how I perceived they were doing their jobs.

Mandell: It's interesting that you also mention the quality of the center community. This is the question of the ongoing conversation that we have or don't have and without which individual mentors are really isolated and the work becomes that much more private.

Bertholf: Absolutely. I often thought about this question of the importance of the "conversation" in relation to our increasing reliance on part-time colleagues, many of whom do wonderful work with our students, but do not have time in their lives for the kind of community we have been discussing. What do we do when we don't have the kind of physical contact with each other that gives us the chance to talk about academic issues and about students? Of course, this is often the case for full time mentors, too. It's a major challenge.

Mandell: In part, this seems to be about that moment in which one mentor can communicate – in some way – to another:

"Remember student X … " "What do I do … "?

Bertholf: For sure. There are also these little prophetic moments, when suddenly a book that you hadn't even thought about in connection with a particular student pops into your head during a mentor session, and you're so sure that it's the right book for this student right now. It's such an exciting moment. And this can be part of, a result of, the give-and-take with colleagues. I loved those moments.

Time is surely an issue. People don't have the time they need for those conversations. So what happens at centers and at center meetings and how you try to make room for these kinds of conversations is so important to the academic quality of the college.

Mandell: I was just thinking about our conversation at dinner and specifically about what Bob [Anne's husband] was saying about the importance of a student knowing this or that about a particular topic. He was saying something like: "Student, you should know about X." He was thinking about his role as a resource person, someone who can tell a student about this book or that topic or this piece of criticism, or this problem that should be tackled. Isn't this a very specific understanding of being a mentor? It's very much about the content, isn't it?

Bertholf: He *does* think about himself as a mentor and it is, in his academic environment, hugely about content. For us, of course, it's always also about process. I think about one of my dear friends and colleagues here who really thinks that educational planning cannot be done until nearly the end of a student's time at the college, because educational quality and educational decisions have to do so much with the processes that the student and the mentor engage in along the way. How can you really know what there is to learn or read or do, especially because you can so easily and abruptly go off in an entirely different, but entirely valuable direction? For some mentors, this model is how the college began. It has great attraction for a committed mentor and student, yet it is a hard model to sustain.

Mandell: In your roles as writing mentor, as associate dean, as director and as dean, what centered you in terms of your own values and what you cherished as an educator? What held this work together for so many years?

Bertholf: As you know, after I retired from the position as dean, I served as something like a job-coach for new administrators, so I had lots of time to think about how the work can be held together. I felt fortunate that I'd begun as a mentor, and I truly believe that the best possible way to learn to be an associate dean or a dean is to start off in that role. I think a lot about the transition from being a part-time writing and literature mentor to being an associate dean, and I realize I already knew who the students were. That was it. That was always it. I had experienced the incredible range of our students. I had this notion of what an amazing place this is. It was this variety I cherished. It was that I was asked to be central in the educational process of all of these people – the sharecropper's son, the stockbroker, the housewife, the middle manager, the single mom and dad. And with every student coming in the door, I had to shift gears; the conversation was always different. When I went out into the world to talk about the college and was asked, "What kinds of adults need an institution like Empire State College," I could answer, "All kinds of adults: people from every conceivable walk of life, every conceivable economic strata. We get them all. And we get them all every day."

That was it. That was always it. I had experienced the incredible range of our students. I had this notion of what an amazing place this is. It was this variety I cherished.

Mandell: And, often, we have this incredible privilege of getting to know these students as well.

Bertholf: After one of our graduations, my husband remarked, in response to one of those great "way to go mom!" moments, "You get so much feedback in your institution and you get it so quickly." When you teach 18 - 22 year olds, you rarely know what happens in their lives because of you. We certainly don't know that about every student at Empire State College, but we often see transformation that happens very quickly and we see people who overcome huge educational deficits in an astonishingly short amount of time when they get turned on and decide that this is what they want to do. You have the external stuff – people get a job and people get promoted and people tell you they got a better job. But you get other stuff too – people who walk out the door and are much more confident about who they are, who were not confident at all, in fact, who were terrified when they began.

Mandell: I wish we actually knew more about this kind of change.

Bertholf: When I first became associate dean, one of the training chores that I assigned myself was to take information calls for a while so that I could hear from those who were calling the college, learn who they are and what kinds of information they needed. After a few calls, I was taking most of the calls in a rather perfunctory way, signing learning contracts and vouchers and purchase reqs while I provided information. But I picked up the phone one day and said: "May I help you?" and there was a huge gasp. A silence. A woman said to me: "Can you just hold on for just a minute? You have no idea how much courage it took for me to make this phone call." And I said to myself: "OK Bertholf, put your pen down, pay attention. There's a lesson coming your way." It was astonishing. It was a defining moment for me. It told me that it is not easy for many of our students to come to us. It took a lot for this woman to pick up the phone. And that has been a huge value for me about the entire institution, which carried over in all the jobs that I did and fed into basic questions that I didn't want to forget: Why is this important? What is this doing? What is this feeding into that will make life better for our students?

Mandell: Over the 20 years that you have been at the institution, there have been many changes, including the growth of new forms

of teaching and learning, especially our use of educational technologies. I wonder what kind of public college you would want to set up now – a new college – if someone gave you that opportunity?

Bertholf: I've thought about that question a lot and I don't know the answer. The technological changes over these two decades have made such a difference. I cannot see how we can avoid the use of new technologically mediated modes of working with our students. Taking advantage of them is the right way to do it. It's how we all increasingly get things done. It's what and how students need to learn. Yet, to build this into a mentoring model is the challenge. It can be very difficult, and I certainly don't know exactly how to do it. I remember a wonderful and thoughtful piece that, some years ago now, Diana Worby [Hudson Valley Center mentor] wrote about "distance learning" [included in *Facilitating Learning at a Distance,* Office of Academic Affairs/the Mentoring Institute, 1996]. She described how she kept the student's photo, and the student had Diana's photo, in front of them as they worked together, and she described brief personal conversations that preceded their telephone work sessions. This was, of course, well before some of the current technologies that make many of the practices that connect students and mentors completely simple and, for some mentors, just a "taken for granted." Diana was quite clear about who this student, who this woman, was. She was working with *her,* this individual. I admired and referred to that example a lot. I don't exactly know what a new institution would look like, but this kind of individualization, this attention to the particular person, is something I would like to hold onto. I think institutions can, but of course, in new ways.

> More than in any other human relationship, overwhelmingly more, motherhood means being instantly interruptable, responsive, responsible. Children need one now (and remember, in our society, the family must often try to be the center for love and health the outside world is not). The very fact that these are real needs, that one feels them as one's own (love, not duty); that there is no one else responsible for these needs, gives them primacy. It is distraction, not meditation, that becomes habitual; interruption, not continuity; spasmodic, not constant toil … . Work interrupted, deferred, relinquished, makes blockage – at best, lesser accomplishment. Unused capacities atrophy, cease to be.
>
> Tillie Olsen, *Silences* (1978)

The Combine

Yvonne Murphy, Long Island Center

I.

As wheat came through the thresher, chaff flew.
My grandfather drove and my father or uncle followed
with the baler, pitching finished bales off the side.
Ernest from up the hill lost his whole hand
in his combine. Sitting on back, I'd watch
the field mice and rabbits get caught in the blades,
end up later, packed neatly into a block of hay.
At six, I knew there was no place to go
once the blade hits you – except to get
bundled in with grass, dirt, straw.

Bolting through the field barelegged each day,
I sliced up my calves and knees,
freshly cut wheat sharp
as an attacker's pocket knife.
No amount of grandma's ointment
or whiskey or love could help.
I'd be out there again the next day,
with the other small animals –
dancing and darting, tempting
the combine's thick edge.

II.

Just taller than the wheat, –
break time or cows to burst over the fence,
men stammering in off their tractors, their sweethearts
left sighing momentarily in the fields.

On grandmother's lawn we served them: piles
of bread and sausages held in grit-caked hands.
My little hands shook, poured water over ice in their glasses,
a flurry of chewing. Leftover hulls from the threshers bounced
out of their sleeves, work clothes soiled with chaff. No talk.

In the kitchen, grandmother dreamed of ocean liners.
Waltzing with her grace undisguised, she swirled and panted,
the pantry gleamed in her smile. I held a washed plate at my chest

like a moon, a life-preserver, gangplanks and portholes
got imagined to the music box *Hi Lily, hi Lily, hi Lo. . .*

When the handle came unwound I'd twist it again for her,
I'd float around after her – Lily, her own name, her body
reeling into dizzy sparks.

"The Combine" is part of a feature (four poems) of Yvonne Murphy's work published in the fall '06 issue of The Recorder, *the literary magazine of the American Irish Historical Society in New York City.*

Drinking Coffee and Reading Together as a Response to Bowling Alone: Some First Reflections

Elliott Lauderdale, The University of South Alabama

There is an important tradition carried on by adult educators – Jane Addams, Myles Horton, and Paulo Freire come to mind, who go to community commonplaces to learn with other adults (Finger and Asún, 2001). These learners familiar with neighborhoods and their needs have enriched university service learning and servant-leadership programs. The political scientist Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000) is subtitled "the collapse and revival of American community." Perhaps a commons, or what sociologist Ray Oldenberg calls a "third place" between home and work for public gathering, allows us to combat the lack of trust and reciprocity that accompany the decline of social capital that Putnam documents. Lately, an increasing number of our fellow citizens are spending more time individually in our cars and with our private media. These thoughts will focus on the community-building activities that can occur in coffeehouses as they inform our efforts to respond to this atomization and to recreate a commons for adult learning. As I hope to describe, preliminary observations in three coffee shops and other hangouts (Satori Coffee Shop, Whataburger, Carpe Diem, Dotch's Barber and Style Salon, and Coffee Loft) focus on reading and discourse between dissimilar community members in non-formal groups. How, I ask, is this behavior related to the literature on adult learning and community development traditions of the settlement house and community center?

My reflections are inspired by the many fine coffee shops I have made my office. One colleague, like me, held office hours in a coffee shop only to find too many students partook. On one plane, I am asking simply what makes a fine coffee shop. When I asked Beth Goldberg, owner of the Coffee Loft, why her coffee shop works, what does she do, she said, "It's your coffee shop." When I suggested that was public spirited, she denied it, saying, "The purpose of a coffee shop is to bring people together, all people, diverse people. If people are not comfortable, the purpose is defeated. I do not control it, I allow it to happen" (personal conversation, September 19, 2006).

In these remarks, I hesitated making public what I enjoy. There are, however, numerous clear arguments for common places where people can come together. This is a simple story of expanding connections. Having become accustomed to working well in coffee shops and enjoying their open sociability, I was attuned to Robert Putnam's recourse to poetry when describing their potential as "commons" in his *Bowling Alone* (2000, 94):

> There St. John mingles with my friendly bowl
> The feast of reason and the flow of soul.
> Alexander Pope (*Satire* I, Book II, line 127)

Putnam contrasts a coffeehouse common place with the isolated Internet café experience wherein folks would gravitate to links where people share their views. What connections and networks developed in coffee shops, or similar common places, that enable adults to learn in a way that builds social capital and leads to civic action? Social capital indicates the extent of generalized reciprocity, or community, and Putnam measures these by a wide range of surveys of civic engagement, volunteerism, participation, informal sociability and social trust (291).

Ideas about the commons arise in diverse disciplines and are connected to several domains, including social capital theory, participatory democracy, city and regional planning, transformative learning, geography, social movements, community development and place ("third" or common). As a caveat, I have tried to explore a literature beyond my interdisciplinary expertise. But the commonality of themes is nonetheless striking and closely related to central themes of adult education, especially that part of our area that is concerned with community development. The task of understanding is further complicated by the anecdotal nature of much of the evidence, which tend to be storytelling about common places.

I will not explore in depth the potential of Internet-based communities. One can recall the special interest affinity groups when considering Putnam's warnings about even further fragmentation of our community. News channels that divide us are a source of Daily Show humor. Do we ask questions to engage the other? The Kettering Foundation's "deliberative approach" asks us to learn to make the best case for those with views we oppose as we argue our case. Kettering deliberation is aimed at public decision-making and action for community betterment. (Matthews) A crucial element in these deliberations is a representative range of perspectives. While technologically enhanced divisiveness is a clear danger, one may also sample the web pages and blogs of one's adversaries or find solidarity with geographically distant fellow travelers.

Putnam joins a long tradition of advocates of the commons with *Bowling Alone*. Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* is a common place for Bellah *et al.,* Cunningham, Daloz *et al.,* Etzioni and Colby *et al.* Indeed, Putnam attributes the term "social capital" to L. J. Hanifan, who expounded the value of community centers (395). Is this progressive idea passé?

One of Putnam's key claims is that we need to revive the commons. He compiles a mass of evidence to document how its loss has led to a decline in public participation in traditional institutions of democracy: religious, community, workplace, nonprofit and informal organizations. It is through these connections and associations that our communities have had a commons. For example, the tradition of the commons

is represented in the fondness numerous writers have had for the New England town meeting where citizens could work out their differences and allocate taxes to educate children and maintain public services.

Not only does Putnam meticulously document a decline in numerous community organizations using a large number of studies, but he also endeavors to explain an underlying change in our democratic sociability. We eat together less, listen less, trust less, are less tolerant, have more malaise, and are less safe. Declining participation indicates a changing citizenship. Those states with more social capital suffer fewer of the declines. Bowling, getting our hair cut, or meeting for coffee can build our social capital.

Interestingly, Putnam notes that we have reported the same amount of free time (about twenty hours per week) for the last quarter century, and that despite claims to the contrary, time studies suggest non-work burdens have actually declined. (190) Yet, we choose to spend our time watching screens and commuting as we participate less in civil society than earlier generations. Larry Parks-Daloz, Cheryl Keen, James Keen and Sharon Daloz Parks in *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* agree with Putnam that television has allowed people to believe they are "engaged and removed" (3).

Civic literacy is a casualty of declining social capital. One phenomenon found in the coffee and barbershops that interests me here is plenty of public newspapers and reading materials. News reporters commonly note important informal discussions occurring in coffee klatches.

Ray Oldenburg, author of *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons and other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community,* is recognized as a sociologist of this "third" or "great good place" tradition opposed to fast food outlets designed to rush customers through an efficient place (1989; Putnam, 2000, 102; Ritzer, 2000). The "third place" is one other than home and workplace. Barbershops noted in Oldenburg's subtitle are traditional community centers, especially in African-American communities. For instance, while getting my hair cut in Dotch's Barbershop, I was able to learn of the details involved in planning two family reunions and gain some political education. Printed materials, including walls full of notices, are central identifiers of community centers. Such "good places" are friendly to reading and hanging out. They are places of community learning.

The *Common Fire* authors help us understand the potential of common places in the development of what they describe as "lives of commitment." The authors conclude that the distinguishing adult learning experience in most of the committed leaders they interviewed in depth was their encounter with someone outside of their "tribe." The authors assert that such encounters are necessary to inspire sustained participation in civic life. We need to be shocked by an "enlarging experience with the other [that] counters the tribal fear of the outsiders … [and permits] commitment … to a larger more inclusive common good" (65). Such experiences are more likely in a "shared, public space of the sort that anchored the American vision of democracy," and in other "commons" like "the square at the county seat in the South, the bodega in the Latino community, Main Street in middle America, a ballpark, school, temple or cathedral in the city, or the fishing wharf on the coast" (2).

Civic literacy is a casualty of declining social capital.

People do congregate in hangouts by "tribe." However, while I must admit that the three coffee shops observed were middle class, they aspired to be open, diverse communities in the same way Beth Goldberg talked about the Coffee Loft. Regulars appear to seek both comfort with some similarity as well as some opportunity for surprise or shock. The coffee shops I know are diverse, but the majority are white, while the barbershops and hamburger shops visited were majority black. The morning gatherings were generally same-gender but welcomed the other gender. In fact, in his book, Oldenburg explores gender relations and emphasizes the importance of informal gathering spots of all sorts. In this same spirit, Daloz *et al.* note recurring efforts, even a need, to recreate the commons – to have "a place where the diverse parts of a community could come together and hold a conversation within a shared sense of participation and responsibility" (2).

However (and this is very important), Daloz *et al.* caution us that there is romance in our dream of the commons. "[F]or some in this society," the authors write, "a sense of participation in the commons only emerged slowly over time, and for others it was never possible at all"(2). For example, class divisions are replicated in the type of hangout people frequent. The price of coffee compared to the price of a fast food hamburger discourages some working people from visiting coffee shops, but other establishments serve a similar function. So too, while expense removes many of the working class from some coffee shops, as the Lynd's already noted in *Middletown* (1929), people who work shifts find places that are open early. At two observed coffee shops, the participants actually show up at different times of the day – some very early in the morning, some on their way to the office, some at lunch, some during their work breaks, and others on their way home, or even later. Those freed from more typical work hours (retirees, students, and other "regulars") visit with the parade of diverse people throughout the day. And during any time of the day, a coffee shop can function as a gentlemen's or women's club.

What are these leisurely common spaces like? In addition to availability of reading material of all kinds, one crucial element is the establishment's attitude toward loitering. One informant reported how he knew several writers who did all their writing in coffee or donut joints. Satori Coffee is such a scholars' office. I lived through graduate school in several Ithaca, NY, coffee houses, including the Commons Coffeehouse, which is also reported to have the longest continuously running regular live radio broadcast of folk music in the country on Sundays. I have felt at home among the many different sizes and kinds of tables full

of students studying or playing chess. The Satori owner, Chuck Cox, who also sells music and food, welcomes a wide range of groups. A school board member meets citizens in Satori, as does the Jesus Tribe and the Feminists for Progress. Satori Coffee is near the University of South Alabama; Carpe Diem is across the street from Springhill College.

All three shops have separate meeting rooms used by religious, political, reading, poetry, and other groups. One particular group of women meets regularly in a Carpe Diem back room after Torah study. This group, gentiles and Jews, calls itself "Alabama Solution." That "solution" is simply to elect more women to office. But this diverse group accomplishes a wide range of missions for the community – political and intellectual – including recommending the choice for "Mobile's Book: A Shared Experience" – project. Instead of a leisurely club atmosphere, this multitasking group seizes time in the coffee shop common place to contribute to our community's social capital. Women, who despite pressures of work and home, manage to be more involved in their communities than men (Putnam, 2000, 199 - 200). Coffee shops are reputed to have been the locus for hatching the U.S. revolution and have been censored numerous times through history. These informal gathering places have significance.

Accidental meetings appear to be a major attraction of this small sample of commons. Folks get to know each other's schedules and happen in when they are likely to encounter someone. Schedules are somewhat predictable. I can identify with some certainty five individuals who will be in the Coffee Loft every Sunday morning between 8:00 a.m. and noon. Several friends are likely to interrupt my writing in the morning before 10:00 a.m. Regular meetings occur of reading groups, religious study groups of differing ages, business associates (I have formally witnessed contracts being negotiated and signed). A fine Appalachian tradition of the Blue Grass circle meets one the first Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Our cycling group meets each Sunday at 6:30 a.m. A community soccer club has formed by means of announcement and promotion by the coffee shop barista. Recently, I raised more than $3,000 for the local rape crisis center by promoting "Vday" in the three coffee shops. It makes perfect sense that Daloz *et al*. cited Cornel West and Jim Wallis, along with Putnam, in their advocacy of community spirit – the so-called "common fire" in their title, as an antidote to the armoring of individualism, busyness, consumerism, cynicism, and tribalism (1996, 10 - 15).

A recurring theme among the writers I've consulted on this topic is that "great good places" provide a recharging that allows a renewed contest with larger global forces (Putnam, 2000, 3). Thus, the *Common Fire* authors carefully selected only those who did not confine themselves to a single issue, but who addressed complexity of a global ambiguous situation. Anthropologist Arturo Escobar comes to a similar conclusion regarding international activists who use the web while they organize local neighborhoods. (2003) And David Korten, who has written extensively about "people-centered development" and civil society, summarizes numerous small efforts like coffee shops and their significance in the making of a strong democracy:

"These and countless other positive initiatives are creating the outlines for self-organizing, life-sustaining economies that are:

– Radically democratic.

– Rooted in place.

– Comprised of human-scale firms, owned by and accountable to people with a stake in their function and impacts.

– Frugal with energy and resources, allocating them efficiently to meet needs, recycling the "wastes."

– Culturally, socially, and economically diverse, supportive of innovation and the free sharing of knowledge.

– Mindful of responsibility to self and community.

– Bounded by permeable borders, which allow democratic self-regulation" (YES, spring 1999).

A small experiment in our university building's hall has suggested the potential of encouraging co-learners toward the commons. The purchase of 12 chairs and two kettles and a bit for supplies has resulted in the emergence of an occasional international community between our adult learners and English-as-a-Second-Language learners for some two years now. A wide range of papers by academics and local organizers of all kinds is suggesting the usefulness of just such a community commons for successful aging, ecological upkeep (like community gardening), public health education, literacy, and mental health work. Literature in library science is increasingly overcoming its "no drinking in the library" tradition and including coffee shops in library buildings. In efforts to cross the town-gown lines and to build community, several colleges have put energy into organizing coffees or teas. Bringing coffee, reading and talking together is at the heart of adult learning. We shouldn't forget the power of these places.

Among the sources that have taken up the themes and questions addressed in these reflections are:

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[Note: Elliott Lauderdale would welcome comments, suggestions and questions about "Drinking Coffee and Reading Together." He can be found via: elauderdale@usouthal.edu.]

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Communication is sometimes a creative process in which the other person offers a new expression, and I understand it not because I am looking for how it fits with given paradigms, but because I am open and suspend my assumptions in order to listen. (53)

– Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (1997)

My First Day at School

Robert Congemi, Northeast Center

The other day I finished 40 years of teaching school. Yes, 40 years – an almost embarrassing sum, isn't it? – except that I started teaching so early in life that I feel myself still a young man, and somehow that fact makes my stint seen less embarrassing. I was a high-school teacher then, 23, my students 17 and 18. I had come to a small town from a large city, already married with two little girls, and worried desperately about how well I'd do, though everyone tried to assure me I'd do just fine. I had rented a big, old house on a street that faced a mountain, the last street in that part of town. The house needed so much repair, and of course I had little ability to make it better. My only thought was to wash down the walls and floors and keep the rooms as clean as possible, paint what I could, for painting even a young intellectual could perform, and work hard at school to be so good a teacher that my poverty and the poverty I submitted my young family to would be in some way counterbalanced.

I was also pleasant and compliant with my landlord. He was a plumber, I remember, in his 30s, who had bought this house to achieve some extra money for his own family. Like the most eager of students, I learned from him how to burn layers of old paint from doors and window moldings, and how to strip even greater numbers of layers of wallpaper from walls. In this way, I contributed to the re-creation of the house and helped perhaps to justify the modest rent he had proposed to me. To this day, I remember him well – his name was Bob Beecham – and fondly, and hope truly his life went well for him and his family, though I heard virtually nothing of his life's fate after I left our little town two years later. I still regret being unable to help him in the tiniest way with plumbing, heating, electricity, and the other household arts, which he had been able to master.

I remember my first day at school I was up and ready hours before I needed to be; I kissed my wife goodbye as she lay abed in sleep, though she, once wakened, had the presence of mind to tell me she had made lunch for me, and that it was in our refrigerator.

"You'll see it, Roger – in the brown paper bag," she mumbled. "Your favorites. Behind the milk."

I walked the few miles to school, which was at the opposite part of town, pale light of morning slowly replacing the black of night. No one was at school, except perhaps for janitors. I suspected there had to be janitors – there were small lights outside the buildings, and a fugitive sound caught my ear as I approached the school entrance. To my surprise and relief, the doors were open, and I walked inside to the greeting of broad, gleaming hallways and darkened, empty rooms awaiting the young people who would soon fill them with stunning energy and life. Lighting hallways in front of me as I journeyed to where my classroom was, I distracted and entertained myself by reading school posters and notices on the walls, and names of teachers on the homeroom doors.

At my own room, I entered, flicked on the lights, put the books and writing supplies, which I had been carrying, on what was now my own desk, and sat behind it, vaguely uncomfortable, like a first-day king, wondering what I should do next, wondering if I could think of something good so that I would be worthy of my new position in life, until suddenly, in mild panic, I remembered I had also been assigned to be – how might I put it to cloak the mild humiliations of those days? – the designated distributor of textbooks.

Leaping from my seat of privilege at the front of my classroom, I hurried into the hallway to find the room where resided the stacks upon stacks of books that needed to be in each classroom so that the school year could begin as it should – *Introduction to Science* to Mr. Singer's room, *American History* to Mr. Ferguson's room, *Four Modern American Novels* to Miss Weems' room. Thirty copies stacked, ready and available in the classrooms, for the opening bells of the school year, for the careful assignment of each text to each student, book numbers recorded dutifully. Thankfully, I found the bookroom with little trouble, used the key that had been given me to unlock its treasures, and switching on its light, revealed to myself the stern and abundant, endlessly replicated books of learning that would dominate the time and minds of this year's student body. Somehow, I counted, I carted, the appropriate tomes and the appropriate numbers of them to each of the classrooms, and then returned to my own classroom, already somewhat harried and weary, but quite young and resistant enough, I knew, to recoup from my sudden losses.

When classes were over, finally, that first day of school, I took a ride from a new friend and colleague who had her husband's car, and went home. Uncharacteristically voluble, I went on and on to the poor woman about what had happened that day. Her name was Mrs. Joan Summers, a pleasant, chubby woman in her 50s who always struck people, I was to learn, as absolutely delightful, a home economics teacher. I remember she listened so kindly to me, so politely, amused, and nodding her head in understanding.

"I think I shall enjoy myself, Mrs. Summers," I told her. "I think I shall enjoy myself very much. My students really listened to me. They were quite nice. Of course, a few I'll have to bring around more, somehow, but they were nice, too, really, when you think they hardly knew me. My goodness, I could almost be a friend – I'm scarcely older – which they seemed to like. Oh, there's so much I want to tell them, so much I want to teach them. And they want to know these things. I know it. I just know it. I can't wait until tomorrow. I

can hardly sit still. Do you understand? Am I babbling?"

Mrs. Summer's turned her husband's old Chevy onto my street and drove up the block toward where I motioned my house was. My wife and my little daughters were in the front yard, the girls playing on a swing set my landlord Bob Beecham had graciously lent to us. My wife sat on the porch steps. I had never seen her look more beautiful than at that moment, her head leaning against a pillar of the porch, just thinking, I guess, yet watching her children scrupulously.

"Well," Mrs. Summers said. "You did have a good day, didn't you, Roger?"

"I mean," I continued on, beside myself. "I'm really going to like this teaching. I wasn't sure. I wasn't completely sure. I sort of knew, but I didn't completely know. I loved talking about Dickens, and about Wordsworth, and about Herman Melville. And I loved talking about writing. Yes, writing. I loved it. And gerunds and participles and … outlining, for God's sakes, I loved talking about *outlining* for their essays. Can you believe it? After class, one of my students came up to me and said, 'Sir, you made outlining interesting to me. Thank you, very much. I think I'll like your class. I never thought outlining could be interesting. I hope you stay in this town for a long time.'"

"Well," Mrs. Summers said again, now not quite so sure what to say, but smiling, letting me know she was happy for me. "Good for you, dear. Is that your little family waiting for you?" she asked, gesturing towards them, on somewhat more comfortable ground for her.

After I had introduced Mrs. Summers to my wife and daughters, I went upstairs to change out of my suit and tie and to put on old clothes.

"I'll take over now," I called downstairs to my wife. "I'll walk the girls, and give you some rest. You've had a busy day, too. I know."

"And you, Roger?" she asked, calling back up.

"It was wonderful, really wonderful," I told her. "Wait until you hear."

In the evening, when she and the children were asleep, I wandered downstairs from our bedroom, and settled for a few moments in the kitchen. I noticed that during the day, Bob Beecham had replaced the old faucets of our sink with new, shiny ones, and that made me feel good. I gathered together my school books and pencils and papers and stacked them neatly on the kitchen table. I thought over again what I would try to teach the next day, for all five of my classes, and if I would ever master the subtle demands of homeroom and study hall. I thought of the other teachers, those that day at the periphery of my consciousness, but people I would soon meet and like to become friends with, and colleagues to. I listened to hear noises of my family. All was silent.

Rising from the kitchen table, I went outside our house and sat on the top step of the old porch. Above the trees of the mountain face in front of me, the sky was teeming with stars, a quite unusual sight for me, being that I was from New York City. The numbers of those stars thrilled me – it was incontestable – and lured me towards a cosmic dimension. This small town, to which I was such a stranger, to the sides of me and behind me, was, too, totally silent and asleep, only a house or streetlight here and there accenting its silence. I must understand this moment, I thought. I must in some way comprehend its meaning.

I lit a cigarette, my first of the day, and began to smoke.

Here I am, it came to me, at the very moment of the beginning of my career. I have my whole working life still in front of me, and I recognize this fact. Sitting here, I know that someday I will look back upon this day and on this moment, and tell myself that I understood what was happening to me. I knew and understood one of the most important days and moments in my life. I had the power to stop, to think, to plan, to make the rest of my career just as I wanted it. I had that chance. I had that good luck.

Yes, it's all in front of you, Roger, I told myself. So now what will it indeed be?

Over the years I have beguiled myself perhaps into thinking that I did seize upon that moment, that youthful insight, and that I have fashioned my career with it keenly in mind. I'm not so sure, though. As we all know, life has a way of distracting us very far from our insights and intentions. Yet I believe it did some good, probably in some subterranean part of my thinking. I can't understand why it wouldn't. At any rate, I had the moment, had the chance to do something with it. Not everyone has.

Putting out my cigarette, I stood up and went back into our house. I had things to do – a family to help bring up, cities and universities to teach in, endless classes to speak before, thoughts and ideas to tender to thousands upon thousands of students.

Upstairs my wife was asleep in our bed. I could hear no sound of distress from our daughters in their tiny bedroom. As quietly as I could, I lifted the sheets and blanket of the bed and slipped in beside her. I, of course, had no thought of today, this day of recollection and writing which has come to me, another sudden gift from the stars, or the cosmos itself, or from whatever incalculable plan that might govern our lives.

Solving the Culture Wars, and Saving Civilization While We're At It: The Case for Environmental History

Eric Zencey, Center for Graduate Programs and Center for International Programs

In cultural criticism, as in comedy and cooking, timing counts for a great deal. So it may seem quixotic to offer a solution to a problem that has long since dropped from public consciousness: the contentious tug-of-war over the writing of National History Standards that played out in our media a decade ago. Nevertheless, the concerns of social theory – especially social theory that addresses our ongoing environmental crisis – are more enduring than the ephemeral attention of the media. If, as some observers say, we are enjoying a bit of a truce in the culture wars,[1] we should recognize that the conflicts in evidence in the struggle over how America should teach itself history have by no means been resolved. They have been damped down or have simply gone elsewhere, percolating up as bilious disagreement over other issues.[2] And in the decade since matters came to a head over the National Standards, we've had a full decade of globalization, bringing with it increased contact between the world's national and supra-national cultures, which offers increased opportunity and increasing cause for intercultural conflict on a global level. The current controversy over representations of Mohammed in print is one example; in its heat, in the demagoguery and misrepresentation that mobilized mass attention, in the righteous uncompromising passion that has been brought to bear, the controversy has a form familiar to any observer of the domestic culture wars.[3] As our integrated, globalized economy faces the end of an unprecedented era of cheap energy, tensions between East and West, between Christianity and Islam, between North and South are more likely to be aggravated rather than softened. So: to clarify the grounds on which a permanent cease-fire in the culture wars could be negotiated promises to be a useful thing.

The phrase "culture war" seems to have been invented by Pat Buchanan, who spoke at the National Republican Convention in 1992: "There is a religious war going on in our country for the soul of America. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we will one day be as was the Cold War itself."[4] The first salvo in one of the major battles of this war, the battle over a set of advisory history standards prepared by a group of professional historians and teachers of history, was fired by Lynne Cheney, former chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities. She launched a pre-emptive strike against the as-yet-unpublished standards in an op-ed piece in the *Wall Street Journal* on October 20, 1994, under the title "The End of History." "Imagine an outline for the teaching of American history," Cheney began, "in which George Washington makes only a fleeting appearance and is never described as our first president."[5] The piece continues in that vein, ignoring an essential distinction: standards for producing curricula are not the curricula themselves. (One might as well rail against screw-pitch standards set by the American Society of Engineers for failing to be made out of metal.) The Constitution is dealt with extensively in the document; she claimed that it was not, but allowed that "it does come up in the 250 pages of supporting materials" – which were, in fact, the standards themselves. Rush Limbaugh dramatized these invented omissions on his show, giving his listeners the sound of tearing and crumpling pages, as from a history book, saying "Here's Paul Revere. He's gone. Here's George Washington as president … "

Cheney's account was inflammatory and inaccurate, but beneath the demagoguery, misrepresentation, and fallacious reasoning was the kernel of a fundamental truth: history matters, and in America (if, perhaps, not so much among teachers of American history) there are clear cultural differences over how history should be taught. The stories we tell ourselves about how we got where we are today tell us who we are; like national politics itself, "[National] history … is about national identity"[6] – and Americans today have dramatically different ideas about who and what we are as a nation.

At issue in the struggle over standards was a fundamental question: what will we tell our kids about who we are? To the conservatives who railed against the new standards, that question reduced to a simpler one: would we let a select group of academics who had "bullied their way into power positions," and who "worked in secret," teach our kids that "our country is inherently evil?"[7] Would we offer what Cheney characterized as a "grim and gloomy" portrait of the country by including in American history stories about the Ku Klux Klan, lynchings, and genocidal practices against Native Americans, McCarthyism? Or would we hold up before the next generation of Americans a narrative of progress, a call to sustain (and perhaps extend) the noble ideals on which the country was founded? To the historians who worked on the project, the question was a bit more complex: How can we communicate to students that history is not a settled matter – not simply factual, not simply "what happened," as Limbaugh, in a fit of know-nothingism, told his audience – but the product of an ongoing intellectual effort, a continual re-examination of the past, in which the concerns of the day invariably shape the questions and interest we bring to it?[8]

Conservatives rallied around a denunciation of "multiculturalism," the idea that distinct subcultures and groups within America have distinctive points-of-view on many

of the events, dynamics, personages, and stories of American history. Since the 1960s (into which decade the origins of this culture war are easily traced), decades of scholarship had proliferated these alternative lenses on the subject matter of American history. To ignore them in the production of standards for teaching students would have been professional malfeasance; and, on the contrary, to present those alternative interpretations accurately in classrooms promised to engage students in critical thinking – the evaluation of arguments, of evidence, of modes of interpretation – and to require them to become not just students but practitioners of the art of history. To Cheney and Limbaugh and other conservatives the new standards were the work of a cabal of politically correct scholars who sought to foist a distorted version of history on America's schools; they wanted instead a return to the *status quo ante,* the teaching of a single, settled, authoritative narrative, one that would inculcate national pride as well as acquaint students with the founding values of the country.

The particular battle over these advisory standards was resolved as political struggles often are resolved: as Todd Gitlin says in his account of the controversy, "Representatives of the two sides split their differences and agreed to approve revised standards."[9] Since the conservative position was styled as a moral rather than political position – it asked for complete purity in its call for a return to the monocultural history teaching of yore – the compromise looked rather like a victory for the multiculturalists: under the new standards, says Gitlin, "At all levels of education, the traditional story of steady progress in American history has been shattered by stories of the battles fought by women, Native Americans, and members of other disadvantaged groups. Non-Western history has a more-honored place alongside Western civilization."[10]

The argument made by conservatives is easy to pillory for its excesses: there was no cabal, there were no secret meetings, the standards do cover the Constitution and yes, under them it is possible to teach about George Washington and Paul Revere and the other iconic figures of the monocultural, America-is-exceptionally-wonderful school of historiography.

But to give the conservative cause its most compelling argument, one that few conservatives actually made: national history is the crucible of national identity, and if we fragment our history into a set of competing (and sometimes contradictory) ethnic, class, gender, and racial histories, we risk undercutting some core of shared vision and values that may prove necessary to the functioning of the American polity. In this vision, it makes sense to argue that the struggle against the elimination of a common, core, and boosterish narrative of American history is in fact a moral struggle, a fight for the soul of the American nation.

A world in which truth is relative to point-of-view is a world in which, to their way of thinking, the machinery of democratic-republican government under the Constitution becomes very nearly inoperable.

What the most thoughtful conservative critics fixed on was the relativism behind the multiculturalism of the new approach: to give any space at all to Native American critiques of reservations as concentration camps, or of the distribution of smallpox-infested blankets as a form of genocide, is to say that Native American views have validity, perhaps not only for Native Americans.[11] A world in which truth is relative to point-of-view is a world in which, to their way of thinking, the machinery of democratic-republican government under the Constitution becomes very nearly inoperable.[12] To admit the existence of many truths, which vary according to where one stands, is to deny that a single unifying narrative about the history of American culture can be told by any but arbitrary authority; and without that narrative, the political integument of the nation – a solidarity of purpose, vision, and value that our system, any system, at some point presupposes – is rent.

I believe that here the conservatives have a valid but misdirected concern. The conservative backlash against the new National Standards was based on a mistaken understanding of the true foundation of American exceptionalism, a failure to accept the bold premise that underlies our founding. What ties the American polity together isn't a common history but a shared commitment to the abstraction of process, to the meta-objectivity of political forms explicitly designed on the understanding that a free and diverse people will worship and think and behave – even interpret their own history – in ways that confound any expectation of consensus or unanimity. Thus, the epistemological ecumenicism behind our Constitutional machinery, including the Bill of Rights. Were Thomas Kuhn himself to have designed a constitutional system of social regulation, I think he'd have aimed at something much like our system with its fragmentation of powers – the checks and balances of shared authority – and protection of minority rights in speech, thought, and (within limits) deed.

Unfortunately, appreciation of the value of this boot-strapping out of particular subjectivities and into the meta-objectivity of process is, among the American populace, notoriously weak.[13] In public opinion surveys Americans announce themselves willing to trade away civil liberties if the government can thereby be more effective in pursuing whomever authorities designate as threats to national security. No surprise here: 30 years ago as a political science major I learned of a notorious bit of social survey research that found that a majority of Americans sampled refused to sign the Bill of Rights when it's placed in front of them as a petition.[14] If our divisive, interest-group-competing Constitutional system (in which, to quote Madison from the *Tenth Federalist,* "ambition must be made to check ambition") requires a shared consensual mythos to hold it together against the centrifugal forces unleashed by religion, regionalism, competitive economic interest, and difference of moral opinion; and if the abstraction of an Enlightenment-era commitment to shared processual values proves too abstract to serve as that

consensual mythos; then perhaps we do need a single historical narrative to serve as our shared foundation. But in the wake of what Gitlin calls "the great compromise of 1996," there is no single, authoritative interpretation of America and its history embedded in the National Standards as finally issued. And, says Gitlin, "We are likely to live without a new, overarching narrative for quite some time to come."[15]

But there is a candidate for shared, overarching narrative that would fill the bill satisfactorily. And the time for recognizing this new, overarching narrative has long since arrived.

Every day, 15 million tons of carbon are exhausted into the atmosphere, adding to the burden that causes current and future global warming. Every day, 115 square miles of rainforest are destroyed, with consequent effects on local and global weather patterns. Every day, 72 square miles of desert are created, with similarly dire results. Every day, 40 to 100 species disappear, to what end we can scarcely now anticipate.[16] These are matters of incontrovertible fact – "what happens," to paraphrase Limbaugh. The world is a big place, but these are daily figures, and this planetary despoliation cannot be sustained indefinitely. The result of this rapacious use of the planet is incontrovertible by rational beings (though many Americans do still steadfastly controvert it – if, that is, they can be dragged, unwilling, toward seeing it at all). We are changing planetary systems on a grand scale, in a one-off, never-to-be repeated experiment in seeing if nature can adapt as rapidly as we can give it injury to which it must adapt. If the experiment fails – which is increasingly likely, if we credit reports from biologists, meteorologists, climatologists, ornithologists, piscatologists, oceanographers, herpetologists, entomologists, *et al.* – the changes we are wreaking now will have destroyed the ability of the planet to continue to support human civilization at anything like a level that we would find commodious, comfortable, perhaps even recognizable.[17]

In their text *Ecological Economics,* Herman Daly and Joshua Farley make a careful, rational economist's argument for crediting the role that planetary ecosystems play in sustaining the economy and culture of industrial development that we have built.[18] Using the work of Robert Costanza, they point to a dozen different categories of natural capital that provide very real goods and services to the economy. The list: low-entropy matter and energy, water purification and regulation, soil creation and fertility, moderation of micro- and macroclimates, pollination of plants, a library of genetic information, protection from cosmic and solar radiations, nutrient recycling, waste absorption. Some forms of natural capital are replenishable – forests, for instance – others, not (the planet's endowment of fossil fuels). The existence of this natural capital is necessary to human productive life, both as it is practiced now (can you imagine the expense and effort of hand-pollinating all the plants that we rely on?) and in absolute terms. Without protection from radiation given by the ozone layer, we die of skin cancer; without the moderating effect on climate of rainforests and ocean currents, our agriculture shrinks to a fraction of its current scale; without the water-absorption and regulating functions of deltaic marshes, we lose cities to storm surges; without the transfer of tropical warmth to Europe though the ocean Conveyor Belt, Europe becomes a cold, energetically more expensive, agriculturally less hospitable place to live; and so on, and so on. Problem: natural capital has long been taken for granted. It is constantly diminished through private appropriation under economic institutions that fail to value it as any sort of good, let alone a capital good whose stock should be preserved through careful management and investment (defined here, as in neoclassical economics, as a form of savings produced by foregoing consumption). That diminishment will, at some point, reach a critical level from which the affected ecosystems cannot recover.[19] When that happens, the ecosystem – and the human economic life dependent on it – crashes. (To the extent that human economic life depends on extraction of limited natural capital as a flow of input to the economy, it may crash well before its host ecosystem reaches its own point of no return: there are few lumber camps in the Adirondacks these days, fewer oystermen on the Chesapeake, no oystermen on the Mississippi at all.) I recall being puzzled as a schoolboy that the area called the Fertile Crescent – the cradle of civilization, home to one of several relatively simultaneous inventions of agriculture – is now dry and stony desert, land that offers little surplus biomass to feed humans. Not until I read George Perkins Marsh's *Man and Nature,* the ur-text of environmental understanding,[20] did I see why: deforestation reduced rainfall. Irrigation salinated the soils. Loss of the agricultural base led to the decline of population and the disappearance of the local civilization.

The forests and soil fertility of the Fertile Crescent were part of the stock of natural capital used by ancient Persia. Any company that draws down its capital, and treats the resulting flow as income, is clearly not a sustainable enterprise: when the capital is gone, so is the income – and with it all possibility of future income. What is easily seen in the corporate economy remains under-appreciated in the natural economy. Jared Diamond's *Collapse* documents the ways in which "civilizations choose to fail or succeed," and makes clear that the unchecked consumption of natural capital as income played a role in the disappearance of almost every civilization that has failed the evolutionary test of survival.[21] We will, I'm afraid, prove no exception to this clear fiduciary principle – not until and unless we learn to value natural capital as capital rather than income, not until and unless we learn to reign in our productive life to operate within sound, which is to say conservatively estimated,[22] ecological margins. The difference between our civilization and those Diamond discusses (a difference he expands upon) is that ours is a global, rather than local, civilization: there exists no horizon over which reside Spanish Conquistadors, Inuit, or Polynesian Islanders with access to nondepleted natural capital, who can emigrate to seed a new and different human culture in the degraded environs of our decline.

The first step in developing the sort of understanding we need about natural capital is to see nature historically. This was the innovation in Marsh's text: he saw that nature did not stand outside history, aloof and unchanging, but had been drawn into it through human action. How are we to know if greenhouse gases are producing global warming? We study history. How

are we to know what the consequences of cutting down the rainforest will be? We look for clues in history – in the change of ecosystems over time in response to changes we have instigated. As I've argued elsewhere,[23] because nature's rhythms exist in a broad spectrum that far surpasses our own at either end, historical understanding is the fundamental precondition for an ecological understanding. An appreciation of environmental history shows us that our experience of "now" – the brief three-score-and-ten span of our lives, which we very naturally take to be normal and ordinary – is instead a remarkable aberration in the history of the planet. Ironically, among the ways in which the current era is unprecedented is the intrusion into human life spans of ecological changes that have heretofore been noticeable only in geologic time.

As a meta-narrative organizing our thinking about American (indeed, world) history, the story of human culture's relationship to nature has some distinct advantages. First, it is objective: there is no gainsaying its insights, no credible argument holding that the facts of our ecological abuse are simply a matter of opinion that could be changed by adopting a different interpretive lens. Glaciers are measurably retreating, the oceans are measurably warming, storms are measurably more powerful as a consequence, fish are measurably scarcer in our over-exploited fisheries, species are demonstrably extinct, the planetary endowment of oil (and hence the Petroleum Age) is demonstrably finite. The truths of environmental history can be discounted only at the cost of discounting most of the edifice of science itself – which is the system of knowledge that has given us our unprecedented power to manipulate and change nature to begin with. It takes quite a bit of logical legerdemain to maintain a position that says, "Science is true and right and good when it is coupled to an economic system that brings us wealth, but it's not credible when it warns us of the dangers of destroying planetary ecosystems."

Second, environmental history is transcultural and transnational. Civilizations can clash all they want over whether Abraham or Adam Smith is a better guide to the regulation of our common life, but if we fail to cap carbon emissions and limit fish catches – if, more generally, we fail to learn and apply the lessons of environmental history – succeeding generations will view that sort of controversy as being a tragically pathetic distraction of no greater lasting import than the medieval scholastics' debates over how many angels can dance on the head of a pin.

Third, as an organizing narrative the story of the mutual interaction of culture and nature has a reach and scope unsurpassed by any other meta-narrative, whether that narrative be the story of God's Righteousness Redeemed, The Progress of Enlightenment, Our Manifest Destiny, Marxist Class War, or the (Right) Hegelian End of History tale currently beloved of neoconservatives. It may be true, as Thomas Kuhn said, that the comparison of such alternative visions is more a matter of aesthetic vision than logical proof, more a matter of utility in practice than simple comparison of evidentiary support.[24] But one sure guide to utility in practice can be found in a set of processual criteria for the evaluation of worldviews, criteria whose metaphysical stature is not so much that of a rule-of-thumb as that of a transhistorical, transcultural near-certainty: When comparing relative strengths and weaknesses of overarching visions, breadth of application and degree of assimilation of detail (scope and reach) are positive virtues relatively easy to compare.[25] Scope: every civilization has a necessary root in nature. Every civilization stands or falls on how well it husbands that root. Reach: the lessons of environmental history apply to matters of large national policy (whether we choose, for instance, to put a substantial tax on fuel, and thereby efficiently promote its conservation[26]) and petty individual choice (that paper-or-plastic question we're confronted with at supermarket checkout time[27]).

… because nature's rhythms exist in a broad spectrum that far surpasses our own at either end, historical understanding is the fundamental precondition for an ecological understanding.

And environmental history as a meta-narrative has this one, paramount, additional virtue: by understanding the history of how humanity has related to the planet, we will have available to us the information and perspectives we need to ensure that the project of human civilization has a good chance of continuing beyond the next few generations or so. No other candidate for meta-narrative can credibly make this claim.

What can be said against environmental history as a candidate for overarching meta-narrative? Most obviously, it doesn't pass Lynne Cheney's "doom and gloom" test: the news from environmental history is bad, and is getting worse. But the test itself is suspect; a commitment to bright-eyed Pollyannadom is inconsistent with careful, reasonable assessment of existential conditions, and it is the latter course that is necessary for collective life to be founded on wisdom rather than delusion. (It hardly needs emphasizing that cultures founded on delusion rarely pass the Darwinian test of survival.) Too much doom and gloom is dysfunctional – if environmental history is going to "save the planet," as Richard Foltz suggests[28], students of it need to be left with a sense that our end is not foreordained. Whether that sense will prove to be justified is a question that is difficult to resolve before the fact. In the meantime, wisdom counsels that we behave as if our actions matter.

Another objection: the over-arching meta-narrative of environmental history may be grounded in fact, but to count this as a distinctive strength is disingenuous. All such visions have some grounding in facticity, and what we should judge is not scope and reach of the vision's factual fit, but the practical result of the system in use. This unabashedly pragmatic approach seems to be at the core of Cheney's argument against multicultural pluralism in history classrooms: teaching

that way is wrong because it results in *this* instead of *that*.

To make the best case for this line of argument: it traces to Plato and the Noble Lie he would tell his guardian class, giving them an historical myth by which to understand themselves, their polity, and their role within it. Locke, too, was a proponent of noble dissimulation, suggesting that because the recondite reasoning that supports the meta-level process insights of natural law was beyond the capacity of the mass of humanity, it is better that they should be given a few simple rules, such as the ones offered as a matter of faith by Christianity, to regulate their social and political intercourse. He didn't envision a culture war, in which those who had been told his Noble Lie would become a democratically empowered majority campaigning against the rationalist policies and foundations of his polity. (Locke wrote in ignorance of a fundamental ecological principle: action within a complex system will have unintended consequences. Or, as the First Law of Ecology puts it, "you can't do one thing.") Besides this practical difficulty, the very notion of a noble lie runs counter to the American enlightenment tradition, embodied in our institutions, of grounding political discourse and exchange in reason, evidence, and publicly accessible debate. To have a philosopher king, priest, or former chair of the National Endowment of the Humanities consciously orchestrating mass delusion for political ends, however noble, is inconsistent with the principles and practice of democracy.[29]

The more telling rejoinder to this objection accepts the pragmatic criterion explicit in the argument (as Plato and Locke, if not Cheney, made it). Knowledge of environmental history is crucial to establishing human culture within ecological limits, which we must do if human culture is to survive on the planet. Among all possible meta-narratives it is the best and likeliest to lead us to the creation of an ecologically sustainable human civilization that preserves the cultural and political freedoms we currently enjoy.

A people's history is in fair measure its identity, and in America's relationship to history we see the truth and the perversity of American exceptionalism. The truth: Americans are exceptional, but not for the reasons they think. To a degree unparalleled in the rest of the world, Americans believe themselves to be free of history, whether the history they're abjuring is the trajectory in time of a collectivity to which they belong – the nation, the culture, the sub-culture, the neighborhood, the ecosystem – or solely an individual, biographical story. We value the myth of meritocracy: we believe in individual economic progress and in the saga of the self-made man. What is this myth but an assertion to ourselves that unlike other cultures, for us the past has no distinctive, determinative hold? "A people without history is like wind upon the buffalo grass," the Teton Sioux would tell their children. "However far the stream flows, it never forgets its source," said the Yoruba people in West Africa.[30] "You can do it, Timmy," is the closest thing America has to an equivalent anthemic statement: you aren't ruled by the past, by the failure of your previous attempts; you're growing and developing and with such change anything is possible. Forget what has been: What is supremely required is that you have faith in what could be.[31] I don't doubt that a democracy on meritocratic principles is preferable to a polity that embraces the stifling yoke of tradition or any other illiberal restriction. But it is not necessary to be freed from history in order to be politically and culturally free; and we must ask, what have we given up in establishing for ourselves this kind of freedom? I think we limit ourselves to the shallowest forms of self-knowledge, and we deny ourselves the wisdom we need to make good decisions for ourselves, our polities our planet.

To the perspective of environmental history, the notion that America's greatness as a nation depends solely on some quality of American character, or on that quality of character in combination with the exceptional quality of its economic and political institutions, looks to be naïve narcissism that is both ecologically and thermodynamically ignorant in the extreme. Europeans set forth on this continent a new nation – one that happened to have lucked into history's largest-ever stock of unexploited scarce low entropy, in the form of deep soil fertility and easily extracted minerals, including especially fossil fuels.[32] It's a lucky accident that can't be repeated, not on this planet, ever. From that stock we extracted wealth, which we used to purchase comfort, distance from want, distance from nature, distance from compulsion of nearly every kind, and we have for several centuries enjoyed the freedom we so purchased. To some extent we've been able to export this bargain – low entropy in, wealth and freedom out – to other nations, but the global pursuit of that bargain is sustained only by the world's ever-increasing use of fossil fuel – stored sunlight, the past low-entropy income of the planet. When the stock of available low entropy can no longer support the level of flow that our institutions require, the system – and, unless we are careful, the freedoms built upon it – will necessarily change. (Or: they have begun to change already.[33])

The unavoidable conclusion: In the face of environmental degradation our customary faith in individual and collective progress will be insufficient to secure our future. What is required is dramatic change in the relationship of industrial culture to nature. That change will come, whether we will it or no; an unsustainable relationship must, by definition, come to an end. The only question is, how intelligently will we face and prepare for that end? Which is to ask, how much natural capital will we reserve from current consumption? Which is to ask, how many humans will the earth support a generation from now? What standard of living, what political and economic freedoms will they enjoy? Intelligence increases the prospects of the survival of the values we cherish: we can, if we choose, use what we know and can learn about the environment and our dependence on it to ease our global transition to a post-cheap-energy, post-rapacious economy, a world in which democratic freedoms and a decent standard of living are no longer purchased by cheap energy and the destruction of natural capital.

A general appreciation among the American populace of the truths of environmental history is not anything like the sum total of the intelligence we will need to make that transition. However, such an appreciation would make rational anticipation of inevitable change a good deal more likely. In rationally, purposefully planning our move to a sustainable society lies the

best, indeed I think the only hope for the continuation of the human project for an advanced civilization of any sort – our own exceptional, noble, Constitutional democracy included.

End Notes

[1] Todd Gitlin, for one: see "A Truce Prevails; for the Left, Many Victories are Pyhrric," his contribution to a Colloquy on the Culture Wars in *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* March 6, 1998, accessible online at http://chronicle.com/colloquy/98/culturewar/background.htm

[2] To name the most obvious: civil rights for gay couples, mandatory childbirth for pregnant women, placing copies of the ten commandments in public places, requiring the teaching of fundamental religious metaphysics in high school science classes.

[3] Here it's appropriate to nod at Samuel P. Huntington and his work, *The Clash of Civilizations,* Simon and Schuster, 1998; and the original article in *Foreign Affairs* 72(3):22-49. Huntington doesn't see the international clash of cultures as being modeled, in fine, by our domestic culture wars; but then, in his analysis, civilizations tend to be homogenously filled black boxes, devoid of diversity.

[4] The whole speech is available at http://www.buchanan.org/pa-92-0817-rnc.html. Buchanan went on, making clear that the culture war was not merely interest-group politics-as-usual: "And in that struggle for the soul of America, Clinton and Clinton are on the other side, and George Bush is on our side." Certainly Buchanan knew that as a matter of duly ordained electoral procedure, George Bush was in fact running against Clinton and Gore.

[5] As reported in Gary Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past,* Vintage, 2000, p. 3. (The authors were part of the group of historians and academics that produced the National Standards for History.)

[6] Nash, p. 7.

[7] All phrases from Rush Limbaugh, by way of Nash, p. 5. All three characterizations are unfounded. The work of producing the standards was administered by the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California, Los Angeles under the guidance of the National Council for History Standards, a nongovernmental advisory group drawn from various organizations of professional historians, and was, by the account of many participants, a model of open, consensus-building process. Work was initiated by the Department of Education, responding to a diagnosis offered in a widely distributed report, *A Nation at Risk,* produced by the Department of Education under Reagan and published in 1983. The standards were developed with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the U.S. Department of Education, and any school district's or state's use of them is voluntary.

[8] This is the perspective of Nash *et al.*

[9] Gitlin, *Chronicle of Higher Education* colloquy.

[10] Gitlin again, same place.

[11] Ironically enough, in a more recent battle in the culture war, partisans and defenders of the teaching of Intelligent Design in the York, PA school district appealed to the authority of some notable relativist epistemologists in arguing against the authority of science; the work of Thomas Kuhn and Paul Feyerabend was adduced to support the view that science itself is has no greater epistemological stature than religion, that scientific belief is in essence a form of faith. This is a misreading of Kuhn (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970) but not of Feyerabend (*Against Method: outline of an Anarchistic Theory of Knowledge,* Verso Press, 1975).

[12] Conservatives thus didn't appreciate or chose to reject the meta-objectivity manifest in the standards-writers' commitment to the processes of rational discourse – to the use of fact, evidence, logic, and debate – as a key to understanding in history. In their evident commitment to rational discourse, in lieu of a single narrative history, as the shared foundation of the American polity, the standards writers were firmly within the American Constitutional tradition of bringing Enlightenment thought to bear on the problems of political culture.

[13] This would not surprise John Locke, who offered a defense of the political utility of Christianity (I paraphrase): "The hand that is used to the plow does not belong to a mind capable of the long trains of reasoning that reveal natural law and natural right. The vast majority of men cannot know; it is sufficient, therefore, that they believe." This is a notion to which I return, below.

[14] No source for this; I recall it from a lecture given by Prof. Hank Reynolds in Poli Sci 302, "Survey Research Methods," at the University of Delaware, sometime in 1974.

[15] Todd Gitlin, *Chronicle* colloquy.

[16] The numbers come from David Orr, "The Problem of Sustainability," in *Ecological Literacy,* State University of New York Press, Albany: 1992, p. 3. As he notes in a later edition, the numbers have only gotten worse since he first wrote.

[17] This has an apocalyptic tone. I've spoken against ecological apocalypticism elsewhere: see "Apocalypse and Ecology," in my *Virgin Forest: Meditations on History, Culture and Ecology,* University of Georgia Press, 1997. My call there for temperate, sustainable thought on our ecological crisis has been misused to suggest that we do not face an environmental breakdown of apocalyptic proportions; that interpretation is incorrect.

[18] Herman Daly and Joshua Farley, *Ecological Economics,* Island Press, 2004.

[19] A cavil: nature endures. It recovered from the shock of the meteor strike that ended the Cretaceous Era, which is the nearest historically proximate

event comparable in scope to the depredations of (what geologists now call) the Anthropocene Era. Whatever we do nature will eventually recover, in geologic time, to exist again as a lush, variegated, complexly interrelated system of life and non-life. When I speak of nature not recovering, I mean that it will not re-establish itself in human history to a state that will provide us with anything close to our accustomed level of enjoyment of its natural capital.

[20] Marsh, *Man and Nature, or Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*. Belknap Press, 1965. First published in 1864 (a few short years after Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859) this is the first text in the Western tradition to accept the idea that human activity could have a cumulative effect in transforming natural systems. Interestingly, Marsh takes Darwin to task for not recognizing that some of the mutability he saw in nature was the product of human action; see p. 247.

[21] Jared Diamond, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Viking, 2005.

[22] Daly and Farley note that exogenous shocks (the vagaries of El Niño, for instance) and our own ignorance mean that caution is advisable in estimating nature's ability to serve both as a sink for the products of our activities and as a storehouse for the flows and stocks we extract.

[23] In *Virgin Forest: Meditations on History, Culture and Nature,* University of Georgia Press, 1997.

[24] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* University of Chicago Press, 1962.

[25] Stephen Pepper, *World Hypotheses: A Study in Evidence,* University of California Press, Los Angeles, 1948. Pepper was Kuhn's mentor, and some of his insights are traceable in Kuhn's work.

[26] The Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency Standards are an ecological failure; every fuel-stingy hybrid that is sold allows its maker to produce another profligate SUV.

[27] Which choice minimizes the chooser's ecological footprint? Which represents a more efficient use of scarce matter and energy? Of course it's more eco-friendly to take one's own reusable tote to the store.

[28] Richard Foltz, "Does Nature Have Historical Agency? World History, Environmental History, and How Historians Can Help Save the Planet." The History Teacher, 37:1, November 2003, available online at http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ht/37.1/foltz.html. Foltz's essay contains a useful review of recent scholarship in environmental history.

[29] I may seem to have countenanced a noble lie myself, above, in cautioning against excessive doom and gloom. But to leave students and citizens with some sense of hope for the future is not to lie to them. The future is unknown and not fully knowable; our ignorance should license optimistic action (not inaction).

[30] Nash, p. 8. I don't know whether or the degree to which this appreciation of history has been displaced by these cultures' cooption into a temporal consumerist culture.

[31] Our tradition does offer wisdom about history. The study of it, Jefferson said, should be undertaken by anyone who would participate in democratic government, for only then could the citizen be able "to judge of the future" and evaluate for themselves "the actions and designs of men." Jefferson's advice, while sound and admirable, has neither the poetry nor the general currency of the epigrams from other cultures.

[32] On the notion that low entropy stocks and flows are the ultimate source of economic value, see Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process,* Harvard University Press, 1971, or, more accessibly, the discussion in Daly and Farley, *Ecological Economics,* 64 - 70.

[33] Here it is possible to cite an increasing shelf-full of recent works on Peak Oil, Hubbert's Peak, the end of the Petroleum Era – some of it very gloomy, some of it merely sobering. Compare Richard Heinberg, *The Party's Over: Oil, War and the Fate of Industrial Societies,* New Society Publishers, 2003, and James Howard Kunstler, *The Long Emergency: Surviving the Converging Catastrophes of the 21st Century,* Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005.

Competencies of Self-Directed Learners

Malcolm Knowles

As part of a Mentoring Institute-sponsored workshop on Independent Learning Strategies held at the Northeast Center on November 3, we reviewed some of our assumptions about " effective independent learners." One text we used as a basis for that discussion was a more than 30-year old "resource" developed by Malcolm Knowles in his Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers *(Association Press, 1975, p. 61).*

Knowles developed a list of "competencies of self-directed learning" to be used by students as a "self-rating instrument." Students were to judge their own competencies (as "none," "weak," "fair" or "strong") in the following nine areas:

1. An understanding of the differences in assumptions about learners and the skills required for learning under teacher-directed learning and self-directed learning, and the ability to explain these differences to others.
2. A concept of myself as being a non-dependent and self-directing person.
3. The ability to relate to peers collaboratively, to see them as resources for diagnosing needs, planning my learning, and learning; and to give help to them and receive help from them.
4. The ability to diagnose my own learning needs realistically, with help from teachers and peers.
5. The ability to translate learning needs into learning objectives in a form that makes it possible for their accomplishment to be assessed.
6. The ability to relate to teachers as facilitators, helpers, or consultants, and to take the initiative in making use of their resources.
7. The ability to identify human and material resources appropriate to different kinds of learning objectives.
8. The ability to select effective strategies for making use of learning resources and to perform these strategies skillfully and with initiative.
9. The ability to collect and validate evidence of the accomplishments of various kinds of learning objectives.

Submissions to *All About Mentoring*

If you have read a book or article that interested you; attended a stimulating conference; had a valuable, surprising or difficult mentoring experience, or a "mentoring" moment you would be willing to describe, please consider submitting it to *All About Mentoring*.

If you have a scholarly paper-in-progress or a talk that you have presented, *All About Mentoring* would welcome it. If you developed materials for your students that may be of good use to others, or have a comment on any part of this issue, or on topics/concerns relevant to our mentoring community, please sent them along.

If you have a short story, poem, drawings, or photographs, or have reports on your reassignments and sabbaticals, *All About Mentoring* would like to include them in an upcoming issue.

Send submissions to Alan Mandell (Empire State College, Metropolitan Center, 325 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10013-1005) or via e-mail at Alan.Mandell@esc.edu.

Submissions to *All About Mentoring* can be of varied length and take many forms. (Typically, materials are no longer than 7,500 words.) It is easiest if materials are sent via e-mail to Mandell as WORD attachments. In terms of references and style, *All About Mentoring* uses APA rules (please see *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* or http//library.albany.edu/users/style/ap2.html

All About Mentoring is published twice a year. Our next issue, #33, will be available in summer 2007. We invite submissions for that issue by May 15.

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A special issue of *All About Mentoring,* #34, to be edited by Cathy Leaker, Margaret Souza, and Alan Mandell, will focus on the theory and practice of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) and Educational Planning.

We invite contributions from a variety of perspectives and on a variety of topics, including:

- Reflections on the history and theory of PLA;
- Reviews of key texts on PLA and educational planning;
- Interviews with those involved in this work;
- Materials for students engaged in PLA and educational planning that have been developed by mentors;
- Case studies of PLA and educational planning work with students;
- Descriptions and analyses of PLA and educational planning models at other institutions in the U.S. and across the globe;
- Examination of the meaning and use of experiential learning opportunities in on-going study.

We invite submissions to this special issue of *All About Mentoring* by July 1, 2007.