ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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"We should not delude ourselves that education can be created anew: as a social institution it has a history and traditions, and it is bound by economic and cultural constraints. Nevertheless, old habits of educational thinking can change, long-standing assumptions can be discarded, and fresh vision can improve practice."

– Jane Roland Martin (1985) Reclaiming a Conversation: The Ideal of the Educated Woman. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 199.

Errata
In "The Liturgy of Pedagogy," by Katherine Kurs (Issue 34, Fall 2008), on page 20, right-hand column, it should have read "sit shmirah" (not "shimrah"). Also, in the author's bio on page 24, Dr. Kurs's Ph.D. is in rhetorical criticism, not philosophy.

Table of Contents

Thick and Thin

We haven't talked in a few months.

It's got to mean we've both been busy.

Busy-ness is the excuse of the day: who isn't busy?

I sometimes think that some people aren't, but that's not a particularly collegial take on things. Who'd admit it anyway?

I'm not asking about hours. The question is busy with what?

Are you asking me how I spend my time?

It's not something we feel comfortable talking about. I now think it's one of our most protected secrets. I've known you for years and don't think we've ever discussed the specifics of our daily activities.

We've certainly talked about workload! It's probably more accurate to ask: When haven't we? It's our own "W."

We're scared to open up the discussion – to really get at the details.

There is a reason for these fears, you know. It's not free-floating paranoia. I want to fulfill my so-called "professional obligation" without someone telling me how to do it.

As I said, I'm not asking you how many hours you're at it. I'm more interested in what you do. I want to know what your days look like.

A "sense"? I'm occupied all the time: four days, sometimes five; hours in flux; two nights until 8 p.m., at least; and probably two hours on both Saturday and Sundays. And then there's the e-mail torrent on top of all that.

You're purposefully evading my question.

I dream about my students. Guilt for me isn't binge eating; it's the papers and the e-mails I've not gotten to. Piles and piles in my head.

I don't think we see students enough.

You're in the past: "see" isn't the operative word anymore.

OK, how about "connect." We don't connect enough with our students.

I don't know what you're talking about. I've never had so many connections. I'm a mad juggler of connections. I'll bet you anything that there are more student-mentor connections than ever before.

They're thin.

You now want to measure them?

I want you to describe to me how you are spending all these hours and what – what specifically – you are doing with your time. What are all those connections about?

I'm telling you that I'm dealing with my students and interacting with them.

Hang in there with me; be more concrete: If you're doing a guided independent study with a student, what do you assume will be the nature of your connection with that student over a 15-week period?

It depends.

Give me a break.

It depends on the student's past studies, on the level of the study, on the topics, and on my best judgment of what supports that particular student. There's no single rule that can cover everyone.

That's just too easy. You're actually telling me that we're responsible academics at a respectable public institution of higher learning and we're unwilling to get more specific than that?

I'm telling you that I'm overworked and yes, I have connections galore with my students, and yes, of course, I wish I had more. But I'm also telling you – you've got to see this – that you're moving into tricky territory if you're pushing me not only to specify hours of connections – which, of course, you know you cannot do – but quality of thickness and thinness. That's even more dangerous.

You're saying to me that it's none of anyone's business.

I'm saying that it's my responsibility to make these determinations and if you, someone I basically trust – if you are going to start questioning my academic judgment, so is someone else, and that will be much more problematic. But I see it now: You claim to be the voice of academic quality.

I think that your effort to protect what you think of as your academic freedom is unconscionably weak. Yes, it's your prerogative to work with your students as you see fit, and I'll admit we can't take that for granted – it's already being nibbled away. But I do care if I or you or some other colleague I barely know is having substantive interactions with our students. I can't believe you don't think this is in our common interest.

As usual, you're naïve.

I'm not proposing a massive surveillance system.

You're not that heavy handed, but surveillance is lurking in a million ways and you just won't see it. But let's get back to your big point: tell me, oh upholder of true student-mentor interactions, who is going to tell us when your appropriately thick interaction is happening?

We've lost an ability to judge. We're too embedded in a thicket of thin connections when we have them at all.

Are you kidding me? Your clever phrase only hides how dead wrong you are. You want someone to do the measuring for us because we're not able to experience what you are claiming we are experiencing? Ah, the idiocy of the masses! Thanks for your knowing help. It will certainly only add to your busy life.

Don't distort my point. I'm saying that unless we start to talk honestly and directly about how we spend our time – whatever time we are spending, with our students –

I don't care if it's online, on the phone or face-to-face, we're in deep academic trouble and we'll forever be arguing about counting or not counting hours and about comparative degrees of mentorial exhaustion. We'll be mired, exactly as we have been, in the big "W." You know what's remarkable: with all of your criticism of my naiveté, I still don't know how you spend your hours and hours each week because you won't talk about it.

Here's what's amazing to me: I feel even less inclined to tell you than I was before we started this conversation. I've never been more sure of how crucial it is for us

to maintain the sanctity of our individual choices about how we connect with our students. You've confused care about quality with systematic prying. Dear Dr. Measurer of Thickness, you're inviting and even rationalizing a slew of new policies that will shimmer in our future and when you see them, you – I know it – won't want them at all.

I know you're so busy, but tell me, Dear Distinguished Protector of Privacy, tell me exactly how you spend your day. Why won't you talk?

Alan Mandell

> *What is truly new is that, in the bakery, I caught sight of a terrible paradox. In this high-tech, flexible work place where everything is user-friendly, the workers felt personally demeaned by the way they work. In this baker's paradise, that reaction to their work is something they do not themselves understand. Operationally, everything is so clear; emotionally, so illegible.*
>
> – Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism (1998).* New York: Norton, pp. 67 - 68.

An Inquiry into Adult Students' Learning through Discussion

Alice Lai, Center for Distance Learning

Introduction

In the recent decade, a growing number of studies in the areas of critical adult education and online education have offered various theories supporting "discussion as a way of teaching" (Brookfield and Preskill, 1999; Conrad and Donaldson, 2004; Oliver and Shaw, 2003; Palloff and Pratt, 2004; Petrides, 2002). They highly support discussion as a teaching method because it helps students become active and responsible learners, cultivates in students the ability to engage in social change and a democratic way of living, and prompts them to exercise higher-order, critical thinking. As an undergraduate faculty member teaching courses delivered entirely online at a college focused on adult learners, I share these educators' perceptions of using discussion to enhance learning, but I am concerned about adult students' perceptions of discussion as a way of learning.

A reassignment (2007 - 2008) from the Office of Academic Affairs, allowed me the opportunity to delve deeper into my on-going inquiry about adult students' perceptions of online learning. During the reassignment period, I had many conversations with Alan Mandell, college professor of adult learning and mentoring, not only about my research progress but also online teaching, learning and course design in general. With the support of the Office of Academic Affairs and the Center for Distance Learning, I also had a chance to lead a small seminar and share my thoughts and research findings with colleagues here at Empire State College. This essay, developed during the reassignment, presents a brief summary of my inquiry about adult students' perceptions of learning through online discussion.

Why do we care about student perceptions?

One may ask: Why is it important to learn about student perceptions of learning in the context of asynchronous online discussion? Current research has revealed that student self-perceived learning satisfaction and experience can affect their motivation

Alice Lai

to continue engaging in discussion; and student perceptions of how and what they learn through discussion can offer teachers insights into the continuous improvement of discussion facilitation strategies, activities, resources and even pedagogical theory. From a teaching perspective, Oliver and Shaw's (2003) study indicates that the lack of meaningful understanding of student perceptions of learning through online discussion can result in teachers facing the greater challenge of motivating students to participate in discussions and quality learning. From a learning perspective, Ellsworth's (1989) feminist critique of critical pedagogy indicates that critical pedagogy may create an uncomfortable

learning environment, in which students become resistant to discuss issues of gender, race, class and sexual orientation. One may assume that when these students develop a negative feeling towards their learning experience or environment, they may become less motivated to participate in discussion of sensitive or controversial topics, which would lead to poor learning outcomes. On the other hand, other research also has shown that the connection between student self-perceived learning satisfaction and experience and actual learning outcome may not always be coherent. Lu and Jeng's (2006) study indicates that while students are satisfied with the online discussion experience, their discussion postings do not show higher-order thinking.

With these researchers advice in mind, my assumption is that student perceptions of learning, learning motivation and learning outcome are interrelated. To gain a meaningful understanding of student learning and to evaluate the efficacy of asynchronous online discussion, I believe we should strive to examine both student perceptions of learning and actual discussion/learning outcomes.

To this end, I led a research project to explore the possible relationships among instructor online discussion facilitative strategies, student knowledge construction and student perceptions of learning. Elsewhere, my research partners and I have presented general preliminary findings regarding effective online discussion facilitation strategies and student knowledge construction (Lai and Lu, 2007; Lai, Lu and Jeng, 2007). Our research findings indicate that the majority of students studied have reached higher levels of knowledge construction through asynchronous online discussion. In this paper, however, I intend to discuss my own inquiry of student learning within the discourse of adult learning. I will first highlight the conceptual framework (i.e., critical adult and online

learning) utilized to design the discussion activity. I then describe and summarize the core of my inquiry – the student initiated discussion activity. Finally, I will include an example of student online discussion and discuss student perceptions of learning through online discussion, motivations for participating in online discussion, and certain challenges encountered in the online discussion.

Conceptual Framework

Using discussion to enhance student acquisition of knowledge, academic skills and social responsibility has been examined by a number of researchers (Brookfield and Preskill, 1999; Brookfield, 2006; Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000; Hollenbeck, 1998; Lai and Lu, 2007; Yang, Newby and Bill, 2005). Among them, Brookfield and Preskill (1999) and Hollenbeck (1998) observe that discussion-based teaching and learning is a way to cultivate students' ability to engage in social change and participate as citizens of a democratic society. Discussion, if conducted critically and effectively, helps to create a democratic classroom in which the teacher is not the dominant voice transmitting knowledge or ideology. Rather, students would have increased chances to collect, consider and debate the diverse viewpoints of their peers, and thus they would gain practice constructing knowledge through peer collaboration. Many online educators also share this perspective and have argued that time for reflection, the complex cognitive activities involved in written communication, and the quick access to multiple resources can all contribute to deeper learning and increased opportunities to learn from diverse sources (Conrad and Donaldson, 2004; Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000; Hollenbeck, 1998).

Using critical theory, adult educators (Brookfield and Preskill, 1999; Brookfield, 2006) advocate that teachers use discussion as a way to ensure that students can learn to engage in critiques of the social and power nexus and explore injustices in society. This can be achieved by meeting the four purposes of discussion: "(1) to help participants reach a more critically informed understanding about the topic or topics under consideration, (2) to enhance participants' self-awareness and their capacity for self-critique, (3) to foster an appreciation among participants for the diversity of opinion that invariably emerges when viewpoints are exchanged openly and honestly, and (4) to act as a catalyst to helping people take informed action in the world" (Brookfield and Preskill, 1999, p. 6-7). Moreover, as the number of students taking online courses grows, online educators (Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000; Palloff and Pratt, 2004; Yang, Newby and Bill, 2005) are increasingly affirming that in computer mediated conference, interactive discussion is not only the key to sustaining teaching, social and cognitive presences, but it also helps students achieve higher order, critical thinking. In this sense, discussion itself serves an important role in cognitive development. In short, discussion is a powerful learning activity that enhances the quality of the learning experience itself and the process of maintaining and promoting democracy.

> *Discussion, if conducted critically and effectively, helps to create a democratic classroom in which the teacher is not the dominant voice transmitting knowledge or ideology.*

Study Design

Guided by Merriam's (1998) notion of case study, I conducted a study of student-initiated discussions in a 15-week undergraduate, upper-level online art appreciation course, Images of Women in Western Civilization, delivered through Empire State College's Center for Distance Learning. Thirty-four students were enrolled in the two sections of the course, most of whom were female. The following three questions guided my own inquiry:

1. What are adult student's perceptions of learning and satisfaction gained from the asynchronous discussion?

2. What are adult student motivations for participating in the online discussion?

3. What are the challenges adult students encountered in the online discussion?

This course was designed to provide students with an opportunity to explore women's lives through the arts and material culture in the different periods of Western Civilization. Learning activities included reading, student-initiated discussion, gallery talk where students posted and critiqued images of their choices, a learning journal and an individual research project. Delivered through the Asynchronous New Global Environment for Learning (ANGEL), student-initiated discussion was the primary learning activity. Guided by assigned course readings and utilizing asynchronous discussion, students had the opportunity to collaboratively explore many aspects of women's lives and creativity such as how women are represented in the visual arts (defined in a broad sense), women's creative endeavors, female artists and the lives of women from ancient times to the present. To establish a democratic learning environment and empower student voices, the instructor did not provide lectures, questions or topics for discussion. Rather, each student was required to be discussion initiators two times during the course of the study. During the first week, students posted to the discussion area those two weeks they chose to initiate class discussions. Discussion-initiators were expected to start up and follow up on their own discussion threads by:

1. providing a brief introduction to an issue/topic, derived from the course reading, that they want to explore with peers collaboratively,

2. raising a few questions to guide the discussion, and

3. continuing to participate in the discussion by responding to posts from classmates.

It was assumed that through such interactive and student-centered discussion activities, students would have the opportunity to take

the lead to explore issues or topics presented in the course readings particular to their interests and concerns, and that in doing so, they would become aware of different opinions and interpretations pertaining to the visual arts' topic or issue at hand. Through this process, I also anticipated that students would reconsider their previous assumptions towards women and the visual arts and begin recognizing gender issues and injustice in art and society.

As the instructor, my role was to serve as a facilitator and co-learner. Besides helping students learn how to conduct student-initiated discussions, I followed each discussion thread, shared my thoughts and experience of the visual arts with students, raised questions to learn more about students' perspectives, provided further resources to help students continue to explore the topic, identified conflicting opinions and invited further discussion or debate, and challenged student assumptions.

Students kept learning journals throughout the term. In the journals, students reflected on some questions listed on Brookfield's (2006) "Critical Incident Questionnaire" and their experiences either as discussion initiators or participants. At the beginning of the term an anonymous, demographic survey was administered online. A learning survey (see the table for survey questions pertinent to my inquiry) was administered, also anonymously, toward the end of the term. The survey questions were guided by previous research focused on the relationship between the constructivist discussion method and knowledge construction (Brookfield and Preskill, 1999; Brookfield, 2006; Garrison, Anderson and Archer, 2000, 2001; Gunawardena, Lowe and Anderson, 1997; Lai and Lu, 2007).

Multiple sources of data were collected including student learning journals, surveys, transcripts of online discussions, and my observation notes. Concerning the use of self-reports (e.g., the learning journal and surveys), Brookfield and Preskill (1999) and Gunawardena, et al. (1997) have argued for the value of self-reports, especially when combined with other methods. Particularly relevant to this study, Brookfield and Preskill (1999) have asserted that, "because discussions are always contextual […] they can only be evaluated from the inside. So

we generally advocate that teachers work from students' own testimony regarding the nature of their discussion experience" (p. 218). "Category construction" (Merriam, 1998, p. 179) was implemented to code and analyze data. To ensure validity of the study, triangulation (Yin, 2002) was implemented. These content and data analysis methods helped to reveal "recurring regularities or patterns" (Merriam, 1998, p. 181) through comparing multiple sources of data. Furthermore, frequencies were assigned to recurring patterns because it helped to determine their level of importance.

An Example of Student's Exploration of Women's Lives and Creativity

Before discussing the results of my inquiry, I would like to provide an example of student's collective exploration of one of the most significantly tackled topics in student-initiated discussions: Women's lives and creativity in the early civilizations. This topic was first raised by a discussion initiator.

> In reading Chapter One of "Goddesses, Whores, Wives and Slaves," I was amazed at the lack of identity that women had in the early times. As these depictions were furnished by the male gender, what do you think the women were thinking about the lack of identity and respect that was offered them? Do you think that women actually never recorded their thoughts, or do you think that those "words" were recorded and lost? (VG, February 2007)

Among other initial posts, VG's post immediately evoked enthusiastic responses, which indicated that students were very interested in speculating what women "thought" of their lives when they were silenced, rather than tackling the facts or author's analysis presented in the actual text. Soon, two viewpoints emerged from student discussions. One assumed that

> " … the society then, showed women as inferior, women went along with it because they did not know anything different. Does this mean that they didn't often think to themselves, about being more superior? We will never know!" (SF, February 2007).

At this point, several students began exchanging their own stories about knitting blankets or clothes for their own children. They pondered how those creative works may serve as a way to study contemporary women's lives.

Students who supported this assumption tended to believe that women did not have agency or an ability to talk back, especially in the early civilizations. On the other hand, students with a different viewpoint claimed that "there definitely is a pattern of male dominance as told throughout the book – but there are always the women who just don't accept it as the norm" (MB, February 2007). MB then used images of Hera, the Amazon woman and the woman from Lesbos, founded on the Internet, as examples to demonstrate that literature did not always depict women as inferior and self-belittled. As the two viewpoints continued to unfold, students continued to draw upon their personal experiences to support their views. Finally, they agreed that it is difficult for people of today to understand what women thought of themselves because of the lack of authentic documentation of the women lives in the early civilizations.

The discussion seemed to reach a dead end at this point. VG the discussion initiator, however, continued to challenge the existing consensus that ancient women left no record of their lives and feelings. She offered a tale she learned while surfing the Internet: In Greek mythology, Philomela was raped and her tongue was cut out. Without a voice, she weaved her story into tapestry and sent it to her sister so that together they could take revenge. As a result, students began sharing images and stories of clothes, quilts, pottery and vases to support the idea that

arts and craft "gave a voice to a woman who may not have had one any other way" (MM, February 2007). At this point, several students began exchanging their own stories about knitting blankets or clothes for their own children. They pondered how those creative works may serve as a way to study contemporary women's lives.

Throughout the course of study, students persistently asserted that women's creativity has long been suppressed by various institutional and gender norms. They affirmed that women's creativity shown in clothes, pottery, cooking, home decoration and gardening is generally not regarded as art by contemporary art historians and critics. They pondered whether this was because that such creative works were created by women, who had lower social status than men and whose ideas and works were seen as less important and intelligent than those of men. SW asserted that "these items do tell a story of women's lives and should be considered art" (February 2007). However, without equivalent education, social status and voices of their male counterparts, women rarely had chances to argue for their creativity or why those items should be considered art. Such perspectives later led to another passionate discussion of gender inequalities in the art world as initiated by MM.

> [Women's] work, if it has survived at all, is usually displayed in historical museums rather than art museums. This makes me consider whether or not crafts and objects made for the home should be classified as art. If we do not call them art, we will be excluding thousands of years of work created almost exclusively by women. Should crafts be considered art? Should the people who created these crafts appear in a section of an art history textbook (MM, April 2007)?

The example of student online discussions as described above illustrates student's acquisition of knowledge and perspectives and critical thinking about women's lives and creativity in the early civilizations. It led them to focus on several issues: the lack of women's voices, lack of authentic resources to understand women's sense of self and feelings, gender stereotypes,

The Learning Survey Outcome

A. Students Perception of Learning from Online Discussion	strongly agree	agree	undecided	disagree	strongly disagree
1. I learned a great deal about the course topic.	11	6	1	0	0
2. Via online discussion, I developed a deeper understanding of course topics.	11	7	0	0	0
3. The peers' questions and discussions really stimulated my thinking.	9	8	1	0	0
4. I have learned information that I can apply to real-world environment.	10	8	0	0	0
5. I felt that my understanding about course topics has been changed.	7	8	2	1	0
6. I was empowered to change my beliefs, values, or thoughts about the images of women.	11	5	1	1	0
7. After the online discussion, I can see the issues from different perspectives.	11	7	0	0	0
8. My existing values and thoughts were challenged during the online discussion.	3	12	1	2	0
9. I felt comfortable to express my ideas.	8	9	1	0	0
10. I was not afraid of sharing different opinions.	8	7	2	1	0
11. I participated actively in class discussion.	8	8	1	1	0

B. Written Comments

1. How did/would you know you've learned from class discussions?

2. Reflecting on your experience in class discussion throughout the semester, what were your motivations for participating in online discussion?

gender inequality in the art world, and the possibility of learning about women's lives through their creative works rather than through the written records. Moreover, at least one student, MM, explicitly questioned the limited visual culture in her art history curriculum. Throughout the course of the study, students were inspired by each other to keep broadening their discussions of the topics and issues concerning the women's lives and creativity. Quick access to the Internet also enabled them to gather additional information or images to gain new knowledge or support their points. They have consulted course readings and added self-identified resources and images, their personal experiences and their observations of women's lives in contemporary society to support their arguments. Their exploration of women's lives and creativity in the different time periods was evidently enhanced by student-initiated, interactive and online discussion.

Summary of Results

Perceptions of Learning. Thirty-one students participated in the learning survey, while 18 students (58 percent) returned the survey. Results from this survey (see The Learning Survey Outcome) and the contents of the learning journals point toward a high level of learner satisfaction and cognitive activities. Many students agreed that online discussion helped them see the issues from different perspectives. They had applied information or new perspectives learned from asynchronous online discussions to the real world environment. One student specifically interpreted Survey Question 4, applying new knowledge to the real world environment, as "being able to talk with friends and co-workers about gender issues in a critical and concise manner" (personal communication, April 2007). She also noted that such ability creates a sense of empowerment. In general, students felt that it was through the online discussion that they were able to develop a deeper understanding of the course content. A majority of the students eventually found the student-initiated discussion activity valuable, especially in helping them become active and responsible learners. As one student wrote in the survey, "I felt that student-initiated discussions forced us to become more responsible, not only for keeping the course

discussions moving forward but also for maintaining [the quality of the discussions]" (personal communication, April 2007). Several students expressed the belief that the discussion was essential to the online learning environment, without which the instructor and students would not have been able to interact, teach and learn. Hence, the majority of students were pleased to see their peers and instructor actively participate in online discussion and utilize it to motivate each other to delve deeper into the topics of their interests as well as course content.

However, as can be seen Survey Question 8, only three students (17 percent) checked off "strongly agree" and two students checked off "disagree" in response to the statement, "My existing values and thoughts were challenged during the online discussion." Considering the high level of learner satisfaction, this finding calls for further analysis. When compared with patterns in other data sources, it becomes evident that many students generally felt that their peers were very supportive and tended to agree with them. Some noticed that it was usually the instructor who took up the task of challenging students. Since my inquiry is based on critical adult and online learning theory, it would be helpful to examine whether students tend to engage in deeper discussion only when they challenge or were challenged by peers and instructor's values and concepts. Only three students asserted that they would like to be challenged or see students challenge each other more often, so that the discussion would be more interesting to follow. These students seem to indicate that "interesting" topics or dynamics were what motivated them to continue engaging in deeper learning and discussion. By contrast, a majority of students felt more comfortable engaging in further discussion when the overall dynamic was friendly and supportive. Further research on adult learning, gender and learning, and critical pedagogy might shed light on this particular disparity in student perceptions.

Motivations. Some students saw themselves as self-motivated. Others expressed that initially they participated in discussions because it was required or because they wanted better grades, but as the discussions unfolded, they discovered other motivations.

For example, some students were curious about how "others" think, especially those of the opposite sex. Moreover, as online personalities evolved and as they shared more personal stories and perspectives, students felt more compelled to participate in discussions. One student noted, "When other students offered responses to me, I was thrilled and motivated to participate more deeply" (personal communication, April 2007). Another student noted, "Respect! My classmates worked hard to provide thoughtful feedback. I would not want this to go unnoticed!" (personal communication, April 2007). Others participated when they felt that their viewpoints appeared to matter to others. While students seemed to enjoy discussion of personal opinions and

> *… the nature of time-flexible and asynchronous online discussions seemed to create anxiety for some students because they felt that their homework never ends and there is always a posting waiting for their response.*

experiences, many added that they would be more interested in responding to those opinions and experiences that linked to the course content rather than personal opinions that they did not see as directly pertaining to the course itself.

Challenges. The following were among the most mentioned challenges students encountered in the online discussion. Some students noted that they would normally be very interactive, but only in face-to-face settings. Such students found it difficult to "talk" with others online because, in the words of one student, "it's so much easier to talk with people I know or can see their facial expressions" (personal communication, April 2007). A few students who were frustrated with student-initiated discussions noted the difficulty they had

with choosing topics and questions on their own; they also expressed skepticism toward learning from peers. Some felt intimidated to participate in discussion initially because they were not sure what the instructor wanted them to say and they felt that it should be the instructor's job to lead the discussion. This echoes Conrad and Donaldson's (2004) assertion that "interaction and collaboration [online] is not intuitive to many adult learners who have been educated in a predominantly lecture-based environment" (p. 9). Other major obstacles were technology-related. Some students had difficulty navigating the course, locating the discussion sites and following the discussion threads. While online learning was preferred by many adult learners in my inquiry, at times, it was still difficult for some students to fully engage in weekly discussions because family or job demands competed with their course work. Moreover, the nature of time-flexible and asynchronous online discussions seemed to create anxiety for some students because they felt that their homework never ends and there is always a posting waiting for their response.

Implications for Teaching Adult Students Online

As Shor (1992) notes, "[t]he first responsibility of critical teachers is to research what students know, speak, experience and feel, as starting points from which an empowering curriculum is developed" (p. 202). My inquiry sought to generate empirical understanding of adult learning in the context of asynchronous online discussion. Because such an understanding was developed based on adult student's own perceptions of learning experiences and satisfaction, the results of the inquiry, I hope, will contribute to the further understanding of the particular needs and interests of adult learners. Equally important, I hope the results will also generate new insights into effective online teaching. In conclusion, I would like to elaborate on three critical points I have learned from this inquiry.

First, I have learned that the life-centered issues and experiences of adult students should form an integral part of the online discussion. Establishing a teaching tone and expectation enabling adult learners to make connections between their life experiences and the course content and applying what they have learned to the real world environment can motivate deeper learning. Take an example from a student who offered his analysis of why some discussions evoked more responses from his classmates and him than others. DA (February 2007) explained:

> From information shared during the introductions, many of us are adults returning to academia for our degrees, and bring a substantial amount of experience with the world (family, work, society). I think many of us are finding similarities between past and present issues, in large part due to having experienced some of them ourselves. For example, a discussion leader posed a question about the equality of the male working image versus the female one, and another discussion leader posed a question about punishment for adultery and rape, which in turn led to discussions about motivations, sexuality and the views of women in the ancient and modern time. These discussions evoked a good deal of thought from me. It just seems, to me, when students only focus on the text, it gives it more of a "book report" feeling and not an actual discussion. I think I learn a great deal when I can make a connection between the literature and personal experience.

Moreover, I have gathered from the learning surveys that discussions became particularly valuable when they helped students gain a "better language or perspective to explain/understand/connect to the problems other women experienced in their life," as a student wrote in the survey. Other students also expressed that they became more confident in engaging in (real-life) conversations about gender issues with family members, friends or co-workers. This was observed especially toward the mid-term of the course when students started to ask what their classmates thought about the responses they received from their wives, daughters, husbands or bosses.

Second, I have learned that social presence is as critical as cognitive presence in fostering adult student's knowledge construction process (Garrison, et al., 2000). In a simplified sense, social presence emphasizes emotional supports, interpersonal understanding and establishment of a sense of "true" self, while cognitive presence emphasizes demonstration of knowledge and cognitive activities. An appropriate balance between these two presences enables students to feel comfortable to assert their different opinions and feelings, and at the same time, receive support and meaningful feedback from peers. I have gathered from the learning journals and surveys that engaging in interpersonal interactions were important motivations for students to continue to participate in discussions. So was their desire to be treated as real human beings and authentic selves.

Finally, I am affirmed that the student-initiated discussion can serve as a powerful activity that can motivate students to become more responsible for their learning while exposing them to diverse opinions. However, such a student-centered learning activity should not be seen as a student-learn-on-their-own practice. Throughout the course of the study, students had experienced a number of roadblocks ranging from "not knowing what exactly I should post as a discussion leader" (KL, March 2007), to "I really feel like an outsider in this 'class community' with different views" (OM, May 2007), to "I hated how impersonal and techno-dependant my learning was" (CM, March 2007). My role as the instructor in facilitating student learning therefore is very important. In particular, I have learned to help students learn how to raise relevant and critical questions while adequately supporting

> *… engaging in interpersonal interactions were important motivations for students to continue to participate in discussions. So was their desire to be treated as real human beings and authentic selves.*

their own arguments. Moreover, students should be encouraged by the instructor to establish proper discussion behavior and engage in higher-order cognitive activities that go beyond sharing personal experience, regurgitating ideas from textbooks, or repeating conventional wisdom. (See Lai and Lu, 2007; Lai, Lu and Jeng, 2007 for online discussion facilitation strategies.)

As a final reflection, a personal inquiry like this one raised a small core question about adult student's perceptions of learning through online discussion, and utilized a small sample size: 34 adult students, mostly female. Yet, to more fully answer the question many variables should be considered ranging from course design, to instructor's personal teaching philosophy, to assumptions about gender and learning, to student's various backgrounds. In this paper, I have only provided a brief introduction of the inquiry, a theoretical framework, a summary of student's perceptions and discussion of what I have learned. As I continue to contemplate the social science research method applied to this project, I realize that examining student and instructor online discussion transcripts, student learning journals and learning surveys can only paint a partial picture of student learning processes and outcomes. To make this kind of inquiry more comprehensive and meaningful, regardless of how small the question or sample might be, researchers may need to utilize diverse qualitative research approaches such as ethnography or grounded theory to provide even richer and reliable analysis and interpretation of student's learning than the one I present here. I am hoping that there will be a chance in the future to apply a different approach to examine the same data or carry out a new project.

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Poetry for Senior Citizens

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When I was 60, I wrote a poem about deaths in my family. It emerged from thoughts I had about having made it to 60 as compared to my mother (who died at 56 in a car accident) and my father (who died at 64 in an industrial accident) and my aunt who in her 60th year committed suicide with some help from my uncle who subsequently died of pancreatic cancer. Since the deaths were, if not gruesome, at least not the painless, in-my-sleep variety, the poem was somewhat stark or at least startling. I say that because I once had the opportunity to share it with a small group of faculty from the English Department in Cortland (New York), and they were clearly taken aback by it. I remember being told how very "powerful" the poem was, and while I was clearly flattered by what certainly appeared to be praise, I did wonder, underneath it all, whether this reaction was to the merits of the poem or to its somewhat bloody details which were simply true.

The year I turned 70, I learned about a local poetry contest for senior citizens. To submit this "powerful" startling poem about death and dying seemed to me a no-brainer, even though I still had concerns about its true quality. I first sent it to a friend asking him to make sure I wouldn't be making a total fool of myself, and he responded with various suggestions that were somewhat alarming in the way in which they disrupted portions of rhythm and sound, two aspects of the poem I valued in particular. But his changes made clear that the poem didn't always make sense, a problem that I tackled by reluctantly eliminating some of the details or, in other words, saying somewhat less. But in so doing, the poem's structure, in my opinion, was definitely improved, and having run out of time for any more revisions, I sent it in.

It's important to know that I would not consider myself a poet. I understand that it's currently psychologically "in" to claim ownership of one's skills. "I am a writer," my friend, Annie, a practicing family therapist, uses as a self-descriptor – not on the basis of having published anything (which she has not) but because she writes and shares her writing in a women's group, an activity for which she pays $50 a week to "Z," the group's facilitator, who is published but who also understands the importance of unrelenting positive reinforcement that assures Annie good value for the buck. Given my ignorance about writing anything other than scholarly articles in an academic field in which good ideas, not good writing, are the criteria for publication, I could never bring myself to make such a claim. Furthermore, my cousin Claudia is a poet. She has the appropriate college degree, has occasionally taught poetry, has participated for years in poetry groups, and has a number of small publications and honors to support any claim she might want to make about her poetic sense, although, to be honest, she's as likely to introduce herself as an astrologist as poet, since it's the only consistent job she's ever had (except for a relatively brief stint as a clerk in a store that sells homeopathic tinctures) for which she receives real money.

The contest sponsors were centered in Middletown, Conn., which, while not a typical college town, is not exactly in the middle of nowhere. I expected the contest would attract people who took their poetry seriously, even if they were amateurs. (With a $20 first prize, I doubted, even in the current economy, that anyone would enter this contest for the money.) Winners would be announced, I learned from a note that acknowledged receipt of my poem, at a reception on a Sunday afternoon in April two days before our federal income tax returns were due. Since doing my taxes is an extremely unpleasant activity, one I put off to the last possible moment, I wasn't sure I would be able to attend, or be in the mood for thinking about poetry. But,

in recent years, the pain of doing my taxes has been significantly reduced by working on them with my daughter who enters my figures into her Turbo Tax software, which, aside from eliminating the likelihood of computational errors, has changed the whole scenario from one of private agony to a somewhat more sociable endeavor. So, despite the bad news I learned the morning of the reception that I had to pay extra tax money which was admittedly softened by the good news that it was less than I had feared and buffered by the humor and assurances offered by my daughter, I was somewhat receptive to attending the award meeting after all. Although I knew that I wasn't going to win anything (wouldn't I have been notified if I had?), I figured that listening to what others had written would be stimulating and who knows, maybe I might meet someone who could ultimately become a new friend.

With that outcome in mind, I was quite surprised to discover, when I arrived in the meeting room, not a few people milling around a table of refreshments chatting with one another, but rather a big roomful of mostly silent people sitting in rows of chairs facing a barren podium. The few empty seats still available were scattered here and there, always somewhere in the middle of a row. A table laden with food (but I couldn't see exactly what) was at the back of the room, totally untouched. I dutifully crawled over a nice-looking, well-dressed, elderly couple to sit in an empty seat next to a rather rotund man, with whom I then exchanged a few pleasantries. After sharing remarks about the weather and parking, I then commented: "It's a lot more formal than I expected," referring, of course, to the room arrangement and the overall silence. "Oh, don't worry about what you're wearing," he replied magnanimously, looking at my jeans, which only then I realized were probably the only pair in the room. "They cost enough," I thought

to myself. "A $75 pair of jeans should certainly allow me as much entry as any of my $20 polyester outfits, don't you think?" a comment I am fairly certain I did not say out loud. Nonetheless, when a moment or two later the room was called to order by an extremely self-assured woman with clearly considerable public speaking experience, the current president of the sponsoring club we learned, my neighbor grabbed my hand, which was sitting innocently in my lap. I waited for him to let it go, and when instead he started to fondle it, I snatched it away and kept it busy for the remainder of the meeting with my purse or the book I had (I always bring a book with me no matter where I go, although not usually for the purpose of keeping my hands inaccessible). I am clueless as to his intent, particularly given that on his right was sitting his wife, but, although he did make little snuffling noises throughout the event, he did not appear to be mentally retarded, which was my initial hypothesis.

Somewhat unsettled, I tried to pay close attention to the history of the club and its mission, and to the names of the various women who were introduced as incredibly hard working in supporting this fabulous opportunity to promote literacy among our senior citizens. The response to the contest was unprecedented, one or another of the always smiling women speakers told us, which even necessitated a reformatting of the book of our poems that we were to receive (with many thanks to the computer-literate club member who did it). Indeed, it was announced that 30 people had submitted a grand total of 67 poems. Thirty people, I thought, that's not so many; maybe – I just couldn't stop the thought from coming to mind – I do have a chance of winning something, after all. (And thus, the shallowness of my modest disavowal of myself as poet was inadvertently revealed.)

In addition to the three monetary awards, we learned, three people also received honorable mention, plus one more who received a "special salute." (Seven, I thought – even better!) Although the special nature of the saluted poem seemed to be due to the author's age (82), it turned out that it was its subject matter that caught the attention of the judges (a retired English teacher and the chair of a department in an out-

of-state college of nursing), who thought it particularly relevant for this event. The poem was called "Silence Speaks Volumes," and I must confess that I could not figure out whether they were being ironic or whether it was the word "volumes" that caught their eye. But if so, why not give special mention to another poem (that won no awards or mention) that began:

> When I die, please build my coffin
> Out of the hundreds, maybe thousands
> of books in my house

Of course the author of this poem did not appear to be anywhere near the age at which he should consider the nature of his casket (even though his plea did seem to me to be, not only a novel, but certainly a very green way of disposing of a departed one's books that would otherwise be somewhat of a nuisance for those left behind).

While I was still reflecting upon the meaning of the special salute, the winner of Honorable Mention #3 was announced, and the poem titled, "My Friend's Chaise" was read with the following first verse:

> Lady in a wheelchair, see how she
> gingerly seats herself.
>
> She does not ask for help,
> for in her mind of memories, her wheels
> are a lifetime of normalcy.

You might want to contrast the beginning imagery of this poem with mine, which began:

> At my age
> My mother was already four years dead
> Head stripped of skin and bone
> Shattered by the impact
> Of a wildly careening car
> On the wrong side of the road.

Or contrast the beginning of my poem with that of Honorable Mention #2 which began:

> When I was very young
> Many years ago,
> There were so many things
> That I didn't know.

And ended with:

> What I have, I wouldn't trade
> It means too much to me,
> Let others fly in the sky
> Or sail upon the sea.

By the time I heard the poems that had received the first honorable mention (about family history), third prize (about stone steps in East Hampton), and second prize (thoughts about a beloved grandson while trying to call him when his phone is busy), I was fervently praying that my lack of recognition would be sustained and that I would not have to read my poem, which I had called "Dead Thoughts," in this gathering. I needn't have worried about the recognition part. The first prize went to a stirring poem about September 11, "Americanism Redefined," whose message was revealed thus in the last line: "Something unnerved Americans and the way of life we now realize had surely been Nirvana."

Actually, I ended up reading my poem after all because the ceremony continued with one poem by every author being read – either by the author, or, if he or she demurred or was absent, by one of the cheerful lady sponsors. However badly my poem was going to be received, I could not bear that it be vocally mangled as well. Buried in the middle of so many others, mine, if one wants to be most generous, simply fell flat. Thoroughly

> *Buried in the middle of so many others, mine, if one wants to be most generous, simply fell flat.*

embarrassed, when I went forth to the podium, I said, somewhat apologetically or perhaps even shamefully, that the poem was a bit "dark," and that confession may have helped people simply tune out its brassy, sentiment-free tones, which seemed overwhelmingly inappropriate to me as I returned to my seat – accompanied by tepid applause and followed by no comment whatsoever then, or later. On the other hand, I cannot seriously say that my poem was the darkest submitted. That honor had to go a person who was well over 100 years old. She was wheeled, nicely

quaffed but somewhat slumped over, to the podium, unable to communicate at all ("She's very tired," one of the sponsors said kindly) – her poem being read somewhat too enthusiastically, I thought, by her grey-haired son – but, given the tales I hear from my friends these days about the trials and tribulations of parents in nursing homes which is where this poet lives, he may have simply agreed with the sentiments: The poem began:

Now I lay me down to die,
But I often wonder why,
Even though extremely ill,
Still I do not die.

All in all, no doubt, even at my age, this experience appears to have been somewhat of a character builder – at the very least revealing as it did (at least to me – and now to you, my readers) my own false modesty. That I have much more to learn – about the meaning of poetry, for example, in people's lives who don't care about what matters so much to academics and who, nonetheless, value the time they spend in composition, and that maybe people at 60 write different kinds of poems than those who are older. The man sitting next to me told me that the three poems submitted by his wife were all his idea, and while it might be easy to sneer at his false pride, who would have thought that writing poetry could be an enjoyable family activity? Is that revelation so different from my discovering a new way of doing tax returns?

"A monk observed a man working in a garden, conveying water by carrying it in a jar to irrigation channels using much energy for little result. The monk suggested a simple yet ingenious piece of machinery that would make the task easier and more efficient and would extend the amount of land that could be used. The gardener replied:

… where there are ingenious contrivances, there are sure to be subtle doings; and … where there are subtle doings, there is sure to be a scheming mind. But where there is a scheming mind in the breast, its pure simplicity is impaired. When its pure simplicity impaired, the spirit becomes unsettled, and the unsettled spirit is not the proper residence of the Tao. It is not that I do not know [the contrivance that you mention] but that I should be ashamed to use it."

– Legge, J. (1962). *Texts of Taoism,* Volume I. New York: Dover Books (pp. 319-20).

Sabbatical Report
Studying the Suburbs: A Year on the Lawn

Barbara Kantz, Long Island Center

"Where did you go on your sabbatical?" comes the enthusiastic question from a colleague.

"I didn't go anywhere. I stayed home and studied the suburbs." A cold, dead, shark-eyed fish stare follows from the questioner. I am then forced to launch into defensive educationalese:

"Hardly any colleges offer coursework on the suburbs, and considering the 2000 census found that 51 percent of the American people live in suburbs, and since many who didn't, wanted to, this is worth examination. Also, here on Long Island, we live in the heart of the beast: Levittown on its 60th anniversary, the American dream of home ownership, personal space, a lawn, a pool of one's own, comes true." A tiny spark of understanding emerges in the colleague's eye, a nod of acknowledgement and a little "aah" follows.

I am a suburban kid and a baby boomer, public schooled in Commack, N.Y. I lived in Mayfair Estates: doesn't that sound nice? Well it was nice. Front lawn, backyard, vegetable garden, neighborhood school, convenient shopping center nearby, walk to church, know your neighbors, ride your bike, play ball at the schoolyard. In 1956, Commack was the fastest growing community in the U.S. I still go to my high school reunions (I was the class president!) and my classmates and I continue to visit each other's parents. My mother, who just passed away at age 92, made weekly sandwiches for Peter, my friend since the fourth grade. While the critique of the suburbs is vigorous – no culture, conformity, homogenization – my colleague, Ian Reifowitz, who grew up four miles from me in the next town over and I were discussing how we did not find the

suburbs provincial at all. Our parents took us to the city regularly, and our teachers provided excellent liberal arts education to us, one alleged perk of suburban living.

Like most suburbanites, we cared for our lawn. The lawn is possibly the quintessential icon of the suburb. Entire industries and subcultures revolve around it. Maintaining a lawn is actually an uphill battle against nature since grass in not native and one must prepare the soil (Scott's turf building system) in the never ending wish to create an "estate." While it is clear today that the lawn chemicals have produced toxic environments and dangerous runoffs, suburbanites persist in its preparation and greening.

Levittown, N.Y.

In paying more attention to my own life in East Setauket, I rediscovered suburbia's rhythm, a lot of which is driven by the lawn and the many power tools that trim, blow, treat and tame it:

Fall: fall cleanup and its noisy machinery, the yard sale, porch pumpkins, the high school football homecoming game, shopping; winter: snow removal and its noisy machinery, school closings, school concerts, holiday house decorating, shopping; spring: lawn preparation and its

chemistry and noisy machinery, golf and tennis, birth of yard critters, town parade, little league, soccer, shopping; summer: the barbecue, opening the pool, block party, cocktail party, noisy machinery, shopping. I am an active gardener, and have learned about indigenous plants through Cornell Extension Center. Tending to a garden helps one to know both neighbors and passersby. Our little gem of a public library has a huge section on gardening, which I frequent, as well as attend presentations by the Setauket gardening club.

While exploring my own suburban environment illuminated one domain, academic study of the suburbs took me to entire new territories. I read about such diverse topics as social change, building codes, public policy and transportation, housing policy, banking and mortgage policy, consumerism, cars, roads, more roads, Robert Moses, technology, commodification.

An investigation of early suburbanization in the U.S. necessarily starts in the city and examines historical processes beginning with the industrial revolution; separation of workspace from living space; technological innovation in transportation; new structures of class, gender and race; and public policy decisions. The city went from being a walking city, to an annexed spreading city, to a city with suburbs. An excellent overview text is *Crabgrass Frontier* by Kenneth Jackson. As he notes, three major public policy decisions drove the suburbanization process: public built roads for private cars, FDIC and mortgage industry, and the G.I. Bill.

In celebrating the 60th anniversary of Levittown, a modern suburb and a direct result of these three policies, interviews revealed that the original Levittowners felt they had a good slice of American life in the post war period of American history. The

2000 census reveals that the goal of most Americans is the same American Dream: to own a single family house with a yard. Yet this piece of the idealized American dream is in jeopardy on Long Island. Our suburbs are getting older, and how to revitalize, desegregate, make affordable the American dream to a new generation of Long Islanders is getting harder. Two groups contest suburban space – those who move to the suburbs for greenness, and developers – those who seek to profit from it. Family structures are changing – more single people, more elderly, and many immigrants who tend suburban properties – have created new tensions.

I joined a research study at Adelphi University's School of Social Work titled "The Long Island Social Index," an attempt to quantify the quality of health and mental health on Long Island. Are there unique mental health and health issues of suburban living? Yes: obesity, fast food, racism, segregation, isolation, cliques, road rage, fearfulness. The 2000 census identified Nassau and Suffolk counties to be "the most segregated suburban communities in the entire United States."

In response to these emergent issues and tensions, a new kind of suburb is emerging. Many suburbanites prefer to live in what Joel Garreau calls "edge cities," road corridors of development. Edge cities successfully compete with urban culture in that they provide work, entertainment and residence all along a road corridor of convenience. People try to live nearer to where they work and want convenience. Industrial parks have developed along edge city corridors. Suburbanites seek security, so gated communities have become the new housing developments along the edge city.

The mall is one main source of suburban culture. Mall exhibits, community theaters and multiplex movie theaters are just as viable as Broadway, Lincoln Center or the Met to many suburbanites. After all, the word suburb means "beyond the city." So edge cities have changed our relationships to cities, which may, in turn, change cities themselves. The bedroom communities of the older suburbs are becoming a thing of the past. While New York is still a desirable residential city, other American cities are in decay altogether and so developers encourage edge cities as viable alternatives.

Part of the current critique of the suburbs in general is offered by the "New Urbanists," architects and urban planners who have been influencing building and policy for the past 20 years. Traditional Neighborhood Development (TND) is their building codeword to reestablish community and maintain sustainable, green spaces. They favor the "McCottage" over the "McMansion," a philosophy aimed to balance individuality with community and the environment. Because land on Long Island is largely accounted for, building up may replace sprawl.

Additionally, an "anti-lawn" movement has emerged, calling for lawn tenders to mix "undesirable" seeds, such as clover or crabgrass, to create lawns more meadow like, using less chemicals and less water.

On a more immediate level, one of the primary outcomes of my sabbatical study was the development of a "suburban studies" course. In this individualized and group study, students engage in a series of interdisciplinary readings in history, sociology, architecture and literature. They have done anthropological field work on such diverse topics as: the barbecue grill, the Winnebego, the swimming pool, Scott's feed, the garage, the vacuum cleaner, Tupperware, the cocktail, SUVs, ATVs, ATMs, Devil Dogs. They have written textual analyses of "I Love Lucy," "Everybody Loves Raymond," "The Graduate," "American Beauty," and HGTV. They researched the histories of their single family homes and/or their family histories, presenting themselves as suburban frontiersmen.

So, you don't have to go far to find out what each student has concluded: I am an historic person, and living history is around me everywhere. A few favorite stories. One

> *So, you don't have to go far to find out what each student has concluded: I am an historic person, and living history is around me everywhere.*

student, a young man who works for the town of Hempstead, read daily installments from *The Power Brokers* to his fellow workers. Another student pulled over on the Southern State Parkway to sob, revealing that for the first time, he understood the power of history. A student from Queens finally understood why her children moved to Suffolk County just so they could have a swimming pool in the yard. She completed a beautiful photo essay on the swimming pool in winter. Another student discovered his family had been active in the Klan, and though disconcerting to him, he said "it explained a lot."

My sabbatical study leads me to conclude that the academic study of suburbia needs a "periodization of suburban history," accounting for distinctive developmental stages, trends and ideas. Additionally, pedagogical opportunities are available wherever you and your students reside, suburbia being one example of a rich interdisciplinary field of inquiry. Finally, knowing more about my property, its historical significance and my own, will make raking leaves this fall a more generative experience.

Animating Transformation: Progressive Higher Education for Adults at Mid-Life

Steven A. Schapiro, Fielding Graduate University
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Introduction: "This experience changed my life."

Countless times during our combined 40 plus years of experience as faculty members in student-centered, low-residency degree programs for adult learners, we have heard students talk of how they were transformed by the experience. Their testimonials at graduations, in which each student addresses the audience, so often include impassioned speeches in which they say "this experience changed my life." We have often speculated on the question: "What is it about such programs that catalyzes such transformations?"

Katherine Jelly and Steven Schapiro

This paper begins to answer that question by bringing together insights gleaned from three sources: the initial findings of a research project on adult development and transformative learning through student-centered graduate education; our experience and practice in progressive education programs for adults at Goddard College, Vermont College of Union Institute and University, and Fielding Graduate University; and the broad literature on transformative education. From these sources, we distill a set of principles and practices for a model of transformative education for adult learners. This model supplements the considerable literature on classroom-based transformative learning with guidelines for how we can foster transformation through individualized, mentor-guided study in combination with brief face-to-face group learning experiences and online learning communities.

In presenting this model, we relate it to four major and sometimes overlapping strands of transformative learning theory. These strands include: the cognitive rational approach to changes in meaning perspectives through critical reflection (Mezirow, 1991); the depth psychology approach to Jungian individuation and spiritual development through dialogue with the subconscious (Boyd and Meyers, 1988; Dirkx, 2000); the structural developmental approach to epistemological change through the life-span (Kegan, 1982); and the social emancipatory approach to education for critical consciousness and social change (Freire, 1973).

To provide a framework for the forms of transformative education that can support such learning, we draw on Kegan's (1982) notion of the key qualities or functions of a holding environment or culture of embeddedness that support development, growth and transformation: confirmation, contradiction and continuity. To those three functions, we add a fourth, creation, to explain the support we need to change ourselves instead of retreating backward in the face of contradiction and disequilibrium. In developing an understanding of the elements needed to provide such holding environments for adult learners, we turn first to three innovative programs that have helped to set the standard for student-centered adult education.

Contexts: Goddard College, Vermont College and Fielding Graduate University

Our understanding of the possibilities for transformative learning in adult degree programs has been shaped and informed by our experiences in three ground-breaking institutions: Goddard College, which was founded in 1938 to put into practice at the post-secondary level the principles of progressive education, as articulated by John Dewey; Vermont College, which acquired and expanded Goddard's undergraduate Adult Degree Program and which later developed a Master of Education Program based on the same progressive principles; and Fielding Graduate University, which was founded in 1978, to provide mid-career adults an opportunity to pursue advanced degrees through individualized, self-directed learning under the guidance of faculty mentors.

The Learners: Adults at Mid-Life

Returning to school at mid-life and mid-career brings with it significant implications for where people are in their journey of development and how their educational experience and their development may impact each other. On the one hand, one's level of cognitive and ego development, for example, can impact what sort of learning and transformation are possible or likely. On the other hand, the process and content of our learning experiences can help to catalyze movement and growth from one developmental stage or place to another.

In terms of Robert Kegan's constructive developmental stage model, most adult students will be somewhere between what he calls the third and the fifth orders of consciousness. Many will be at the "socialized mind" and the "culture of mutuality" of the third (interpersonal) order of consciousness, potentially moving to the "self-authoring mind" and the "culture of identity" of the fourth (institutional) order. This shift involves the development of a greater sense of agency and autonomy and the development of a more internal locus of evaluation. Those already at that fourth order are potentially moving to the "self-transforming mind" and the "culture of intimacy" of the fifth (inter-institutional) level. That shift, which very few people appear to make, involves the development of dialectical thinking, and the capacity to see interconnecting systems of thought and behavior, to understand the interpenetration of the self and others, and to embrace ambiguity and paradox. In Kegan's view, movement from one order to another takes years, and so most of us at any time are in transition from one to another, as we seek what he terms a new balance between our needs for connection and autonomy. Where students are on this developmental journey can have important implications for how they may grow as a result of a student-centered educational experience. As Kegan explains in In Over Our Heads (1994), self-directed learning calls for the self-authoring mind of the fourth order of consciousness, and asking for such behavior may help people to move in that direction. And while only a small percent of the population are at the fifth order, the content of the Fielding Human and Organizational Development Program (HOD) curriculum for example – with its strong social constructionist bent – may catalyze movement to that next, self-transforming mind, characteristic of the post-modern perspective.

In terms of Jung's theory of individuation, mid-life also is a time with great potential for growth, as we move to integrate the neglected or repressed parts of ourselves (Hollis, 1995). For example, at this time of life, in Jung's schema, many women find their voice as they integrate their more agentic and "masculine" side (or animus), and many men develop their more relational, affective and "feminine" side (or anima) as they become more attuned to the needs of others. From this perspective, as both men and women go through this "middle passage" from their first adulthood to a second one, they often engage in a search for more meaning and more wholeness (Stein, 1983; Hollis, 1995). And as Cranton and Roy (2003) explain, this process of individuation, while partly an unconscious one, can be described as very similar to Mezirow's transformative learning process, as both involve a shedding or re-assessment of our socialized self (or persona in Jungian terms) to integrate and express a more consciously chosen and in that sense more authentic self-definition.

In terms of Paulo Freire's stages of magical, naïve and critical consciousness (Freire, 1973), most adults in our society are at the naïve stage – blaming individuals (as either victims or perpetrators) for social problems – potentially developing a more critical understanding of the systemic or underlying socio-economic causes of those problems. Adults at mid-life and mid-career bring to their education the resource of their experiences in the workplace, in relationships and in life in general. They are often returning to school as a result of frustrations and limitations in their work and their lives. Many are looking for ways to think more broadly and systemically. They may be experiencing a sense of alienation and looking for new, more satisfying ways of living, working and being. Feeling stuck, they are confronting the limits of their own ways of understanding, of the constraints and limits of their organizational contexts, and of the limits imposed by systems of oppression based on race, gender and class. In turning these limits and problems into inquiries about how to resolve them (what Freire calls problem-posing), the educator can support the development of a more critical consciousness, and the recognition of the necessary links between personal and social transformation.

Findings from a Research Study

While theory and anecdotal evidence have long supported the transformative potential of programs like those of Goddard, Vermont College and Fielding, very little empirical research has been done to support those claims. A recent study has begun to fill that gap. Schapiro, McClintock and Stevens-Long (McClintock, Stevens-Long, 2002; Schapiro, Stevens-Long, McClintock, 2005a) explored the relationship between adult development and nontraditional doctoral education. In that study, a self-selected sample of 59 Fielding HOD graduates (about 15 percent of the total alumni group) were asked to describe intellectual, personal and behavioral developments that they attributed to their graduate school experience, to give examples of each and to specify aspects of their experience at Fielding that they believed to have effected the changes they described.

Findings indicated a wide array of changes in all areas, which are summarized with the major themes that were identified through open coding: cognitive development – more perceptive, thinking in complex ways, seeing multiple perspectives, better able to

Feeling stuck, [adults at midlife] are confronting the limits of their own ways of understanding, of the constraints and limits of their organizational contexts, and of the limits imposed by systems of oppression based on race, gender and class.

appreciate research and theory; personal (ego and emotional) development – more tolerant, more confident, experiencing expanded consciousness, experiencing positive emotions; behavioral development – continuously learning, communicative, in flow and resilient.

In a subsequent paper, Schapiro, et al. (2005b) analyzed the data further in order to explore the relationship between the reported outcomes, the academic and contextual influences to which students attributed those outcomes, and the four major models of transformative learning noted above: cognitive-rational, individuating, constructive-developmental, social emancipatory.

Many of these outcomes resonate strongly with Mezirow's notion of perspective transformation, including such themes and subthemes as being more perceptive, more reflective/critical in their thinking, seeing more multiple perspectives, questioning assumptions, and examining one's own and others perspectives. Evidence of Jungian individuation can be found in such outcomes as experiencing expanded consciousness, greater awareness and integration, changes in spiritual life and being in flow. It appears that for many of these respondents, a rational process of perspective transformation was accompanied by a more personal process of personal growth and integration.

We also can see some evidence of movement from one of Kegan's stages to the next. For instance, in changes such as the "development of critical thinking, ability to suspend judgments, becoming more tolerant of self and others, thinking systemically, seeing the perspective of self and others, and becoming more empowered and autonomous," we see much evidence of movement from Kegan's interpersonal (third) to the institutional (fourth) order. Since very few people ever reach the fifth order, there is not as much evidence of that movement, although changes such as "more tolerance of complexity, seeing complex and ambiguous patterns, appreciating diversity and perceiving social construction" point in that direction.

While the data analysis as summarized above does speak directly to a process of

conscientization as defined by Freire, the raw data and the words of the respondents provide many examples of a heightened consciousness in regard to issues of gender and race-based oppression and economic inequality, along with a commitment to act on that awareness. In the cognitive realm, these changes are reflected in such themes as "thinking systemically" and "perceiving social construction," in the personal realm in changes such as becoming "more confident of self, own voice, ideas" and feeling "empowered/autonomous," and in behavioral changes such as "taking reflective action." Indeed, taken together, these outcomes sound much like conscientization itself.

This summary analysis clearly suggests that respondents may have experienced all four kinds of transformation, to varying degrees. They reported that the following aspects of their graduate educational experience led to these changes: a learning process that was self-reflective, self-directed, interactive/collaborative and experiential; interpersonal relationships (faculty-student and student-student) characterized by equality, support, acceptance, and inclusion of diverse people and perspectives; curricular content that often leads to a transformation in perspectives and world views (e.g., systems thinking, theories of human development and consciousness, social constructionism, critical theory, use of self as an instrument of change); and an organizational structure that provides for student involvement in governance and in organizing the learning experience itself.

These experiences are clearly consistent with what Mezirow and others (E. Taylor, 2000; Cranton, 2006) have described as key elements in the transformative learning process. The first phase of that process, the creation of disorienting dilemmas, may be brought on, in this context, by the paradigm-challenging content of the curriculum along with the requirement for application of theory to practice, for self-reflection, and for critical reflection on one's own and others' assumptions, all of which are included in the outcomes summarized above and described at some length by the respondents.

It also is important to note that the relatively unstructured and student-directed

nature of the Fielding learning experience, in which students design their own studies in consultation with their faculty mentors, may in itself be a disorienting dilemma as those in authority are not telling students what to do but inviting them to decide for themselves. As that dilemma often requires students to change their perspective on the nature of knowledge and of the teaching-learning process, and their role in it, the Fielding learning process as a whole may be a significant transformative learning experience in itself. As Brookfield (1984) points out, self-directed learning may help learners to develop a greater sense of agency not just in their individual learning process, but also in regard to their social and political environment.

Discourse/dialogue, the other key factor identified by Mezirow as central to transformative learning, is clearly included in the "interactive and collaborative" nature of the learning experience, a major theme identified by the respondents. These findings also lend support to the importance of close faculty-student relationships, a factor not highlighted by Mezirow but identified by others, such as Robertson (1996), Taylor (2000), Kasl and Elias (2000), Barlas (2001) and the philosopher, Max Buber (1970), who argued for an I-thou teacher-student relationship: "he must know him not as a mere sum of qualities, aspiration and inhibitions; he must apprehend him and affirm him, as a whole" (p. 178).

What is unique about these findings as compared to other empirical studies of transformative learning within adult graduate education is that the Fielding learning experiences are not primarily classroom based, but occur in the context of faculty-student mentoring relationships, such as those described by Daloz (1999), self-organized study groups, conference-like gatherings of the full student-faculty learning community, and online seminars and forums. It may be that the close relationships and interactive learning process described by many of the respondents provides a supportive context in which students can experience both the challenge and disorientation brought on by new experiences and new perspectives and the dialogue and discourse through which new meaning can be created.

The learning processes that support individuation have been less well identified in the literature (Boyd and Meyers, 1988; Dirkx, 2000) but it would seem that the need for self-reflection, the study of human development and consciousness as a required part of the curriculum, the emphasis on affective as well as cognitive dimensions of learning and artistic as well as intellectual ways of knowing, the self-directed nature of the learning process, and the mentoring relationship to which the student can bring his or her whole self, all provide a context in which the expansion of consciousness and psychological integration characteristic of individuation can occur. Constructive-developmental transformation through an educational process, according to Kegan (1982), Daloz (1999) and Parks (2000), requires a combination of affirmation, challenge and vision, all of which are evidenced in the elements described earlier – the mentoring relationship, the cohort experience, the curriculum and in the challenges of being self-directed.

Student-centered Transformative Education for Adults: Key Principles and Practices

Bringing together the findings from this study, lessons learned in our experience at Goddard, Vermont College and Fielding, and insights from the literature, we suggest some key principles and practices for student-centered transformative education for adults. The model presented here uses Kegan's (2006, 1994) concept of cultures of embeddedness and the "confirming, contradicting and continuing functions" of holding environments that support growth, development and transformation; adds a fourth function – "creation" – which we argue must follow contradiction if change is to occur; and draws on these four functions to provide a framework for the transformative education process.

The following list summarizes the elements needed to produce each sort of learning environment. These elements are each explained in what follows.

Learning Environment Needs

Confirming Environment

- one-to-one mentoring relationships with faculty characterized by authenticity, affirmation and social equality
- small group bonding and co-learning with peers
- safe, supportive yet challenging learning community
- residential learning retreats as a part of the experience

Contradicting Environment

- the challenges of self-directed learning
- the rigor of critical inquiry
- the paradigm busting curriculum of areas such as systems theory, epistemology, social constructionism, human development theory and critical theory
- Êthe diverse and challenging viewpoints expressed in discussion and discourse

Creating Environment

- opportunities for ongoing reflection and meaning making
- framing questions of personal and social significance
- learning by engaging with real-life problems and issues – praxis
- taking a stand and finding one's voice
- learning that includes the whole person

Continuing Environment

- ongoing relationships with mentors and peer learners, both during the program and after graduation
- the continuing integration of life and learning
- the inclusion of alumni in an ongoing community of learners, both in person and online

Confirming Environment

A holding environment that provides support and affirmation, a platform from which learners can leap into the unknown, and a safety net that can catch them if they fall, are some the elements provided by a confirming environment.

One-to-one mentoring relationships with faculty characterized by authenticity, affirmation and social equality

Feeling known, heard and respected by a caring and attentive faculty mentor is an invaluable element in a confirming environment for adult learners, just as it is for an infant and her caretaker or a third grader and his teacher. Within the safety and affirmation of such a relationship, students can open themselves to challenge and vulnerability, knowing that they have that support to fall back on. Such affirmation, which must begin with careful listening, is the first of three key functions that Daloz, in his book *Mentor* (1999) so eloquently argues that the mentor must provide. If that relationship is to encourage transformation, and not simply an affirmation of the status quo, it also must be characterized by authenticity and mutuality, as we call forth the authentic and growing self of the student. As bell hooks (1994) has said, "empowerment can not happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging others to do so." And in making ourselves vulnerable,

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we need to take the risk that we might be changed in the process. In being willing to admit our mistakes and our doubts, we help our students to do the same and to make possible truly collaborative relationships, and the powerful learning that those relationships can foster. If we can show our students that we are full of our questions and our own search for answers, we can model ourselves, to use Carl Rogers' phrase, "as people in the process of becoming,' and thus help others to fully engage in that process as well. In helping others to

grow, we grow ourselves, as we all become learners and teachers together.

Small group bonding and co-learning with peers

While supportive relationships with faculty are important, it is also crucial to provide opportunities for students to create close bonds and connections with one another, so that the learning experience is not just a transaction between faculty and student but a more circular transaction among a group, in which everyone is learning from and with everyone else. Such opportunities can be provided by, for example, organizing students into small cohort groups for their orientation into the program, if not for the program as whole, and by making a part of these experiences a sharing of who we are as full people, and not just as students and faculty. The creation of such bonding is one reason that a residential component for adult learners can be a vital part of the experience, as explained later. And even in online learning seminars, it is important to create space (a virtual lounge, for instance) for more personal interactions. Feeling like an accepted and valued member of a group provides a strong container of safety and support.

Safe, supportive yet challenging learning community

Beyond the unit of the group, whose members may come together for a given study or inquiry or who join a program at the same time, the community of the whole can be important to and supportive of students' learning, growth and change. Community can contribute to the safety needed in order to take risks. Programs and even in some cases whole institutions can intentionally build their own community among all participants and, where appropriate, include attention to community as the object of inquiry. That is, strong community and the trust, safety and opportunities for growth that it affords can be both context for and content of any given inquiry. Such community, where issues arising are engaged directly, where all perspectives are welcome, where diversity is honored and voice supported, serve not only to support individual growth and transformative learning but also to support the potential for change in the social realm.

Residential learning retreats as a part of the experience

Critical reflection on ourselves and our contexts can be deepened by taking time away from our regular lives. This sort of distance from our day-to-day responsibilities and relationships is one of the functions provided by residential retreats as part of the adult learning experience (Fleming, 1998). Without such opportunities, adult learners immersed in busy work and family lives may treat their adult learning experiences as another consumer event where they are shopping and getting something, not engaging with their full selves and not detaching enough from their regular life settings to gain more perspective on them. To immerse ourselves instead in a new community of support provides an opportunity for distance, reflection and growth. Remote and natural settings, with only basic comforts provided, are especially conducive to this sort of reflective experience. Living together in a retreat setting, sharing meals and rooms and sometimes cooking and cleaning chores as well, can help people to connect deeply with others, in ways that could take months or never happen at all if we see one another only during class time. And as faculty and students share the residential experience, their relationships also can accelerate in the same way. Whether in set cohort groups as described by Lawrence (2000), brief residential communities of learners as described by Cohen and Piper (2000), or the experience in democratic living described by Spicer (1991), the impact of the residential experience cannot be overestimated. The more remote, and more self-contained the experience, the more powerful it can be, but even a few days in a hotel away from home can stimulate both critical reflection and interpersonal bonding in ways that cannot be duplicated online or in the commuter's classroom.

Contradicting Environment

Affirmation without challenge can be an empty form of support. We grow in response to challenge and contradiction, which can come both from within and without, from parts of ourselves seeking expression and fulfillment, and from the demands of our environment. While we confront many challenges and disorienting dilemmas through the natural course of living, a transformative educational environment can both hasten and heighten these contradictions and dilemmas, leading us, in concert with a confirming environment, into the sort of disequilibrium that can lead to change.

The challenges of self-directed learning

Asking students who are used to being passive learners to take responsibility for articulating what they want to learn and how they want to learn it can be a challenging and disorienting experience. Specific elements of a self-directing learning (SDL) environment can include

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not providing a set curriculum, but asking students to work with faculty mentors to develop and negotiate their goals, resources and learning activities. The relatively unstructured and student-directed nature of such learning experiences may in itself be a disorienting challenge. As that dilemma often requires students to change their perspective on the nature of knowledge and of the teaching-learning process, and their role in it, the SDL process as a whole may be a significant transformative learning experience in itself. In terms of Kegan's model, as described above, the demands of SDL can call for and catalyze movement to the self-authoring mind of his fourth order of consciousness. As students co-construct

their own learning relationships and learning environments, and as some of them also engage in action research aimed at changing the organizations or communities in which they work and live, they also experience themselves not as objects of someone else's educational or institutional agenda, but as agents and subjects, as co-constructors of their own education, their own social reality and their own lives.

The rigor of critical inquiry – into self and world, ideas and experience

As authors of their questions and inquiry, as co-creators of their studies, as contributors to their world, students almost necessarily develop a more questioning, confident stance. Yet this seemingly inevitable progression from seeing themselves as agents to questioning what might previously have been accepted as given must be bolstered by educators' intentional focus on criticality, on what it means to examine a question or set of ideas critically. A contradicting environment must insist on critical inquiry into all that the student encounters – not just a given theory or idea or argument, but one's own and others' experience, one's own and others' assumptions. A contradicting environment must foster our students' development of their critical lens on all that they read, observe, experience so that they can discover, surface and consider carefully the contradictions. Through the resulting disequilibrium, they can reach new, more adequate, more complex understanding. Through such critical inquiry, deep change – of self, of society – can come.

A paradigm busting curriculum

Such critical examination, an ongoing process, also can be the focus of a student's inquiry. Asking students to grapple with concepts, paradigms and epistemologies which challenge their current ways of knowing and of conceptualizing themselves and their world is a key element in creating the sorts of contradictions and disequilibrium that can lead to transformation. For instance, the study of epistemology helps students to question how we know what we know; critical theory can lead to the capacity for critique of ideology and of our current forms of political and economic life; systems theory and social constructionism challenge our sense of how

we understand ourselves and our social context. In contrast, learning experiences which operate within the context of our normative and hegemonic theories and assumptions about our material or social reality tend to foster informational but not transformational learning. While Kegan suggests that the challenges of post-modern thinking may be beyond the capacity of many adult students to fully comprehend, for those already at the self-authoring mind of his fourth order, these ideas may be just the sort of challenge and stimulus needed to begin to move toward the self-transforming mind of the fifth order.

The diverse and challenging viewpoints expressed in discussion

By engaging in reading, thinking and writing by ourselves, in isolation, we can come to new insights and understandings, and perhaps even transform our points of view. But often, it is through testing our ideas out in conversation with others, and considering and learning from others' perspectives, that we engage in the sort of reflective discourse which Mezirow (1991) sees as a key element in the transformative learning process and that Freire (1973) sees as central to the dialogical and collective construction of knowledge. It is this sort of group dialogue and discourse that independent learning lacks. While this sort of discourse is possible, to some extent, within the one-to-one dialogues between faculty and students, it is much more possible within a collaborative learning group, in which students can be exposed to a wider diversity of perspectives. It is through such dialogue that learners can also engage in what Belenky and Stanton (2000) have described as the "connected knowing" through which learners can transform by trying to empathize with and understand the views of others (Cranton, 2006). This is a different transformative process from "separate knowing," through which we engage in critical analysis and debate. Engaging with other group members in a collaborative search for understanding also can lead to what Yorks and Kasl (2002) have called "learning within relationship … a process in which persons strive to become engaged with both their whole-person knowing and the whole-person knowing of their fellow learners" (p.183). And if the learning community includes people

of diverse racial, ethnic or other identities of difference, other opportunities for contradiction and potential transformation may arise in what Daloz (2000) calls the "constructive engagement with otherness," through which, as Parks (2000) explains, our assumptions about ourselves and others can be transformed: "Constructive encounters across any significant divide set at the soul's core an experience of knowing that every assumption may be potentially transformed by an encounter with otherness" (p.141). Such dialogue thus not only provides a context in which we can test out and explore our own ideas, but an opportunity to be transformed through our exposure to others peoples' thinking and ways of being.

Creating Environment

A contradicting environment can lead to disequilibrium and disorienting dilemmas, but unless people are able to discover or articulate new ways of knowing, doing and being, they may often resolve their discomfort by retreating to their prior state of equilibrium. If they are to move ahead and not backwards, they need a "creating environment" that can be provided in a number of ways:

Opportunities for ongoing reflection and meaning making

If students are asked to continually reflect on their experiences – both past and present – to examine their own process, to make meaning of their experience and to articulate their learning, they can construct new knowledge and change their habits of mind and of being. This is the constructed knowing that Belenky, et al. (1986) describe in *Women's Ways of Knowing*. As Dewey (1933) said many years ago, we do not learn by experience, we learn from experience as we reflect on it and reconstruct it. In the same sense, learners need an opportunity to go through all of the phases of Kolb's learning cycle, including not only the abstract conceptualization of the traditional academy, but also the experimentation of more active learning (Kolb, 1984). Such reflection and meaning-making can be supported by asking students to articulate their learning from each of their learning experiences, and to periodically reflect on and make meaning of their education

experience as a whole. This process can be supported by such practices as narrative self-evaluations in which they articulate their learning, periodic reviews of portfolios of a student's work, and reflective essays on their journey through the program, articulating their intellectual and personal growth.

Framing questions of personal and social significance

For students to be deeply affected by their learning, for personal change to occur, and for them to see the potential to effect change, students' studies must have both personal and broader significance. That is, the questions the student asks – real questions, not questions to which they already know the "answer," not questions designed to prove their intelligence or demonstrate their prowess – must matter to the student and, to have wider meaning, must make a difference in their world. With inquiry that carries significance – both to the student and to society – both student and society can be changed. Designing their own studies can help students to discover and articulate that significance.

Learning through praxis – engagement, action and reflection on real-life problems

If learning can begin with a quest to understand and address issues, questions and problems that learners are facing in their own personal, family, organizational or community lives, then it will naturally be relevant and meaningful to them. And if the learning process can involve not just reading, thinking and writing, but also some form of doing – some action to address those issues, followed by reflection on that action – then the learner can be changed in the process. This is what Freire meant by praxis – the cycle of reflection, action and reflection. We reach new insights and understandings – we transform ourselves – as we try to transform the world. Such a process can be encouraged by asking students to organize their studies around their own questions and problems, and by requiring an applied component to each area of study.

Taking a stand and finding one's voice

By asking students not only to summarize and critique others' work, but also to state their own position on the controversial issues in a field, and to go on to construct

and articulate their own new knowledge, we can help students to find their own authentic scholarly voices. This process is most clear in the writing of a thesis or dissertation. As students work toward master's and doctoral degrees, one of the transitions they experience is to move from being consumers of knowledge to becoming producers and constructors of knowledge. Student-centered learning, like that at Goddard, Vermont College or Fielding, is uniquely well suited to facilitate such an outcome. From the beginning of that experience, learners gradually experience a shift from seeing knowledge as something that exists outside of themselves and that faculty will impart to them, to seeing it as something that they too have the authority to construct for themselves; from thinking about their learning experience only in terms of meeting faculty expectations, to thinking about it more in terms of what they want to know and learn; from thinking of themselves as passive recipients of others' learning, to thinking of themselves as active agents in their learning and their own lives.

Learning that includes the whole person

When we give students the opportunity to bring all of themselves to the learning process, and to engage their hearts and bodies, as well as their minds, we open more pathways to transformation. We

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also increase the likelihood that the transformations that do occur will be integrated and lasting. We are whole people, and change in one dimension of our being

must eventually involve changes in those other dimensions as well. As Cranton has explained (2006), using the Meyers-Briggs typology, learners' entry points to transformative learning may depend on how they experience the world; for some, change begins with reflection, for others with experience and for others with intuition. And as Yorks and Kasl (2006) argue, when we include expressive ways of knowing, "those ways of knowing that engage a learner's imaginal and intuitive processes" (p. 45), in the learning experience, we open the door to other routes to transformation.

Practices that can enable learners to make use of these other ways of knowing include autobiography and narrative means of expression; journals for ongoing self-reflection; making space for the expression of feelings as well as thoughts in the learning process; ritual, movement, dance and singing as an integral part of group learning experiences; artistic and symbolic means of expression; meditation and other contemplative practices as a means to access the deeper, subconscious parts of ourselves (Hart, T., 2001; Lennox, 2005). Such practices can be used as a complement to the usual reading and writing of the academy, not as a substitute for them.

Continuing Environment

Change and transformation that come about through extraordinary learning and life experiences often do not last if we cannot integrate our new habits of mind and being into our "real lives." Many of us have experienced the awakening and new sense of self and possibility in various learning and growth retreats, travel in other cultures, or through psychotherapy, only to slide back into our old ways when our changed self threatens the status quo in our relationships and contexts. If these changes and transformations are to last, we need somewhere in our lives a holding environment that is there for us through our change process, and that does not need to change along with us but can provide us some stability and support. That "continuing" environment can be provided in graduate adult education through such means as:

Ongoing relationships with mentors and peer learners

Having at least one close connection with a faculty mentor, from the beginning of the program to the end, can provide some of the support that we need. When such a relationship transcends the time limits of a particular course or learning experience, students have someone they can use as a sounding board to hear their developing thinking, a shoulder to cry on or lean on, and a platform to jump off from. It is important that such relationships do not always involve evaluation and grading, but provide a context from which it is safe to venture out and make mistakes, and then come back to lick one's wounds or celebrate one's successes. When such bonds are established during the academic experience, they can continue afterward as needed, as the connection established is between two people, not simply between a teacher and a student.

Similarly, when students can connect with one another as fellow travelers on their journey, and not as competitors for a scarce resource of high grades, continuing supportive relationships become possible. In this way, students can serve as mentors for one another, part of the "network of belonging" that Sharon Parks (2000) identifies as a key feature of a mentoring environment. If we provide the structure and space in which relationships can develop, then students will take care of the rest of their own.

The continuing integration of life and learning

When we base the academic learning experience on students' life experience, when their own questions drive the learning process, and these questions carry both personal and social significance, then students develop their capacity to be lifelong learners, and the sharp distinction between learning in school and out of school disappears. The transition to post-graduate life is thus much less jarring. While one is no longer paying tuition or earning academic credit, the scholar practitioner's integrated quest for knowledge can continue unabated.

The inclusion of alumni in an ongoing community of learners

If alumni can continue to feel a part of a community of learners, they never need to feel that they have fully left that nurturing and challenging context in which they were transformed. At Fielding, for instance, alumni are invited to attend the semi-annual conference-like gatherings of students and faculty called national sessions, both attending workshops and seminars and leading them. Continued access to internal online resources, which may include various discussion groups and forums, as well as use of the electronic library databases, can provide other means through which students can stay connected. Since these national sessions and electronic networks were the primary means of being connected while enrolled, the transition to post-graduate status once again does not have to be so severe.

Conclusion

Provision of all the components of the confirming, contradicting, creating and continuing environments described earlier does not guarantee that students will experience transformation. That is up to them. Transformative learning is not something we do to other people, it is something that people do for themselves. All that we can do is to provide the opportunity and the stimulus, the container and the heat. If all of the ingredients are there, if the learner is ready to change and engages the process with his or her full self, then the alchemy of transformation can occur.

If we agree with John Dewey that "development is the aim of education," then we can, "teach with developmental intent" (K. Taylor, 2000), as we provide the sort of learning environments described above. These environments can help learners to experience transformative learning that can stimulate, support and sometimes hasten their developmental journey through mid-life – a journey toward wholeness, more open and inclusive frames of reference, a more self-authoring and self-transforming frame of mind, a more critical consciousness, and a more integrated, socially engaged and satisfying way of being in the world.

During the many years that we have had been privileged to accompany so many adult learners on their transformative journeys, we have moved through our own mid-life growth and change, in no small part due to the inspiring examples we have seen all around us. These learners – our teachers – have taught us much about the courage of the human spirit and about our continuing capacity for growth, development and transformation, no matter what our age. They have inspired and challenged us to try to be and become our own best and fullest selves. Like so many of our students, we can each say that "this experience has changed my life."

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Teaching Against a Clash of Prejudices

Tanweer Ali, Center for International Programs

"But recollect from this time that all good things perverted to evil purposes are worse than those which are naturally bad."

For the dependable locksmith Gabriel Varden who is addressing his pious, though chastened, wife in Charles Dickens' *Barnaby Rudge,* the "good" is religious commitment and the "evil" is communal violence. Dickens' novel is set in the London of 1780, the year of the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots. A small group of unscrupulous rogues exploit social deprivation, religious zeal and ignorance, and the result is a sudden and violent explosion of mayhem.

But the questions with which Dickens and his characters grapple are no less relevant to our own day. How do good things get perverted to evil purposes? How, by what processes, does prejudice turn into deadly hate? How are ordinary people manipulated into acquiescing or even participating in mass violence? Two faculty members at the University of New York in Prague, Empire State College's partner institution in the Czech Republic, have undertaken extensive research into these questions and have developed what I believe are some highly original ideas. And last summer, they collaborated in the design of a new course that they called, Nationalism, Identity and Prejudice, which enabled them to share their respective approaches with students in the college's program in Prague.

Latvian-born journalist, writer and academic Peter Zvagulis has developed a groundbreaking new methodology for analyzing and detecting potential conflict in its early stages. Peter's methodology (which has been applied in projects for the government of Latvia and the European Commission, the European Union's executive body) draws on insights from social psychology, history and linguistics. The crucial insight is that we need to understand prejudice as a collective social phenomenon, not just as an aggregation of individual emotions. Peter has studied the mechanisms through which politicians and the media manipulate stereotypes and create scapegoats. The outcome is a self-feeding process, which tears apart the bonds holding society together with lethal consequences. In the course of his research, Peter has studied in particular detail the build-up to the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, the Bosnian war, and the genocide in Rwanda. The key element in all of these cases was the use of hate speech in the media. This was the essential catalyst that turned private prejudice into collective hatred.

Analyzing the media for indications of "hate speech" is one of the pillars of the early warning mechanism that Peter has developed. Altogether, his methodology includes 13 indicators of hate speech. Hate speech is directed at a specific minority group and is the precursor to the social breakdown, which results in actual violence. Often by the time the peacekeepers arrive on the scene, social collapse has already taken place, the killing has started, and it is an uphill struggle to restore normality. It is certainly much better to identify potentially volatile situations before they spill over into violence.

Monitoring the media requires a deep understanding of the dynamics of a society and cannot be a purely mechanical process, since manipulation can take subtle forms, especially when it is underpinned by a defining ideology. An example might be the so-called "dog whistle politics" where politicians use signals and references that will be clearly understood by their target audience (no doubt, their goal), but where the language is not clearly identifiable as inflammatory. Thus, for example, one European political party's principal election slogan a few years ago was: "Are you thinking what we're thinking?" Apparently an innocent choice of words, but in the specific context, this was identified by some as an attempt to mobilize the politics of race. (In this case, a rather unsuccessful attempt, as the party hardly increased its share of the vote from the previous election, it would seem that the answer to the rhetorical question was "no.") Another example of the type of ideology with the potential to underpin a campaign of media hate speech is Samuel Huntington's notion of a "clash of civilizations." Whatever Huntington's original intentions, his hypothesis which divides humanity into distinct and "clashing" civilizations may lend coherence to a conception of a society divided into the good "us" and the menacing "other."

> *Hate speech is directed at a specific minority group and is the precursor to the social breakdown, which results in actual violence.*

Rather than seeing the world in terms of inevitably clashing identities, this course presented a view of ethnic and civil conflict in terms of weak social structures and the breakdown of existing identities, resulting in societies vulnerable to political opportunists skilled at forming new identities to their own advantage. Thus, the clash is not real but artificial – the result of capitalizing on old prejudices directed at the "other," thereby enabling the definition of a new common identity. Taken in this way, perhaps what Huntington has identified may be better described as a "clash of prejudice." And the prejudice that Peter analyzes may be founded on religion, race, ethnicity, nationality, tribal affiliation or sexual orientation. So, where Dickens writes about

explosive tensions directed at a religious minority, Harper Lee describes collective prejudice based on race.

While Peter Zvagulis' analysis is founded on his knowledge of social psychology, Mark Tomass, an economist by training, has used the intellectual tools of his discipline to examine situations that allow marginal political elements, which he terms "political entrepreneurs" to exploit opportunities to seize power. Mark's work draws heavily on game theory, the branch of mathematics that studies how decisions are made in strategic situations. Game theory is regularly used in economics to help understand how situations arise in which, though all players act to further their own interests, the outcome leaves everyone worse off.

As a simple example, let's consider how an individual citizen may view paying taxes. The temptation to cheat and evade the full burden is there, and our citizen, let's call her Sally, is pondering whether to declare the full amount or to cheat. Sally knows that the tax money goes to provide public services such as universal health care, education and Social Security and that she is better off when these services are provided by the government. But she is looking at two potential scenarios and thinking of her own best interests. Suppose that everyone else is honest and dutifully pays their fare share. So the government is well funded and public services are in good shape. Sally knows her contribution is a drop in the ocean and that she can improve her own standard of living by cheating, as she will have more disposable income. So the temptation to be a free rider is high.

Now let's consider the other scenario. Her compatriots are not honest, tax fraud is widespread, and the government does not receive sufficient revenues to provide adequate public services. But again our citizen knows that her own contribution is negligible in the overall context. So why should she be a dupe and pay up when all her neighbours are cheating? Either way, she seems to be better off cheating. If every citizen reasons in this way, the course of action they take to maximize their own well being results in a situation in which they are all worse off. I do realize that this is a somewhat simplified example, but I hope I have made my point. There can

arise situations where individuals acting to further their separate individual ends can collectively harm their best interests when the right social mechanisms aren't in place.

And it turns out that some of the types of situations that are studied and analyzed in game theory serve as excellent tools for examining ethnic tension and civil strife. Mark Tomass has analyzed identity using this intellectual framework, and has examined the ways in which situations arise that enable political entrepreneurs (rather like business entrepreneurs) to seize opportunities where they spot a vacuum and further their goals. But in these situations, where social and political structures are weak, the end result can be one that nobody actually wants. Thus, for example, Mark has studied the Lebanese civil war (1975-1990) in great detail, applying his theoretical framework. Coming from Syria, he also has had the advantage of being able to use his own personal insight.

Mark Tomass has attempted to build a bridge between the social psychological causes of social identity and its socioeconomic effects by formulating the concepts of "identity sharing group" and "resource sharing group." For him, identity and prejudice relate to each other in many ways primarily because both phenomena are characteristics of group formations. Mark investigates how identity, grouping and prejudice relate to each other at different levels. After introducing hypotheses on complementary processes that induce prejudice through intra and inter-identity sharing group interaction, he describes how prejudices are formed and transmitted among identity sharing groups. Subsequently, he explains how assimilation enlarges the scope of identity and can mitigate civil conflict.

The combined approaches of Peter Zvagulis and Mark Tomass resulted in an innovative and lively summer course that was a novel experience both for the faculty and the students who participated. Our program in Prague is perhaps an ideal place to explore the questions that the course addressed; after all, we have students from dozens of different countries, including several recent war zones. While the atmosphere is generally very open and students tend to use the multicultural nature of their educational

experience to their best advantage, it is inevitable that differences will surface from time to time. This summer's conflict between Russia and Georgia sparked off a passionate discussion on Facebook between Russian and Georgian students, and others, and even though this was largely a dispute among friends, things did get heated at times. It was a pity that this all took place after the end of the course, as it would have been an ideal forum for students to continue to explore the role prejudice and stereotypes play in such conflicts.

Beyond the confines of our campus, Prague also provides an interesting overall environment for teaching about national, religious and other identities. Though Prague is now one of the safest cities in which to walk about that I know, and the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1993 didn't involve a single shot being fired or a single drop of blood being spilled, it wasn't always quite so tranquil. Right in the middle of Europe,

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the Czech capital has often found itself at the center of much broader European conflicts, right up until the end of the Cold War. Anyone in Prague looking for signs of the impact of war wouldn't have to look far. Just a few minutes' walk from our campus is the headquarters of Czech Radio, the scene of fierce gun battles between resistance forces and the occupying German army in the last days of Second World War – Prague was the last European capital to be liberated at the end of the war. And on one's way to the Czech Radio building, one passes the

National Museum, which still bears bullet holes from the Soviet invasion of August 1968.

But we can go much further beyond the last century. Prague was the real home of the Protestant Reformation on the European continent. The movement, started in the early part of the 15th century by Jan Huss, predates Luther by around a hundred years. And the Hussite movement sparked off a series of internal wars. And later, in 1618, it was in Prague that the Thirty Years War started, one of the most devastating religious wars in Europe's history. This history of religious conflict brings to mind something to which Mark Tomass refers in an upcoming book that he is writing, some chapters of which he was good enough to share with me. Mark recounts how, during the Lebanese civil war, Christian militiamen would wear oversized crucifixes while fighting gun battles in the streets with their opponents. So the crucifix, a symbol of peace and nonviolence for Christians, had been perverted into a symbol of war. Mark states: "In Christian faith, Jesus submitted himself to be crucified; he taught not to violently resist evil, yet his presumed followers killed in his name." Here, sadly, is a world Gabriel Varden could have related to only too well.

Note

" ... *my self-concept has changed from that of teacher to that of facilitator of learning. This may seem to be a simple and perhaps even superficial change, but I found it to be fundamental and terribly difficult. It required that I focus on what was happening in the students rather than on what I was doing. It required that I divest myself of the protective shield of an authority figure and expose myself as me – an authentic human being, with feelings, hopes, aspirations, insecurities, worries, strengths, and weaknesses. It required that I be clear about precisely what resources I did and did not have that might be useful to the learners, and that I make the resources I did have accessible to them on their terms. It required that I extricate myself from the compulsion to pose as an expert who had mastered any given body of content and, instead, join my students honestly as a continuing co-learner.*"

– Malcolm Knowles (1975) *Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers.* New York: Association Press. pp. 33-34.

The Stillness Inside of Spinning:
An Interview with Yvonne Murphy

Cathy Leaker, Metropolitan Center

Yvonne Murphy, mentor in cultural studies at the Long Island Center, received the Susan H. Turben Award for Scholarship in 2007. At the All College Conference in 2008, Yvonne presented a talk about her writings. Her reflections on her work became the basis of this edited interview with colleague Cathy Leaker. Thanks to both Yvonne and Cathy for their interest in and work on this project, and to Jonathan Royce for a first draft of the transcript.

Yvonne Murphy

Leaker: The talk that you gave at the All College Conference seemed so unusual in terms of the scholarly presentations that I've heard. What I really liked was the way you blended performance, scholarship and autobiography. What you did is really important to what we do as mentors and to the kind of work that we're inviting our students to do, too.

Murphy: I wanted to try to interweave those elements because I see my scholarship, my life, my teaching and my thinking about pedagogy as kind of a seamless cloth. I believe with poetry in particular that its

performance is as important as what's on the page. Everything is important and I was trying to think of ways to show that. I was thinking about "the murmur of the book," which is a phrase from Umberto Eco's preface to *The Book of Kells*. I spent a lot of time in September 2007 at Trinity University in Ireland studying *The Book of Kells* and Eco's sense that it couldn't have existed without the civilization, without the monks, without the precise moment in history, without the interlacing of ideas and without the isolation.

Leaker: So you're asking about what makes a certain text possible.

Murphy: Eco says it was the murmur before the book that made the book possible, so I was thinking about how all of my work at the college really made my first book, *Aviaries,* possible in terms of my personal life and growth, my teaching, my work with students, colleagues and events, world events – how they all played a part.

Leaker: I was just reading your poem, "Wonder Wheel." Its first line seems to be capturing exactly what you're talking about: "Our art is here, revolving in satellites, inconceivable to us." There's the "art" and yet there's also that notion of being "here." It's grounded in a location, in a particular moment of doing. Can you read the first stanza?

> Our art is here, revolving in satellites inconceivable/
> to us, like the red and white cars swirling on top/
> of Coney Island's Wonder Wheel, built in 1920/
> out of steel girders from Bethlehem –
> *never an accident,*/
> braggadocio or no, our own transmissions keep turning/
> in prayer wheels or atoms attached invisible inside ankles,/
> collar bones, fleshy hind quarters holding dreams written/

in codes on scrap paper, spun into cylindrical dervishes/
that orbit and enchant our lives unfolding mythic narratives/
of trees and kisses, starlight swimming in convolutions of hair.

Murphy: To slip into the autobiography of my piece, there is this kind of mystical/artistic/intellectual role of the artist that I encompass as a person. But I also can't escape the fact that I'm essentially a farm kid, growing up on my grandparent's farm, and ultimately I'm an extremely practical and nuts-and-bolts "if it ain't real, it ain't no deal" – kind of a person. Our art is right here, and there is this sense of "Look! Pay attention!" There are streams of being lost in the world of ideas, but at the same time there is an awareness of being tied to the concrete world of buildings, people, places, sights, sounds and smells. That's the poet as well. It's very real and very concrete, but it's also very ethereal. Again, there's this kind of prescience that happens – at least for me, and I think for a lot of poets.

Leaker: And you wrote this poem early in your time at the college?

Murphy: Yes, it was actually the first poem I wrote. I think I wrote it in August 2001, right before September 11. You know, I love Coney Island and I've always returned there. It's a very fantastical place for me, a sense of "there's something greater here." But there also is this concreteness: it's "built in 1920 out of steel girders from Bethlehem – never an accident … " which is a quote from the sign in front of the Wonder Wheel. Here it is, a testament to engineering, to humanity's ability to create permanency and, at the same time, we feel this sense of wonder. That's the kind of oxymoronic tension I also think I incorporate a lot in my work. I'm drawn to it because here it is, something that is supposed to appear so spontaneous, yet it's constructed, it's engineered.

Leaker: And there's also change; there's movement.

Murphy: Yes, "our own transmissions keep turning in prayer-wheels or atoms attached invisible inside ankles … " Trying to attach something as esoteric as a prayer wheel to an atom, to our ankles, to "fleshy hindquarters" … We move closer and closer into the nitty-gritty, and then spin out again. Actually, this whole poem's about spinning; there's that kind of dervish quality, always spinning back out into mythic narratives, "of trees and kisses, starlight swimming convolutions of hair." There is that ethereal "starlight," but it's always tied to the practical, the earthy, the hair.

Leaker: And now you move the reader to Manhattan. Can you read the final two stanzas of "Wonder Wheel?"

> To the right – Manhattan, World Trade
> Towers sway towards/
> each other, a tuning fork lending its
> tone to the muggy summer/
> four-four time. The Verazano Bridge is
> loops and loops of tape./
> Leftover rides from Steeplechase Park
> flow lonely in the haze,/
> an old roller coaster covered with
> vegetation, catalyzed into/
> a mountainous topiary. It tickles the
> foot of the Parachute Drop/
> with its many-leveled, herbaceous
> tongue. All of these sing,/
> these *things*, simultaneous within us
> and out.
>
> The waters of the Atlantic sparkle at
> the brim, lulling the pier./
> Children run with plastic cups, birds
> flying, the smell of fish,/
> French fries, hot dogs, corn and
> mangoes on sticks, flags with white/
> stars floating in the middle, mermaids
> and sea creatures drink cervezas/
> to a marimba beat. *Por Fin* – finally, at
> last – waves from a square radio/
> while fishermen lean back all the way
> in their chairs, their lines already cast.

Murphy: Yes, I do go on to Manhattan and different structures, now the World Trade Center towers, how they're a "tuning fork" "lending" their "tone to the muggy summer four-four time." But again, it's that things are man made and also become part of us. We're all interconnected. The towers become

human as they're created by humans. And then ultimately this line: "all of these sing, these things, simultaneously within us and out." I was really celebrating that particular day, but, for me, the last lines of that poem are really prophetic – the sense of the world that just will continue. We have to recognize that our art is right here; it's spinning faster than we can even understand. Or the kind of miracle that the world is spinning so fast even while we feel like we're completely still.

Leaker: The poem now appears to have this prescience and poignancy. But it's also connected to something else: What struck me when we met and I started learning the way you work with students is your ability to say, "Look! See," even in the midst of spinning, of looking carefully and seeing what's before you. I think there's something about that stillness in the midst of spinning that speaks to adult students' lives and to the kind of work that we're trying to do and the kinds of binaries we're trying to help them break down.

Murphy: I mean, I love chaos! It's my best friend. And the reason is because it's so creative. You can learn to stand in all the spinning; I know that our students definitely do. I mean that's the hardest thing about life, but it's also the hardest thing about learning and coming to new intellectual tasks. How can you allow yourself to be immersed in all of these free-floating, free-form ideas while simultaneously you are approaching them, accepting them, but also not losing a sense of who you are, and not being overwhelmed? I always talk with my

How can you allow yourself to be immersed in all of these free-floating, free-form ideas while simultaneously you are approaching them, accepting them, but also not losing a sense of who you are, and not being overwhelmed?

students about becoming comfortable with the discomfort of all that.

Leaker: What makes your poetry so interesting to me is that I feel there's a kind of joy and energy in the disorder. For example, your poem, "The Cyclone" keeps us in Coney Island, but introduces Marianne Moore as a poet who embraced chaos, speed, technology and modernity; there she is, right in "the front seat."

Murphy: It's so funny because, like me, she's also a poet who read the dictionary, or read the encyclopedia, or studied maps, or studied atlases. I think of my two kind of foremothers, Marianne Moore and Elizabeth Bishop. Bishop relies more on the sensuality of the visual image, but they both have that kind of encyclopedic, catalogic consciousness – a cataloguing of facts, ideas, places, things, animals, and you know, all of the details.

Leaker: You're saying that we can't separate this encyclopedia-rich book-knowledge with this energy and joy of the crowd feeling. You see them as complementing each other. It's just false if we want to separate those two.

Murphy: The joy comes from that "cyclone" of verbiage and ideas and images and sounds. There aren't any bounds. I would say that I'm just such a student of postmodernism in that uber-inclusive sense: I want everything, you know; it's not enough to have something. It's just the joy of celebrating how everything interplays. There's a line in "The Cyclone" that really says it for me: "Deliberate structure supporting chaos, thrills engineered/ to appear spontaneous."

Leaker: As you've said, this spirit also is connected to your ideas about mentoring.

Murphy: I'm always trying to update and revise so that my contracts with students are: "thrills engineered to appear spontaneous!" Because my learning contracts might appear to be very free-form, students are always surprised to see how much structure there is; it's something that comes out as the term progresses. The important thing is to also leave enough room for the spontaneity of their own discovery. It's their own discovery that leads them to lasting knowledge.

Leaker: Isn't it interesting to see how the contract becomes this moment of intimacy between the mentor and the student? I think we don't always capture what that intimacy really is. And here, I was thinking about your poem "Hummingbirds" because it seems the most intimate of the poems that you read in your presentation.

Murphy: It's about finding that intimate moment – something that resides at the core when you're really working with a student, or if you're really working on your own scholarship, or you're really working on your own poem or story. You get to this point where there's a moment of absolute recognition, either of yourself, your vision, your student's abilities – whatever. It's utterly terrifying and utterly joyous at the same time. The problem is: How do you keep the terror from overtaking or overshadowing the joy? It's something I'm always trying to solve in any work that I'm doing. The "Hummingbirds" poem is about a very intimate moment, in this case, of two people, of two lovers. This is the first poem that Poetry magazine ever took, and that was in 2004, which was a big deal for me, because I felt it really legitimized my work. It's interesting that they chose such an intimate poem as opposed to some colossal kind of deconstruction of engineering! It hints at those moments: "Red, the throat full of warmth/ or embarrassment as we flit/ and somersault – chirping and chattering … " It's the same movement as a roller coaster or a Ferris wheel. That total dizziness. "The nectar, sugar-water/ we gorge ourselves with," which could be knowledge, which could be arts, which could even be humanity. Sometimes I would like to be the "love child" of Whitman and Dickinson. There's Whitman with his utter inclusiveness. He has poems where he starts: "Now I will do nothing but listen," and he writes down everything that he hears. And then there's Dickinson for her ability to just get to the chase! Ê

Leaker: I'm also thinking about stillness. Stillness passes so quickly in your poetry. It's so much work for a hummingbird to be still. Your poems don't necessarily reject stillness, but they understand its fleetingness. Especially as we think about mentoring our adult students, stillness seems so important.

Like we're at the top of the roller coaster, we're there and then it's plunge!

Murphy: It's an illusion or at least very, very momentary.

Leaker: But that doesn't mean that it can't be productive and important. It's almost a reclaiming of movement.

Murphy: I think there's a longing for that stillness – "the murmur" for stillness. This is the world we live in. The absolutely worst thing I could ever do is sit still. I've thought about it as one of the effects of being born into Generation X, being born into post-modernism, and it isn't something that I've ever questioned. The post-millennial need is not for meaning, but perhaps for stillness, for quiet and for recognition.

Leaker: But you're pointing to something interesting – our efforts to find the stillness as we move. And maybe this is connected to this nostalgia for a kind of mentoring that will claim stillness for students and give them this very quiet, peaceful space, something that they often don't know. Sometimes your poetry seems to say that that's just not going to be there, and that, instead, stillness is a fleeting state that we have to grasp and learn from as we pass through it.

Murphy: Stillness is always already existing with chaos, or with flux or movement, or with flittering and fluttering. It's a drive-by. It's not at all about the idea or the experience of a permanent retreat. The idea of solace is naïve. It's not only naïve but it's very privileged. It's the kind of feeling that I was trying to express in "The Combine," which was included in *All About Mentoring* in 2007. It's about being six or seven years old and watching animals get chopped up and men losing their hands in the combine. It's kind of "anti-naivete."

Leaker: A very class-bound sense of what it means to rest. I was thinking of your poem "The Mangrove." It's not exactly stillness gone wrong, it may be movement gone wrong. "We cannot tell the rate at which we travel backwards,/ underground the subways have stopped running – /global warming, storm surge, something/about squandering, rupture of sense." It's nightmare movement; nightmare stillness.

Murphy: You want stillness? Here it is! It's like death. I want to say it's the opposite of movement. I think of the Buddhist tenet about perfection, and how life is one continuous mistake, and that we're always moving towards perfection but that we never achieve perfection, because perfection is actually death. When you achieve perfection, there's nothing else to learn. "The Mangrove" is really an homage to Elizabeth Bishop's poem "The Man-Moth," which is just an amazing poem where she was really looking at the modern era through a misprint. It was supposed to be "The Mammoth" and was misprinted in The New York Times as "The Manmoth," so she wrote this long poem looking at the artist as half-man, half-moth and existing underneath the ground, and that first line comes from Bishop's poem: "He cannot tell the rate at which he travels backwards." That's fascinating for me to look at because it's about what happens when everything stops. There's a beauty in it, the kind of the beauty of garbage; the beauty of calcified lime-scale on subways' tiles. Or the movement is so slight that we experience it as oppressive, like the salt-crystals that shimmer at night or the seeds that are waiting to move. There's this kind of dormancy and also an anticipation of starting over. In effect, we could begin again. The last lines of the poem, "the world/ could begin again, filtered pure enough to drink" also is from Bishop's poem. It is the Manmoth's tear, which is pure enough to drink. But at the same time we have to fully see that we humans have screwed up!

Leaker: It's just not easy to see and feel all of this at once.

Murphy: If you open yourself up to all of the senses all at once, it's very sensual and it's beautiful, but it's also very agitating. Sometimes I have to turn the senses off so that I don't hear or see things. I've also been able to train myself to be able to hear very minute sounds and it becomes a kind of music that you can then think about recording and pairing with imagery overlaying with ideas. It becomes a multifaceted living tapestry. It's not worked on in repose or stillness; it's worked on in active agitation of sensation.

Again, it's about not separating the idea-making with the passion-stirring.

Leaker: Again, it's about not separating the idea-making with the passion-stirring.

Murphy: This gets us back to my current project on *The Book of Kells.* There's something about the history of the book, the book as object, both historical and personal; it's a repository of not just knowledge and ideas but also of passion. And by passion I also mean history: all that's been thought, felt, said, heard, believed and, of course, rejected. So there is a recognition of chaos in terms of a long history of that, but also, this notion of the book as a repository, as a place.

Leaker: And you want your students to see this, to feel it.

Murphy: I want to think about these things with my students. I'm always working through problems in my head, and I'm always working through problems in my art, and I'm always working through the same problems with my students. I want to bring the questions that I have, that kind of academic/intellectual/artistic overlay of questioning, into my groups and my tutorials. I see it as a form of modeling and a form of engagement, of intimacy. When I engage students in that style they learn to engage me in that style, and they learn to engage their own ideas, their own problems, their own solving. I'm a big modeler, and I think that whatever problem I'm working through, for example, with *The Book of Kells,* "how we contain knowledge" is a problem that opens up so many different moments – moments of excitement, of hysteria, of paranoia – of fear that we will lose everything that is special and sacred and beautiful. These moments are continuously happening. We have to learn from that.

Leaker: So, it's not about being static but about reclaiming through reinvention. In effect, as I understand you to be saying, we reclaim and preserve the book not through nostalgia but through reinvention within the ever-shifting chaos in which we find ourselves. We certainly feel this chaos, this cyclone, in education too. We can't escape it. Can we use this recognition to help ourselves, to help our students, and maybe even to find a way for education to matter differently?

Murphy: It's absolutely a problem to be nostalgic for the order or for the idea of an order that's going to rescue us. There's no one theory, strategy, teaching method, or structure that's going to make all of this manageable. It's not manageable. The world we live in is not manageable! There are so many ideas, so many pressures, so many constraints. Our students come from this world and we do too. This is the embracing of what we face that might sound naïve and hokey, but it's exactly this kind of acceptance of what comes our way, and thinking of everything as a potential tool or a potential key, or potential piece of the key that can be built to move forward. It's what I want to do as an artist and as a teacher.

Leaker: I think of your words from the poem, "Foucault's Dream:" "We don't think that the words will take off, get lost,/ disappear without any pattern or discernible trace." But this is what we have to deal with.

Murphy: We have to be able to train ourselves to see, and the more you train yourself to see, to hear and to listen to all these things we've been talking about, the more you can see and hear and listen. Theodore Roethke has that poem, "In a Dark Time," where the first line suggests: "in a dark time the eye begins to see." It is true that we can accustom our vision, can accustom our own sensibilities to see what we've been unable to see, because I think that's crucial.

Leaker: If I may quote you again, "Our art is here, revolving in satellites inconceivable/ to us … All of these sing,/ these things, simultaneously within us and out."

Murphy: The key words are "inconceivable to us." There's so much that I'm aware of and so much that I'm also aware of that I don't know. It's not about retreating but returning, "singing," making it possible.

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Faculty Development: In Their Own Space and Time

Linzi Kemp, Center for Distance Learning and the Qatar Foundation

Introduction

In this research, the recipients of and participants in faculty development are our part-time colleagues. It is with difficulty that one can even closely define the body of people who can be termed "part time," as institutions of higher education have a range of contracts that these people are offered. On one hand, I find myself defining them as "other," or, in effect, who they are not (i.e., the full-time, tenure-track faculty). Yet, such a designation is certainly unfair because: a) it suggests that "other" is in someway "lacking" in comparison (Levi-Strauss, 1964; Leach, 1970, p. 36); and b) part-time faculty are a body of people who are a large and very important contributor to the teaching programs in higher education today. Indeed, in 2005, there were 0.6 million part-time faculty employed at post-secondary institutions (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2007), and these employees are approximately 46 percent of the total faculty workforce, according to Knapp, et al. (2005, Miller, 2001, IES, 2006). For classification purposes, therefore, and to avoid discussion of commitment to an institution, I want to consider part-time faculty as those who have less than a full-time appointment with a particular institution, including those who are "adjunct" status (usually employed by the course or term). The development of part-time faculty is essential because of their status as significant members of university communities and, therefore, as much as any faculty, deserving of professional enrichment. Henceforth, in this essay I will refer to these employees as "the faculty."

The Challenges of Faculty Development

"The faculty" is usually not campus located, although they may have a shared office at a location that they visit from time to time. Many of them work mainly from home and come into the university buildings only occasionally. Increasingly, too, there are faculty who are wholly at a distance, i.e., they work from home, and all their contact with the institution is at a distance. These people do not have offices (shared or otherwise) at the institutions for which they are teaching; instead, their work takes place from wherever they are connected. As these people are geographically dispersed, we need to offer development opportunities at a convenient location for the recipient – that is, in their own space. We also must consider the need to connect the faculty with the institution, and to build a community for faculty at a distance. In Kemp, Ostrov and Smith (2005), it was acknowledged that faculty who are full-time, tenured or tenure track interact routinely on a daily basis because they are present within the physical space provided by the on-the-ground institution. In effect, they can "drop in" on each other in their offices, they meet in hallways, and have many formal meetings in which they are engage. Faculty located at a distance are at a disadvantage when it comes to building a community of learning. As Wenger (1998, p.125) considers, "sustained mutual relationships" are vital, and "knowing what others know, what they can do and how they can contribute to an enterprise" is very significant. It also is recognized that "the faculty" have multiple professional commitments; they could be teaching at various institutions and may have a full-time or part-time professional job outside of teaching. Pauszek and Longley (June 2004) conclude that time for development is an obstacle when this audience has a "day job," and/or maybe teaching at, or traveling to, another teaching assignment. Therefore, we also need to consider when to offer development opportunities that will be at a convenient time for the recipient – that is, in their own time.

A Development Community

As Carnevale, et al. (2004) show, a role for faculty is to "engage students in a learning community," and because each faculty member also is a life-long learner, discovering what others do can lead to learning how those practices can be integrated and applied to teaching and learning. Faculty development is about encouraging collaboration and dialogue to uncover what is known and to discover what we need to know; then it is about developing people to integrate this knowledge and providing opportunities to apply it to their teaching. "The faculty" long for a community of people like themselves to learn from and share experiences with. As an adjunct faculty member posted in an online discussion area (Kemp, 2008):

> Sometimes, this is not an easy task. You don't have coleagues [sic] to tell about, to share your opinions, to ask for advise [sic], to ask if you are doing well, how to improve this or that, what is the best way to do it, You sometimes don't know if what you have done is the best way to do it.

So, no doubt, when we create an environment for "the faculty" and for anyone at a distance, we enrich the whole institutional community of learning.

But to create an online community of faculty engaged in development, we need to turn from the paradigm of thinking about "technology as technology" and shift to considering "technology as the learning environment … the tools therein are for exploring, communicating and socializing to form a learning community" (Hartman, Dziuban and Brophy-Ellison, 2007, p. 64). With respect to Hartman, et al. (2007) though, I'd also prefer to remove the word "tools" from any vocabulary relating to learning. "Tools" is rather too reminiscent of a mechanistic approach, where organization is the machine and the image is

that of "man" as a cog in the wheel of that machine (Burns and Stalker, 1961, Morgan, 1986). So we need to start from the premise that "most faculty members are experts in their respective disciplines, and as teachers, they expect to be regarded as such, [but that] technologies can quickly turn them into novices" (Hartman, Dziuban and Brophy-Ellison, p. 1). Then we can appreciate that for a geographically dispersed faculty body to develop in an online context, we need to train them in engaging successfully in a new kind of environoinment.

Pauszek and Longley (2004) present how Empire State College supports such training via a faculty gateway (a centralized portal) within which lie online workshops and tutorials that are "moderated, interactive and self-paced." So too, an online faculty development area needs to be what Murage (2004) calls an "enabling environment." Such an area needs to consider that, as Thomas Friedman (2005) depicts it, "the world is flat." Thus, I think we are at a time where we need to acknowledge that the world of faculty development is, itself, "flat." That is, it is a truly global scene, with the possibility of whole new forms of collaboration, of interconnecting knowledge, of dissolving borders of development, and ultimately of adding value for the individual teacher/researcher/scholar and for the institutions that employ them.

Two Examples of Virtual Faculty Development Environments

I would like to take you on a journey that I have taken around some of the online environments for faculty conferencing at a distance in order to show the variety of venues, the activities that have been created to engage participants, and to give direction to the future of faculty development. I will review two online faculty development opportunities, so that you can gain some insight into how these concepts work for effectively delivering faculty development at a distance.

Instead of attending a face-to-face conference, imagine attending an e-conference ('e' for electronic). Lying on the sofa in the comfort of one's home and via your laptop and an Internet connection, you are conferencing away to your heart's content! The first e-conference in which

I participated was sponsored by the Open University, U.K., and the second by LearningTimes.org, both having a duration of three days and using the Elluminate platform.

This was a marvelous experience of global conferencing and faculty development, as it brought together scholars from around the world. Daily at 2 p.m. (GMT) there was a keynote speech. This also was a convenient time for those of us in another time zone, as our first activity was this keynote at 9 a.m. (EST). During the three days, the keynote and other synchronous presentations utilized voice narration combined with PowerPoint and enabled text chat and audio for discussion. Prior to the conference, papers were submitted for peer review and then uploaded to the online conference area as daily papers relating to a theme, e.g., Kemp (November 2007), "Fit for Teamwork: Modern and Postmodern Organisational Environments." On their own time, participants read the papers online (or downloaded them) and commented on them via asynchronous threaded discussion. There also was an online poll for best paper where participants voted electronically. What I particularly liked about this conference was the Doctoral Zone where doctoral students had been invited to submit their ongoing research and to receive feedback from those of us who had already been through this academic process. Faculty were then in the position of actively mentoring academic colleagues of the future, giving service to the academic community, very much in keeping with the spirit of the Center for Teaching Excellence at The University of Maryland that considers it the university's "responsibility to mentor … junior faculty … as they become educators" (Dooling and Helwig, 2004). But more than that, I was stimulated by reading a student's research into attitudes of postmodernism in organizations, the theme of my own Ph.D. studies. Thus, both the student and I gained continuing professional development through meeting each other online. And we hadn't travelled miles to do so!

The second online conference I "attended" was organized around asynchronous web poster and audio poster sessions. For example, in the Discussion Zone, there was an asynchronous discussion thread in

the "Conference Café" where we could get to know each other by posting our photographs (optional) and biographies, and then following up with "chat" about what was going on in the conference. There was also a group blog to contribute to and a community journaling of experiences (see an explanatory video (LeFever, 2007). There was a keynote presentation in the synchronous environment. Participants entered a virtual classroom and participated in the presentation through audio and text chat. As all the sessions also were archived, following the conference one was able to review, listen to and have access to all the conference activities. I had text chatted with a participant (adjunct teacher) in one of the live sessions, and recalled this on review. I then followed up with an interview to hear his views on online conferencing as a format for professional development. He considered it "a different way of meeting people at a new event … work days are a hard time for participating" (personal communication, March 11, 2008).

Why did I get into the virtual conference experience? I think it was simply because I found out it was available and was curious enough to give it a try. Meeting people globally online, discussing with them and getting to know them was, to me, an effective use of my time and an important introduction to experiments in faculty development. It kept me very concentrated on the task in hand and, of course, "down time" was under my own control. In effect I could carry on socializing, post to asynchronous threads, read papers, review presentations, or, indeed, carry on with my own work. (To get the most out of such online conferencing, I do advocate that it should be honored with time and commitment.)

The e-conferences were amazing experiences, wonderful examples of engaging opportunities to collaborate, share and learn across the miles in an enjoyable and technologically smooth environment. I recognized that virtual conferencing was a splendid opportunity to bring faculty together and, given the theme of this paper, that it would be of great benefit for connecting "the faculty" who are not campus-based. Without a doubt, part-time faculty and those located at a distance want

to "belong" and contribute to a community, and such online environments are a mode of connecting with one another, with full-time colleagues and with higher education institutions.

Significantly, we do not need to consider online faculty development as a poorer alternative or in competition with face-to-face environments. Rather, the online and physical faculty development environments can instead support and complement each other. The more and varied the opportunities for connection, contact and discussion in engaging environments, the richer the teaching and learning that will ensue throughout our institutions. We know that conferencing is an opportunity for connection that can lead to collaboration as we gather together in a learning community. Those benefits also are available for "the faculty" – for part-time faculty through a virtual/electronic/distance faculty development environment that needs to be a major priority for all of our institutions.

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Kemp, Wiki on faculty development: http://facultydevelopment.wetpaint.com.

Kemp, Podcasts and other multimedia on teaching and learning: http://web.mac.com/linzikempj/Work/Welcome.html.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison offers a professional development and certification in distance education. http://www.wisc.edu/depd.

List of publications and books available at http://www.teachingcoach.org/Library/index.html.

The Journal of Faculty Development – a forum for the exchange of information regarding professional development in post-secondary educational institutions. http://www.newforums.com/news_JFDPage.asp.

To Improve the Academy is published annually by POD and is abstracted in ERIC documents and in Higher Education Abstracts. Each annual volume of *To Improve the Academy* is provided free to current members as a benefit of membership. http://www.podnetwork.org/publications/academy.htm.

College Teaching, a unique, cross-disciplinary journal, focuses on how teachers can improve student learning. http://www.heldref.org/ct.php.

The Journal on Excellence in College Teaching Celebrating 28 Years of Presenting and Publishing the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. http://celt.muohio.edu/ject/.

Sabbatical Report

Fernand Brunschwig, Center for Graduate Programs

I spent my sabbatical leave in New York City, at Columbia University Teachers College (TC), where I was a visiting professor in the Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education. I live nearby, on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and TC proved to be a hospitable and fertile environment for me. I taught Concepts of Physics 1 and 2, which gave me a chance to focus on my "home" discipline. I also got a refreshing opportunity to see how an institution very different from Empire State College worked, to interact with a diverse and talented group of individuals, and to participate in the activities of the Teachers College and Columbia University community (including use of the gym, especially the squash courts!).

The "official" purpose of my leave was to work on further development of physics teaching materials. These materials all related in some way to the "modeling approach" to teaching physics and to a textbook by Robert Karplus *(Introductory Physics: A Model Approach)*. I used Introductory Physics as the textbook for the Teachers College class, and this provided an opportunity to try out some of the teaching materials as I prepared them.

The context of my work: the modeling approach and my "rescue" of Karplus' textbook.

Robert Karplus was my mentor and dissertation advisor at UC Berkeley, and two of his many contributions to science education provided the framework for my sabbatical.

First, Karplus' textbook (published in 1969) originated the "modeling" approach to teaching physics. For Karplus, "models" represented a certain type of "mental tool" for thinking about physics. This idea was based, in some ways, on the earlier Physical Science Study Committee (PSSC) Physics

project. But what had been a somewhat static and narrowly-focused approach in PSSC became in Karplus' hands a flexible foundation for building scientific thinking that was less abstract than the more formal demands of a scientific "theory," "law," hypothesis" or "principle," and much closer to the way "experts" actually thought about physics when they were trying to solve problems or understand something that puzzled them. Karplus' particular genius was to have articulated an approach and a few specific types of models that also were accessible and useful to beginners in physics, and which could be used in thinking about and building understanding of physics phenomena. Karplus' models and modeling

> *Karplus' particular genius was to have articulated an approach and a few specific types of models that also were accessible and useful to beginners in physics, and which could be used in thinking about and building understanding of physics phenomena.*

approach represented an "intermediary" in degree of abstraction between the theories and laws of science and the phenomena we observe in the world. The modeling approach relates fairly closely with the way that many, if not most, scientists actually act and think in their scientific practice (although not with what they usually say and do in their teaching, where the process

of science is often presented as an unrealistic ideal, with the warts and other "real-life" aspects de-emphasized).

Second, Karplus' textbook further developed an innovative conceptual sequence for teaching physics that was radically different from what was used in essentially all physics textbooks and courses up to that time. The traditional sequence began with a study of motion and Newtonian mechanics (velocity, acceleration, forces, motion near the surface of the Earth at constant acceleration, Newton's Laws of Motion) and used this as the foundation and prototype for the development of the other topics in the curriculum. This sequence encompassed what was known as the "Newtonian Synthesis:" Newton's extraordinary explanation of motion throughout the universe in terms of mechanical forces, the most important of which was reduced to a simple "Universal Law of Gravitation." Newton's law of gravitation predicted the forces exerted by planets and stars on each other, and his Laws of Motion then allowed one to predict how these objects would move with uncanny accuracy. This was an amazing intellectual achievement, which, at the time, seemed to make everything in the Universe potentially explainable, and even predictable – leading to the idea of the "clockwork Universe."

Newton published his system in the "Principia" in 1687. Over the next hundred years or so, Newton's work became the model for "good science:" one simply had to discover the laws governing the mechanical forces between objects and then Newton's Laws of Motion would, by means of some fancy math if necessary, reveal how the objects would move. This program turned out to be very productive for understanding a wide variety of phenomena, including astronomy, geology, electricity, magnetism, wave motion and many others, and it established the study of mechanics (forces and motions) as the

foundation for many other areas. Naturally, the Newtonian Synthesis also gradually became embedded in the textbooks, and it was used as the "foundation" for developing all the other topics in physics. Finally, in about 1900, physics reached the limit of the Newtonian approach: radioactivity, the behavior of light and the theory of relativity, the atomic nucleus, and quantum mechanics all required completely new approaches that departed from the use of mechanical forces and motions as the fundamental explanatory idea. However, the Newtonian approach is still what one finds in essentially all modern physics textbooks.

However, Newton's achievement involved a very high degree of abstraction: understanding the concepts of force, inertial mass, instantaneous position, velocity and acceleration, and the principles relating them together, requires a very substantial series of intellectual leaps, as well as the reconceptualization of the way one "sees" everyday motions that, superficially, seems to contradict intuition. This abstract conceptual load, introduced at the outset of the physics course, makes it difficult for most students to succeed.

The PSSC project, in an only partially-successful attempt to reduce the abstract demands at the beginning, had placed the study of light and waves first and postponed motion and Newton's Laws. Karplus adopted this sequence, but, more importantly, he preceded it by developing a set of ideas and concepts that were closer to the way most beginners' thinking worked than the highly evolved and specific ideas of velocity, acceleration and force that were required to understand and apply Newton's Laws. Models and modeling are one example; others are interaction and interaction-at-a-distance (the process by which one object exerts an influence on another and the precursor to fields and forces), the systems concept, inertia (the tendency for objects and systems to stay the same in the absence of interaction) and energy (the capacity of a system or object to give rise to changes in itself or its surroundings).

Unfortunately, Karplus' textbook was not a success, at least partly because of its innovative sequence of topics. It went out of print shortly after it was published,

and Karplus himself passed away in 1990. However, in cooperation with his widow, I rescued the book and, with the help of Tim Johnson, a distinguished Empire State College graduate, I edited and published a second edition in 2003.

Supplementing Karplus' Text and Mathematica:

Thus, during my sabbatical I proposed to produce two types of materials to supplement the second edition of Karplus' textbook, which by now had been reviewed in The Physics Teacher and adopted in a few schools and colleges:

> Materials for teachers. These included commentaries on individual chapters and detailed solutions to problems from Introductory Physics. In addition, I developed a new Web site, www.fernwig.com, devoted to a "Teachers' Guide to Karplus' Introductory Physics," where I made these materials available for free.

> Materials for students. These included additional problems related to the general topics in Introductory Physics, as well as a number of illustrated, 5-15 page "modules" on topics that were covered briefly or not at all in the book. These materials also are published at www.fernwig.com.

I used the tools available through Google "Apps" (www.google.com/a) to set up the Web site. I am continuing to contribute to the site, and I hope that it will grow and evolve in the future.

In addition to the text-based materials, I became intrigued part-way through the year with the potential of the new release of the Mathematica software (Version 6). Mathematica is a well-known "technical computing environment," a competitor to MatLab and Maple, which scientists and engineers use to carry out difficult technical tasks (modeling, detailed calculations, and data visualization). However, Version 6 of Mathematica included the capability to create "interactive demonstrations" utilizing all of the powerful mathematics and physics tools of the software. Moreover, these demonstrations could be "published" in a form that could be run and manipulated

by beginners using the freely downloadable Mathematica Player.

Columbia had a site license to Mathematica, and I taught myself the basics of how to use it. At about the same time, Wolfram Research, the company behind Mathematica, established its Mathematica Demonstrations Project, which encouraged creation of interactive demonstrations and provided a well-organized Web site where authors could submit demonstrations for review and possible publication on the web. All of the published demos could be previewed on the web or downloaded in a form that ran on the free "Player." In addition, in a step in the direction of "open source software," Wolfram also made the code behind the demos available for download. (The code behind Mathematica itself, and the Player, one of which was necessary to run the demos, remained proprietary.) This meant that I could study others' code and modify it to see how it worked. It turned out that the Mathematica programming language was somewhat similar to LISP, a classic computer language that I had studied previously, so the "open source" demos provided enough of a "window" for me to learn the basics of how to program in Mathematica.

As a result, I generated a number of interactive demos. Seven of my demos have been reviewed by the Wolfram Demonstrations Team and subsequently published (at demonstrations.wolfram.com):

Block on a Frictionless Inclined Plane (with Joe Bolte)

Circular Motion and Newton's First Law

Energy of a Slingshot: David and Goliath

Galileo's Paradox

Interaction at a Distance: The Radiation Model

Interference of Waves from Double Slit (Young's Experiment)

Pythagorean, Meantone and Equal Temperament Musical Scales (with Emmanuel Amiot)

You can find (and download) these by searching for my name at demonstrations.wolfram.com.

There are now well over 4000 demonstrations on the Wolfram site, covering a huge range of topics, including math, all the sciences, engineering and technology, the social sciences, business, the arts and games. Many of the demonstrations are directly relevant to and usable in schools; the number of demonstrations is continuing to grow at an impressive speed, and Wolfram Research has continued to support the site with excellent technical help and an active review team. It has been stimulating to help build this new resource for science education, and I am looking forward to contributing more demos and to programming in Mathematica.

Overall, the sabbatical was stimulating and a wonderful change of pace. I worked quite hard at it. Keeping up with my writing as well as the course I was teaching, while also learning to program in Mathematica, turned out to be quite challenging, but it was very rewarding. I've come away with a fresh perspective on physics teaching and continue to be quite optimistic about the value and potential role of computer-based simulations and demonstrations in helping beginners learn and enjoy physics. I am even considering the possibility of an electronic edition of Introductory Physics with "live" content jumping out of a screen near you!

"The defining characteristic of the individualized degree is the individual student's role in helping to define and design it, assuring that the course of study addresses that student's learning goals and obstacles while meeting broad institutional standards instead of standard major requirements. Like the interdisciplinary degree, it was in part a reaction to the strictures of the departmental major; but it was more fundamentally a shift from a faculty-centered to a student-centered instructional approach, a shift in focus from teaching to learning. If one goal of an undergraduate degree is to prepare learners to dispense with their teachers and become lifelong, self-directed learners, then the inmates must one day be given the keys and taught to use them – to set their own learning goals and design their own courses, even their own field of study."

– Rick Hendra, "The Devolution of the Individualized Degree at University Without Walls/University of Massachusetts – Amherst A Case History," unpublished manuscript, 2008.

Practice and Grace

Gary Snyder

The following talk was offered by Gary Snyder at the Empire State College All College Conference in March 2008. We were honored that poet, ecologist, professor and great American voice, Gary Snyder, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, the Bollingen Poetry Prize and many other awards, joined us in Saratoga Springs and provided us with this text ("with considerable commentary") of his keynote.

1. Starting with Practice and the Actual World

All of us, especially when young, are vexed by the questions, what am I? Which of my styles, dreams, talents, are the important ones, the ones I should trust and follow? What am I doing here? Where the heck am I? As the song says, "What's going on?"

I grew up on a small farm in the Pacific Northwest of North America. The salmon-rich waters of Puget Sound were nearby, and "what was going on" was the steady extraction for lumber from the huge trees of one of the world's all-time greatest forests. The vast temperate rain forest of the maritime Pacific Northwest was an ecological and botanical wonder of enormous proportion. It produced (along with the coastal redwoods somewhat farther south) the largest trees in the world. Into this striking expression of wild natural process came the Euro-Americans who in short order were dismantling the growth of millennia and transforming it into the structures of the rapidly growing West Coast cities. As a child there the question of "who am I" was tied to my membership in an expanding society with little sense past or future. Our rural homestead was close enough in time to that world of old forest that I doubtless soaked up some influence from the swamps, woods and snow-edged mountains. My father's large family were among the hardy workers who

brought in the logs and fish. I appreciated and admired them, but also somehow went into a youthful study of anthropology and biology with an eye to tracking the path of oppression and exploitation – both of people and of nature – through history.

At 17 or so I became a member of the Wilderness Society, an organization which is still doing good work, and about the same time joined the mountaineering group called "Mazamas" based in Oregon. I became not only a mountaineer and a seasonal worker in forestry – including doing some logging – but also a beginning defender of the wild.

The ethos of our 1930s farm was hard work, study and skepticism. Some of our farmer-neighbors were Japanese immigrants. The talk around the dinner table was grassroots socialism, union activism and a guarded support for Roosevelt.

Ten years later, by 1950, I was on the path of religious study and practice that led me to Buddhism. I was attracted to it in part by an appreciation for its animist and shamanist roots. I ended up being what might be called an "early" Zen Buddhist. Respect for all living beings is a distinct part of that tradition. I committed myself to formal study with Buddhist teachers, and later ventured to teach others how to meditate and live lightly in the world.

So we come to the idea of practice: I see it as meaning a deliberate and sustained effort to see and be more finely tuned to the oddities of self and to the way of the actually existing world. "The world" is, with the exception of a tiny bit of human intervention, a self-maintaining process that we might call wild.

I know that there are many thinkers now who are arguing that "Nature has been totally altered by human activity." My friend Bill McKibben titled his first book on climate change *The Death of Nature*. It's true, humanity (or more accurately
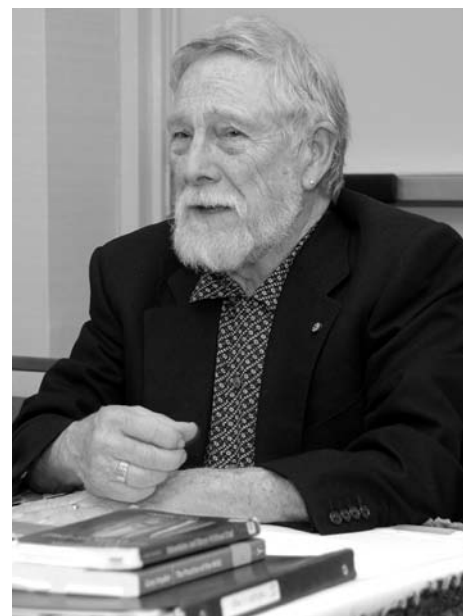
Gary Snyder

the entrenched economic activity of the Developed World) is causing disruptions in ecosystems and world cultures everywhere. I pray that wild nature will adapt and outlast the worst that the developed human world can do. The decline of fossil fuel energy resources may actually help. Wild nature is a long-term project.

"Wild" is a term for the process of the phenomenal world. We participate in that: our bodies are wild with their breath and digestion, their young growth and then aging. Language itself is a wild system, learned and developed socially, but from the beginning wired deep in the human mind. Other creatures have this mapping and organizing system also, but perhaps not always as complex, and in any case not (so far at least) accessible to our study.

Keeping "wild" in mind suggests more than social and environmental virtue, or useful economic ventures. It's good to be working in the actual world. One point is take your place on earth seriously and get to know it – its natural systems, its physical landscape.

Everyone is part of a family – ancient and ongoing biology. There is work to do in a community, including the children, the elders, and the misfits and include the nonhuman neighbor critters in the neighborhood even if you don't invite them to dinner. Do art, song, dance, stories, plays, jokes and chores with your friends.

What makes a "real human being?" – A question that came to indigenous people after they met Euro-Americans. Real people come from somewhere, have a mate or two and have children, have skills, and are willing and able to tell a story.

The word "ghosts" as used by 19th century Chinese laborers in the American West was a term for most of the Americans they worked among because the frontier people seemed ungrounded and disconnected from each other, a horde of individuals each totally self-absorbed and solitary.

Nothing said here is to take away from the occasional elegance, refinement, beauty and the intriguing complexity of that form of social organization we call civilization whether east or west. Especially the sort of civilization that respects quality over quantity and is not simply an excuse for multinational piracy. As the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss remarked years ago, the arts are wilderness areas of the imagination surviving, like national parks, in the midst of civilized minds.

The abandon and delight of love also is an expression of the wild. Thoreau referred to "the awful ferity with which good men and lovers meet." Ferity is an older word meaning "fierceness" – one early use was in describing Scots warriors. Virtue, love and art all share some sources.

Looking across the planet one sees that the issues are not much different anywhere. The whole world was relatively wild and had good forests and marshes and teeming oceans, many flourishing cultures, and much wildlife up until a just a century ago. We were all living in smaller communal subsistence societies for most of hominid history. There are lessons and skills that belong to that long human past that we have not yet appreciated or brought into our present understanding.

The wild process is impartially, relentlessly, and beautifully formal and free. The rainstorms, windstorms and calm spring mornings – the arc of a quick meteor in the dark – are expressions of a world to which we belong.

2. What Poetry and Art are For: An Excursion into Traditional China

Traditional Chinese poetry seems to have found, at its finest, a center within the poles of humanity, spirit and nature. With strategies of apparent simplicity and understatement it moves from a deeply felt sense of time, history and humanity to a broad and tender view of nature. Twentieth century English language translations make this poetry into "plain tone and direct statement," and in this form Chinese poetry has had a strong effect on Occidental poets tired of heroics and theologies. That this actually elaborate and complex poetic tradition should have made such a contribution to Occidental modernism is rather curious. Yet it can be understood as having something to do with the 20th-century thirst for naturalistic clarity. Chinese poetry provided the exhilarating realization that such clarity can be accomplished in the mode of poetry.

The introduction to the fifth c. BC Chinese "classic of poetry," the Shih Ching says, "Poetry is to regulate the married couple, establish the principle of family loyalty, intensify human relationships, elevate culture and improve the public conscience." Which is to suggest, reasonably enough, that poetry in a halfway functioning society has an integrative role. We do recognize that poetry can make one remember one's parents, celebrate friendships and feel tender toward lovers. Poems give soul to history, and help express the gratitude we might sometimes feel for the work and sacrifices of our predecessors. Poetry strengthens the community and honors the life of the spirit. We might even say that poetry guides lovers toward ecstasy, witnesses the wisdom of elders, intensifies human bonds and heightens the life of the spirit.

Chinese poetry in that early era of the Shih Ching had no particular sensibility for landscapes and nature. So what's missing in the "Introduction to the Shih Ching" (supposedly written by Confucius) – this

early appraisal of poetry from the world of the literati – is much thought for nonhuman nature. We know that the arts lend us eyes and ears that are more than human, pointing toward other biologies and other realms. Almost a thousand years after the

We know that the arts lend us eyes and ears that are more than human, pointing toward other biologies and other realms.

Shih Ching era wild nature and mountain landscapes began to enter the poetry of China. Contemporary Occidental poetry has been influenced by that aspect too.

But now early into the 21st century most societies are fractured, anxious, urbanized and alienated. What does poetry do then? For at least a century and half, the engaged writers of the developed world have taken their role to be one of resistance and subversion. Poetry can disclose the misuse of language by holders of power, it can attack dangerous archetypes employed to oppress, and it can expose the flimsiness of shabby made-up mythologies. It can savagely ridicule pomp and pretension, and it can offer – in ways both obvious and subtle – more elegant, tastier, lovelier, deeper, more ecstatic, and far more intelligent words and images.

Poetry also serves as a mode of speaking for our dreams, and the deep archetypes. Poetry will not only integrate and stabilize, it will break open ways to exit the accustomed habits of perception and allow one to slip into different possibilities – some wise, some perhaps bizarre, but all of them equally real, and some holding a promise of further angles of insight. The Chinese, with their Confucian focus on the family and the community, and the Chinese Buddhists with their return-to-the-world-to-help Vows, would argue that one will bring back and share whatever one has found. Some poems are, in this way, truly a voice from outside.

This mix of elegant pragmatism and almost shamanistic vision is what seems to have marked the poetry of the people who lived in the basins of the Chiang and Ho (the Yangtze and the Yellow Rivers) over the last two millennia. It has done the world much good, and will continue to teach and inspire.

3. Considering the Three Lineages

Mythopoetically and playfully speaking, there are three human lineages. One is the "Children of Abraham" – a population in which all members believe a very convincing story which traces their existence back to the somewhat quirky Biblical patriarch Abraham. These people are known in the world today as Jews, Muslims or Christians.

The next group is the "Descendants of the Primates." These people in a way are "Children of the Enlightenment" and have been good students in school. They are commonly found in universities, coffee shops, the upper levels of corporations, Hollywood and the Democratic Party. They are not necessarily comfortable with their relationship to primates – monkeys really do seem foolish sometimes – but they have no choice but to accept this view, since it is seen as the only reasonable and scientific description as to who they are. Some are rich and powerful but others seem to live wasted lives. They are known to write books.

The third group is the "Sons and Daughters of the Bear Mother." This lineage dates back to the very far past, and the story of the woman who married a bear. (This is not a very convincing story, but then these people all know that it is a story, and they find it charming and useful.) The Bear Mother had children who were half human, and they in turn are the ancestors of the whole lineage. The Sons and Daughters of the Bear Mother are the most ancient and widespread of all lineages. All of North and South America, all of ancient Eurasia, Oceania and much of contemporary Africa. These are – some might say – the Pagans. These folks never had any problems accepting their kinship with animals – unlike the descendants of primates. The highly civilized current members of this line includes many Hindus, old fashioned Confucianists, Daoists, traditional Buddhists and Koreans who don't even know it (Korean national mythology actually says they are descended from bears), a few Turtle Islanders, and a lot of contemporary Japanese.

4. The Problem of Ignorant Design

The problem with "intelligent designers" of the Occidental variety is that both proponents and opponents are rarely able to imagine a "designer" in other than fairly conventional terms of a God or a First Cause. So scientific proponents of Darwinism will say that "intelligent design theory" is a cover for trying to locate God at the beginning of the evolutionary process. This shows their inability to think of mind/intelligence in the universe in terms other than basically monotheistic centralized father-like organizing figures, Founder and CEO of the universe. It's true that those who argue in favor of Intelligent Design have their idea of "God" in mind, but in fact they have a big bear by his little stubby tail. There is subtlety in this question. We need to remember that there is a world of animistic intelligence which is entirely other to the monotheistic view.

In contemporary argument, the intelligent design proposal is set against the idea of random mutation and reproductive survival of the most fit. This is called neo-Darwinism by some. Several variations can be suggested:

1. Random chance could indeed be the designer's tricky intelligent notion of how to make things happen.

2. To a more sophisticated eye, from a greater distance none of this is quite random.

3. An alternative to centralized intelligent design would be the common old view that nature as a whole is self-creating and self-correcting, though we can only infer what its direction might be.

"For nature humanity is just straw dogs" – says the fifth century BC Dao De Jing. This hard-nosed Chinese view (we can infer) seems to hold that in the greater natural process even humanity will take its knocks – as it does – without particular favor. In that sense nature is impersonal, and "inhumane." The Buddhists would add that the process involves better and worse karma and there is some justice in the long term as to how cause and effect plays out. Cruel or stingy is not going to work out as well as kind and generous in the very long view.

The early Buddhists taught with a key verse,

> In this world
> hate never yet dispelled hate.
> only loving-kindness dispels hate.
> this is the Dharma,
> ancient and inexhaustible.

(From the *Dhammapada,* one of the earliest Buddhist texts, purportedly the actual teachings of the historical Buddha, Shakyamuni.)

But: the possibility of a self-creating universe is an idea not available yet to most Occidental thinkers.

> *Cruel or stingy is not going to work out as well as kind and generous in the very long view.*

And now the strict old style Buddhist view: Nature, evolution and ecology are all difficult, unsatisfactory and painful – carried along by ignorance and hunger. The driving force in evolutionary biology would not be intelligent design on the one side or random chance on the other – but the inherent blind drive of organisms to keep themselves alive, keep on being metabolic beings in the "realm of desire" kama-dhatu, world of hungers and hopes. Is this not what organic biology is driven by – they would say – and their Hindu compadres would say, "I want off this endless meat wheel!"

Not exactly accident or random, it has a sort of drive – an ignorant or possibly deluded drive, but with the seeds of possible practice and enlightenment in it. In the very elevated radical nondualist version of Mahayana Buddhist thought, there is no distinction between the enlightened and the deluded worlds. "Stupid Design" ah, what bliss.

5. Grace

There is a Buddhist verse called the "Four Great Vows." The first line goes "Sentient beings are numberless, I vow to enlighten

them." It's a bit daunting to announce this intention – aloud – to the universe daily. This vow stalked me for several years and finally pounced: I realized that I had vowed to let the sentient beings save me. In a similar way, the precept against taking life, against causing harm, doesn't stop in the negative. It is urging us to give life, to undo harm.

The men, women, gods or critters who attain some genuine understanding of these things are called "Buddhas" which means "awakened ones." The word is connected to the English verb "to bud." I once wrote a little parable:

"Who the Buddhas Are"

All the beings of the universe are already realized. That is, with the exception of one or two beings. In those rare cases the cities, villages, meadows and forests, with all their birds, flowers, animals, rivers, trees and humans that surround such a person, all collaborate to educate, serve, challenge and instruct such a one, until that person also becomes a New Beginner Enlightened Being. Recently realized beings are enthusiastic to teach and train and start schools and practices. Being able to do this develops their confidence and insight up to the point that they are fully ready to join the seamless world of interdependent play. Such new Enlightened Beginners are called "Buddhas" and they like to say things like "I am enlightened together with the whole universe" and so forth.

Good luck! One might say. The test of the pudding is in the eating. It narrows down to a look at the conduct that is entwined with food. At mealtime (seated on the floor, in lines) the East Asian Zen monks chant

Gruel is effective in 10 ways
To aid the Practicer
No limit to the good results
Accomplishing constant delight.

and

Oh, all you demons and spirits
We now offer this food to you
May all of you everywhere
Share it with us together

and

We wash our bowls in this water
It has the flavor of ambrosial dew.
We offer it to all demons and spirits;
May all be filled and satisfied.
Om makula sai svaha

And several other verses. These superstitious-sounding old ritual formulas are never mentioned in lectures, but they are at the heart of the teaching. Their import is older than Buddhism or any of the world religions, they are a part of the first and last practice of the wild: Grace.

Everyone who ever lived took the lives of other animals, pulled plants, plucked fruit and ate. Primary people have had their own ways of trying to understand the precept of nonharming. They knew that taking life required gratitude and care. There is no death that is not somebody's food, no life that is not somebody's death. Some would take this as a sign that the universe is fundamentally flawed. This leads to a disgust with self, with humanity and with nature. Otherworldly philosophies end up doing more damage to the planet (and human psyches) than the pain and suffering that is in the existential conditions they seek to transcend.

The archaic religion is to kill God and eat him. Or her. The shimmering foodchain, the food-web, is the scary, beautiful condition of the biosphere. Subsistence people live without excuses. The blood is on your own hands, as you divide the liver from the gallbladder. You have watched the color fade on the glimmer of the trout. A subsistence economy is a sacramental economy because it has faced up to one of the critical problems of life and death: the taking of life, and food. Contemporary people do not need to hunt, many cannot even afford meat, and in the developed world the variety of foods available to us makes the avoidance of meat an easy choice. Forests in the tropics are cut to make pasture to raise beef for the American market. Our distance from the source of our food enables us to be superficially more comfortable, and distinctly more ignorant.

Eating is a sacrament. The grace we say clears our hearts and guides the children and welcomes the guest, all at the same time. We look at eggs, apples and stew. They are evidence of plenitude, excess, a great

reproductive exuberance. Millions of grains of grass-seed to become rice or flour, millions of codfish fry that will never, and must never, grow to maturity. Innumerable little seeds are sacrifices to the food chain. A parsnip in the ground is a marvel of living chemistry, making sugars and flavors from earth, air, water. And if we do eat meat it is the life, the bounce, the swish, of a great alert being with keen ears and lovely eyes, with foursquare feet and a huge beating heart that we eat, let us not deceive ourselves.

We too will be offerings – we are all edible, and if we are not devoured quickly, we are big enough (like the old down trees) to provide a long slow meal to the smaller critters. Whale carcasses that sink several miles deep in the ocean feed organisms in the dark for 15 years. (It seems to take about 2,000 years to exhaust the nutrients in a high civilization.)

At our house we say a sort of Buddhist grace –

We venerate the Three Treasures
[the teacher, the teaching and friends]
And are thankful for this meal
The work of many people
And the sharing and suffering of other forms of life.

Anyone can use a grace from their own tradition (and really give it meaning) – or make up their own. Saying some sort of grace is never inappropriate, and speeches and announcements can be tacked onto it. It is a plain, ordinary, old-fashioned little thing to do that connects us with all our ancestors. It's a good practice.

A monk asked Dong-shan "Is there a practice for people to follow?" Dong-shan answered: "When you become a real person, there is such a practice."

Eating is a sacrament. The grace we say clears our hearts and guides the children and welcomes the guest, all at the same time.

We, the People

by Raúl Manzano, **Metropolitan Center**

The paintings included here are part of my response to an ongoing series of issues I personally find challenging. As an immigrant from Colombia, South America, I have seen stark social inequalities between rich and poor and politically divided societies here and elsewhere. While each of these works is a personal expression, I believe that at the same time each embraces a universal truth.

R. Manzano
2003

Blind Justice

Heartland

West

South

We, the People

East

North

Mainland

B y sharing experiences Ê that I have had, I want to Ê create art that provokes Ê and encourages the value of art Ê for social change, which brings Ê awareness of people's rights, of Ê self-empowerment, and of the Ê importance of education. Ê

I use patriotic symbols such as the Statue of Liberty and the American flag for what they represent to many people: freedom and democracy. I aspire to engage the audience to reflect on the ideas behind the paintings and to explore the notion of art as a form of communication. I want them to look beyond the aesthetic value of art and to reflect upon the implied or yet-to-be interpreted message. More importantly, I would like the viewer to question who they are, where they come from, and how they position themselves in relationship to this country regardless of their political or religious beliefs, their class, race, ethnicity or their gender.

I invite you to visit my Web site www.raul-manzano.com to view the complete series, and welcome your comments.

Field of Dreams

Communities of Interest: Creating Distanced Communities of Learning

David Starr-Glass, Center for International Programs

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone. "But which is the stone that supports the bridge?" Kublai Khan asks. "The bridge is not supported by one stone or another," Marco answers, "but by the line of the arch that they form." Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds: "Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me." Polo answers: "Without stones there is no arch."

Calvino (1997, p. 82)

Learning inevitably takes place within a social context. In this essay, I will briefly consider the reasons why a social dimension adds value to work with distanced students, whether we engage with them as distanced mentors or as online facilitators. I also will consider approaches, which in my own practice have been useful in initiating and sustaining a sense of community. While this consideration is clearly grounded in a theoretical matrix it also has evolved from, and has been patterned by, my work with students and collegiate interaction with a few fellow mentors trying to turn potentially isolated and isolating learning experiences into communities of interest [1].

The Social Context of Learning

Sometimes, social context is seen as an essential and uniquely privileged factor in the production of knowledge. In what have now come to be thought of as classic social learning theory (exemplified by the different but complimentary work of Albert Bandura, Jean Lave and Lev Vygotsky), social contexts are identified as the primary forces in making our learning experiences salient, in shaping the way in which learning occurs, and in reinforcing our subsequent changed behavior. While such theories isolate and privilege social components, it is clear that there are many other factors that define and sustain learning environments. Certainly, contemporary social theories of learning are more inclusive and sensitive to the nonsocial factors that shape and moderate learning (Hughes, 2004).

While not wanting to overstate the case for the social component of learning, it can certainly be argued that a social dimension is a very powerful and persistent aspect of learning for all students (Conrad, 2002). Many see this social dimension as being particularly appropriate, powerful and salient for students who are tentatively set on a trajectory that will bring them into a profession, innovative organizational setting or similar community of practice. Communities of practice generally have a strong culture that requires novices to be socialized: the awareness of this culture and the ability to respond to it are critical for the successful entrée of the novice. However, even where socialization into a profession, or work group, is not relevant, it is generally considered that the development of a social dimension of learning refines and reinforces modes of communication, stimulates the development of social networks with associated increases in social capital, and makes positive contributions to the formation of human capital.

Distanced Learners, Distanced Mentors

Whatever the advantages of learning within a social context, whatever the benefits of early socialization for later anticipated careers and professions, it seems intuitive that all distanced learning experiences have a paucity – if not a complete absence – of authentic social contact. When students learn distanced in space and in time there is no evident social structure or mutual inclusion, nor is there any particular reason that a student should consider engaging socially within the learning environment. Often, students decide to participate in distanced learning programs after considering a constellation of factors that include competing nonacademic activities, limited time availability for educational work, and the desire for flexibility in scheduling individual patterns of educational and social engagement. In such circumstances, distanced students may see community inclusion as neither relevant nor particularly desirable; indeed they may wish to stress individual learning pathways and resent, or resist, attempts to create a joint participative learning environment.

If considered advantageous, social presence, proto-social engagement, or at least a nascent sense of community can be structured and managed in asynchronous online course. Such social engagement does not automatically come into existence in distanced learning environments and if required – or considered significant – the course facilitator must actively set about creating an environment where social connectedness is fostered and encouraged. To create a social dimension, or to produce a community, among a collection of online learners is relatively easy; the challenge increases considerably when the distanced learners do not constitute a natural collection of participants but rather a scattered and not obviously aligned network of individual mentoring relationships.

As a mentor engaged in distanced learning programs, I recognize the value of a social dimension in learning and strive to create and to sustain a sense of community, social cohesiveness and social capital in distanced work with students. When mentors and mentees are distanced, the model that presents itself is not that of a collective of individual mutually acknowledged elements that can be shaped into a single group but rather of an assembly of strong – yet neither visible nor apparent – mentor-mentee dyads, where a common mentor may become the common node that willfully connects mentees into an extended social network. Mentors wishing to develop or stimulate a larger social network, which can perhaps develop into a community of

common interest, must cultivate the one-to-one dynamics of individual mentoring relationships while at the same time see the possibility of those unique mentor relationships serving as a links – or perhaps as channels – for the flow of mutually created knowledge, a sense of relatedness and a perception of community inclusivity.

For mentoring to move from a dyad of engagement to community creation – just as for isolated online participants to perceive a social group – the mentor, or course facilitator, must be pro-active and manage learning encounters in ways that allow for these desired outcomes to materialize and be sustained. The facilitator, or mentor, must work to realize the potential for community connectedness and try to reduce factors that obscure it. Perhaps the greatest impediment to developing a sense community is simply that it does not seem to be an intuitive option, or outcome, in distanced learning contexts. The numerous tensions – some might say paradoxes and difficulties – of allowing distanced learning to experience social presence has been identified and explored in the past: distanced mentoring (Starr-Glass, 2004); the dynamics and process of distanced educational engagement (Starr-Glass, 2005); social capital and networks (Starr-Glass, 2006b); and the creation of social presence online (2006c).

Here, I want to look specifically at the ways in which I understand community as a component of learning environments and how I work towards promoting and enhancing community in my work. My present approach developed in response to a specific situational model of distanced mentoring that is employed in the Prague Unit of Empire State College's Center for International Programs.

Should Educators be Interested in Learning Communities?

Learning is always embedded in a social matrix that defines, elaborates and reinforces it. Social learning theory has made a significant contribution to understanding of the form and intensity of the social embeddedness of learning; however, there also are generalized reasons that suggest the significance of a social context for learning. Also, learning and social contexts are not separate but part of an interconnected

and dynamic interaction. To make social connectivity salient in the educational process enhances that dynamic and that interactivity. Before detailing the general approaches to community building, perhaps I should provide a brief description of the tasks and environments in which I engage students.

In the Prague Unit, senior students must complete a focused work that explores a theme: in our case that theme is in business or economics. The work constitutes a capstone experience, bridging prior academic learning and understanding with real world issues and situations. Alternatively, students engage in a supervised internship where again they are expected to explore and relate to the kinds of demands and transitions commonly expected in capstone business experiences in American colleges (Starr-Glass, 2006a).

The capstone module, which presently characterizes and is unique to the Prague Unit, has considerable educational advantage. It also is a framework, which by focusing students to engage on a mutually recognized task, serves as an ideal way of structuring a shared social sense and a communal inclusion that has benefit not only for the students involved but for the institution as a whole.

The capstone experience (dissertation or internship) is usually completed in the student's final semester. In the preceding semester, the student engages in a process of defining, articulating and planning the capstone experience. Both the planning phase (the proposal) and the final product (dissertation/ internship) are guided by an individual mentor who works with the student at a distance via an online platform (presently ANGEL), e-mail, etc. Mentor and student meet several times a year when the faculty team visits Prague. Thus, the mentoring relationship that is crafted and sustained with students essentially takes place at a distance.

Our business and economics students, coming predominantly from Central and Eastern European countries, will most likely enter the workforce after graduation generally filling junior management positions within private organizations or entering the burgeoning professional business services

sector as trainees. Many of our students also go on to earn master's degrees in business, or communication, or an allied subject area at prestigious universities in both America and Europe, including the London School of Economics and Cambridge.

Given such a task environment and student profile, the following reasons are identified for the development of a social engagement for our students, their current and continuing educational process and their careers are:

Enriched learning environments.
Social context within the learning process provides the learner with an enriched environment in which explorations of newly gained knowledge, experimentation with communication issues, coping with persistent aspects of personal doubt and subject matter ambiguity, elaboration of theoretical and personal narratives and the inclusion in broader discourse are encouraged. While we see this social space as relevant in all educational engagement it appears to be particularly critical when working with international students who are confronted with many complex cross-cultural and communication challenges and who are learning within an American college albeit one dedicated to inclusiveness and with a growing, although arguable imperfect, sensitive to intercultural issues and international education.

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Reduction of isolation effects.
A perceived social context mitigates against the sense of isolation and detachment that is often experienced by distanced and isolated learners. Generally, students elect to pursue a program of flexible learning because of perceived advantages, some of which might even include separation from the "crowd." The isolation of independent learning is, however, often counter productive and can compound and reinforce inherent problems associated with their initial reaction to be excluded from the learning collective. Perceived communal inclusion and a sense of authentic social presence may provide students with mutual support and increase self-esteem; serve to re-evaluate educational goals; stimulate in-group comparisons; reduce stress and anxiety; and, increase levels of motivation. All of these can potentially enhance individual student performance and allow for better-informed social comparisons and interaction. At the macro level, reduced isolation and a developing communal sense is most likely a significant factor in decreasing course attrition and in increasing overall student retention rate throughout their degree program.

Legitimate peripheral participation.
Social context provide bridges between current study and the anticipated future, especially where that future is considered to be organizational membership or professional or vocational engagement (Wenger, 1998a, 1998b). This bridging aspect, together with social and communication skills developed in community interaction, is seen as particularly significant with our Prague business and economics students, most of whom express a desire to remain and seek employment in Central and Eastern Europe. Integration into the workforce and anticipated contribution to the student's country of origin is an implicit and critical issue in the design and realization of the authentic capstone experience for soon-to-graduate and soon-to-enter-the-workforce students that we provide (Starr-Glass, 2006a).

Social and human capital.
Social context provides the matrix for the creation of social and human capital. Social capital has proved both a popular and illusive concept but essentially it recognizes a positive value to mutual trust, norms of reciprocity and shared goodwill that seems to come into being within social networks (Starr-Glass, 2006b). We see this positive value recognized and assigned by students and alumni in terms of networking, mutual associate and patterns of exchange within their social and professional networks. By tangentially introducing the concept of social and human capital in the learning systems within which our undergraduates learn, we anticipate that they will be better able to facilitate, enhance and perhaps develop more extensive social capital networks in their futures.

Elements of Learning Communities and Communities of Practice

Although there is a pleasant ring to "communities of learning," in our mentoring and instruction we have been more interested in the actuality, albeit tenuous, of creating and sustaining community and not in mere rhetoric. But to what extent can community be engendered in any educational course or interaction? What are the elements that define a community and how can these elements be tentatively identified or actively promoted within an assembly of individual actors?

While there are genuine concerns as to the nature, degree of authenticity, intensity and longevity of communities developed in learning context such as formal academic courses, there is agreement that at least a proto-community dynamic – often termed a "bounded community" – can indeed be developed when a group of isolated learners is connected via technology to engage mutually and collaboratively on what are perceived to be joint learning-centered activities. Bounded communities – in the sense of "bounded by the expectations inducing participation, but also by the timeframe of a typical course" (Wilson, Ludwig-Hardman, Thornam and Dunlap, 2004) – may occasionally develop spontaneously within educational settings: however, more usually they require a degree of purposeful intervention and artful management by the instructor to come into being and to endure.

Much of the understanding of such communities in educational contexts has come not from academic communities per se but from individuals entering, learning and being socialized into informal social groupings, professions, vocations, etc. Considerable work has been reported on these communities of practice (Wenger, 1998a, 1998b). From this literature three interactive dimensions are suggested that constitute the centrality of a perceived community:

Joint enterprise.
Participants recognize that there is a compelling purpose and commonality in the tasks in which they are engaged. They perceive interlocking roles and scripts for their actions. There is an element of mutual recognition and accountability. Participants may, as it were, be working on specific pieces but they appreciate that, to some degree at least, there is an overarching pattern into which these pieces fit.

Shared repertoire.
Participants see a common, or shared, access to resources and ways of completing tasks. In a dramaturgical sense there is open access to roles, scripts, stories, acts, performances and measures of critical appreciation. There are shared expectations as to tools, procedures and anticipated results. Participants have, in that sense, a commonly understood and articulated language that allows them to communicate, communicate and appreciate the presence and contribution of the other.

Mutual engagement.
There is perception of mutuality not simply in performing roles and producing outcomes but in relating to other participants, in establishing and relying on trust, in maintaining mutual confidence, in the recognition and maintenance of social cohesiveness and belonging. Participants recognize that there is something that binds them, however temporarily and however tenuously, apart from the centrality of the designated task.

Construction and Maintenance of Distanced Communities

In order for latent communities to flourish, and for community identity to be reinforced or made salient among members, three elements are commonly acknowledged: joint enterprise, shared repertoires and mutual

engagement (Wenger, 1998a). How do I, in my distanced mentoring relationships, try to create community?

As a mentor dedicated to the success of students, involved personally and compassionate with them as unique and authentic persons, concerned about their academic and professional excellence, cognizant of the contributions that they will make to their transitional societies and economies, and aware of the values and potentials of community in learning, I am faced with a challenge in creating and sustaining a valid and useful social component in mentoring activities. My approach has been informed by work on online bounded communities in which aspects such as the joint enterprise, shared repertoire and mutual engagement is recognized, created and managed (Wilson, Ludwig-Hardman and Dunlap, 2004). In creating and sustaining a sense of community in my mentoring relationships, I use the seven components that they identify in their work. For each of these basic components, I have indicated specific approaches found to be useful or effective.

Articulation of shared goals.
While engaging with students individually, I communicate goals shared by all other senior students including our other mentees. I refer to prior and current mentees, the tradition of the capstone experience, recommend archived work of previous students, discuss possible involvement in the State Exam (a voluntary and external examination whereby the student can obtain an accredited Czech baccalaureate degree), and share the stories, legends and mythology of capstone participants. Present participants are asked to consider themselves as part of an ongoing connected effort to explore, reveal and demonstrate excellence.

Creation of safe, supportive and respectful learning environment.
Such an environment is critical in exploring community inclusion; it also is a basic requirement in a mentoring relationship. I expand the individual student interest into the broader community of practice, recommending interviewing business managers and making introductions to management consultants and specialists who are often former students or contacts cultivated professionally. I actively foster

connections with mentees and create a respectful place in that relationship where intellectual experimentation, exploration of ideas, re-evaluation of values, and doubt and uncertainty can be engaged, respected and valued.

Stressing commonality of interests and identity.
I stress my involvement in learning as a faculty member, my own ongoing research interests and the difficulty of writing dissertations in English (not the student's first language). I self-identify as someone who has practiced management and who has studied organizations and business subjects. I identify with previous students, representing myself as – in a very real sense – a bridge between a present defined mentoring relationship and a broader community of interest and involvement. I also acknowledge my own linguistic challenges and learning as a commonality, referring to my efforts to learn Czech and Croatian languages and cultures. Incidentally, acquiring in-country language skills is such a basic demonstration of recognizing and respecting cultural difference among our students that it should be considered much more seriously among all of those engaged in international education.

Active engagement in collaborative process with student.
Mentors share a sustained, ongoing and ever-deepening communication reinforced by personal site visits to Prague, joint tutorial meetings that often include social dimensions such as individual lunches or group meetings in the evening. I invest energy and enthusiasm in the mentee's work recommending approaches, perspectives and strategies for its development and improved depth and quality. I emphasize the shared dynamic of the work and the communal product that results.

Respectful inclusion of possible extended community members.
I follow community of practice models by asking students to contact and to work with the local business community as internships, interviewing managers or other selected appropriate organizational participants, gathering information or survey data, etc. I see community as local, living and relevant to my mentees and to

their transition from being students to becoming members of these communities of practice. Most of my students will remain in Central Europe: the majority in fields such as management and marketing, or in consulting practice. I encourage students to explore diversity and incorporate their findings into a more inclusive appreciation of community. I also encourage networking between current students and alumni and allude to the creation and value of social capital within our informal networks of learning. Incidentally, social capital benefits are not limited to student networks; we, as mentors, try to include the college into a broader, more inclusive, network of social connections with local (Czech) business, higher education organizations and faculty members of our collegiate partner in Prague.

Progressive discourse towards a shared and inclusive building of knowledge.
Knowledge is deliberately represented as an active construction not a passive accumulation. In its construction, knowledge is enriched by multiple inputs, challenges and affirmation. I encourage not simply aseptic literature reviews but also the expansion of knowledge through the works, often fuzzy and imperfect, of prior students: the dissertations of our student body are maintained and available as a resource. Wherever possible, and if academically sound, I encourage research questions that deal with local expressions of business or activity. I try to realign the exploration of these research questions in ways that give expression and value to historical, transformational and evolutionary forces and that relying on the contribution of prior students.

Mutual appropriation.
Learning is not a direction flow from mentor to mentee: all learning engagements produce the mutual refinement of, and addition to, knowing about the subject, self and others. Ideas and learning can be shared and appropriated by others and it is the mentor who can exemplify openness and interest in the process of discovery. I encourage exchange between students and other knowledgeable people in the business and professional community. I also encourage students to explore relevant issues in which we also have a professional or academic interest. Superlative work

products are encouraged. There is an acknowledgement of other contemporary student efforts and of former students ideas and approaches. I consider rewriting and refocusing exemplary works for publication in peer-reviewed journals.

Again, it should perhaps be stressed that operationally, communities of mutual interest can only arise through the intervention and willingness of mentors to act as nodes in an extending network of connections. It is my perception, although

> *… communities of mutual interest can only arise through the intervention and willingness of mentors to act as nodes in an extending network of connections.*

not at this point one that has been formally researched, that communities created in this manner extend spatially and endure temporally. Students and mentees are embedded in a college setting with ongoing classes and interaction. The student body is international in profile and there is a degree of both national cliquishness and forces acting to integrate individuals into a larger academic community. I see mentoring efforts at community building as paralleling these external processes and having a special and more focused objective, looking towards the ability to create and sustain community connections with both business and professional peers and a broader professional and career community.

My experiences in community building are personally pleasant and professionally rewarding. One of the informal indices by which I measure success is the enduring personal connection built up with former students. I have a rich and active personal association with former mentees who often merge into a more extended community of interest and involvement. I frequently utilize this existing community base to

influence and support new students; indeed I see community as essentially an ongoing, ever-expanding connection in which I have a central and orchestrating position and which is always able to incorporate new graduates. Additionally, while community building is essentially theoretically driven and educationally centered, I appreciate that such communities have other facets and commonalities and see them as providing a rich basis for the Center for International Programs so far as marketing brand identification, public relations and alumni fund raising.

Communities of Learning Online

From this brief article, it should be obvious that community building within online settings is inherently easier than our mentor-based model. Online settings allow for the inclusion of many more individuals and for the careful and constant shaping of the collection of individuals into a cohesive group. The role of the facilitator is not to create and propagate individual "nodes" in the network, but rather to allow the asynchronous participants to sense the possibility of communal action, to reward such action, and to support and encourage the growth of the online community throughout the course.

While much of the shared experiences in this essay relate to my work as a distanced mentor at Empire State College, I also have considerable experience with online course delivery (University of Maryland University College – Europe). Many online students erroneously associate notions of community or mutual engagement with collective, or collaborative, projects, which are reflexively seen as appropriate by facilitators but which are often disliked, or resented, by students. Collective, or collaborative, projects can often lead to inappropriate and unfair distribution of student resources and inputs and also suffer from free-rider problems that are recognized and resented by other participants. Many students also find that working by themselves, rather than investing in community, is more direct and intuitive particularly where the quality of group members and work product output is unpredictable.

There is no simple process that will automatically turn 30 online participants

into a bounded community. If a community aspect is desired within distanced learning settings it must be initiated and sustained by the facilitator. Directed communication, a designated cultural bias toward community values, and the reinforcing and rewarding of proto-community behavior are all essential in moving from the collection of individuals to a collective. The points presented are obviously applicable, in modified and relevant forms, to the process of online community creation.

What Has Been Learned. What Remains to be Learned

When the distanced student is initiated into a community of learners, having similar goals and similar experiences, their learning environment is enriched with new opportunities, more complex communication dynamics and augmented cultural vistas. Distanced students are able to understand themselves not as uniquely isolated but as part of a supportive, motivating network. Business students – who are often looking at continuing with graduate studies, professional employment or business consultancy – are allowed to form an initial glimpse of their future study or work communities and are more critically aware of how it operates.

Additionally, a social dimension in course work allows for the creation, albeit limited and tentative, of a rich and probably enduring social network that provides mutual benefit and advantage for its members. But perhaps as important as anything for us, as mentors, is that community building in which we allow ourselves to be the nodes in growing networks adds greatly to the interest and engagement – personally and collectively – in the creation of learning environments for our students.

Here, I have reflected briefly on my experiences and understandings of building communities of interest among our distanced learners: this is an attempt to reflect on the values, process and outcomes; it is intended to be an exercise in dogmatic visions or prescriptive solutions. To me, it seems clear that such efforts have a positive value for all who are involved; however, there are a number of aspects and issues that we consider worthy of further exploration.

- To what extent are communities actually created in distanced mentoring situations?

- How can we devise an instrument that will identify and quantify the degree of community that is created?

- What are the immediate and long-term benefits of community among our students?

- To what extent do communities created in our mentoring relationships manifest in enduring social capital in the long run?

- What are the quantifiable benefits of community – or at least mentor-initiated quasi-community – engagement for mentees/participants, for the ambient communities within which our teaching is embedded, and for the college itself?

Presently, these and many other questions remain unanswered; however growing experience with the bounded community aspect of mentoring suggests that there is indeed lasting value for all participants. The critical issue for us, however, is that mentors – or facilitators of online courses – are presented with powerful opportunities to examine and to change the architecture and process of educational engagement. While a paradigmatic approach to mentoring might emphasize the centrality of the personal bond between mentor and mentee, and while I in no way wish to detract from such a bonding, there are nevertheless other possibilities that can augment and perhaps overarch the dualism of the relationship.

My experience is that mentoring can be enhanced and enriched by the introduction of a broader sense of community belonging that transcends the imputed privacy of classical mentoring dynamics. Within such communities students are connected and brought together, even although only to a limited extent and even although in ways that differ from the experiences and dynamics of face-to-face communities.

Such a connectedness enriches the learning environment and the learning experiences for students; however, it also enriches the life and the role of the mentor. Mentoring clearly reveals to participants that it is a process and not a product: a mutually engaging dynamic in which both participants are changed, enriched and made more aware. Similarly, although a different process may be at work within bounded communities, mutual engagement and respectful interaction changes and enriches those who are connected even for a while, even if only in a somewhat tenuous community of shared interest and belonging.

End Note

[1] I would like to thank my friend and colleague Tanweer Ali, mentor at the Prague Unit, for his thoughts and shared experience. His considered comments, insightful questions and helpful suggestions have all added considerably to the various drafts and evolution of this paper. Tanweer is a skilled and resourceful international mentor par excellence and his delightful companionship always contributes greatly to my enjoyment of the golden and liminal city of Prague. It is my pleasure to dedicate this article to him.

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Not in the System

Miriam Russell, Center for Distance Learning

It was Nov. 18, 1998. I was still adjusting to being a widow, but now, armed with my new doctorate in education, I was ready for a change. Back in New York state, closer to my family, I was looking for a good match for my experience and recent training. But the choices for someone with a doctorate in education were quite limited: a school administrator or a college instructor. I learned that I'd need the equivalent of another master's to be a school administrator in New York state, which I didn't want to be anyway, so I reverted to applying for positions where there was the most need.

A New York Times ad urged teachers to apply in New York City public schools and earn a good salary. It seemed like a possibility since I held permanent New York state certifications in English/speech and Language. I applied and was interviewed by Harriet in the special education department. She explained that there was an opening for a speech therapist in an elementary school in the Bronx because one of the therapists was leaving.

The position was in the middle of one of the most impoverished areas of the city. I wanted to visit before making a decision, so I asked to spend a day with the speech therapist whose position I would take. A visit was arranged for the next day.

When I arrived by subway and bus around 9:30 a.m., school was already in session. The five-story, prewar brick building had a tiny playground nearby. The front door opened on a landing with steel stairways; a uniformed guard directed me to the office on the second floor. The principal's door was closed and he wasn't in sight.

I approached a secretary at one of the desks.

"Your name?"

"Miriam Russell."

"I don't have your name here."

"I'm from the District Special Education Office to meet with the speech therapist who's leaving. But first I need to speak to the building special education supervisor."

Overhearing, the payroll supervisor at another desk called me to her.

"Do you have a license?"

"I've applied for a New York City license. I have New York state certification. Here are some papers signed by the district speech supervisor."

"Do you have a file number?"

"Yes, it's on this paper," I said, producing the papers. "When I was at Court Street yesterday, they agreed to expedite the fingerprinting I did two weeks ago."

She called the Board of Education and gave them my number then put the phone down.

"You're not in the system."

"I'm just shadowing the person presently in the position today – to see the children and the school."

"You can't do that. You're not in the system yet. You don't have a license. When were you going to start?"

"On the 30th."

"Well you can't start until you're in the system and have a New York City license."

"I don't want to work today, just observe."

"You can't do that. The district people don't understand. We can't let anyone in who isn't in the system and you're not in the system."

"Try calling Harriet, the district supervisor."

She repeated her admonitions to Harriet: "The regulations don't allow anyone to be hired without a New York City license!"

"Could I speak to Harriet?" She handed the phone to me.

Harriet explained, "They don't understand that we are trying to fill the position because the speech therapist is leaving. Ask them to page the special education supervisor. She'll take you to meet the therapist."

It was almost 10:30 a.m. when the special ed supervisor appeared. I introduced myself and explained my mission.

"Cheryl isn't here today, but I'll introduce you to Candy, who is the other speech therapist," she said matter-of-factly.

I followed her up to the third floor, watching her sneakered shoes ascend the grimy, steep stairs. "Boy, you'd develop steel thighs traveling up and down these stairs every day," I thought.

"This is the special education floor." Immediately we encountered a boy running in the hall yelling. She tried to grab him, but he pulled away, smashing into the glass door of a display case and shattering it over the floor.

"Get in there!" she yelled as she pushed him into a room. "Get in my office and sit down!"

The boy ran around in the office. "Sit down and be quiet!" He continued running around, yelling back at her until she got him out into another room. Children ran in and out. She yelled at each one of them about something; apparently the special education building supervisor's job involved discipline by vocal volume. It didn't look very effective. Was this a typical day in her office?

Finally, she led me to Candy's office, down a narrow hall and up a short flight of stairs. Candy was just about to leave for a baby shower for one of the staff members.

"OK, let's have lunch." I suggested since it was nearly noon.

"Oh no, I have to meet with the party committee."

"OK, when will you be back?"

"Around one."

"I'll meet you here at one o'clock. Meanwhile could you show me the office I would be using?"

Up another short set of stairs, Candy unlocked the door at the top. It must have been a storage room since there was barely space for a teacher's desk and one student desk, but little else. The single dirty window was boarded up from the outside.

"Could I see some student files?"

"I don't know where they are. I have to go now."

We returned to the supervisor's office. I was hoping to talk to her, but she suggested I talk with the teacher next door. After telling her students to sit down and be quiet, this teacher told me about the difficulties of teaching at the school. She confessed she really didn't like the job.

"Well, I generally like children and I enjoy seeing them progress," I offered. This teacher kept reminding her students to sit down and wait for lunch. There was no effort to employ a "waiting" game that can be so instructive for elementary school children.

So far, this school seemed to be all about the teachers. There were baby showers to plan, and it was okay to take time to complain

to a prospective teacher like me. The most important factor seemed to be to get in the "system" of special licenses. I was getting impatient and it was noon. "I think I'll get some lunch," I thought.

Leaving the building, I questioned the guard at the front door landing.

"When I start next week and park in the parking lot, can I get inside the building through the side door at 8 a.m.?"

"I don't have any control over that door. Come in the front door."

"Who has control over the side door?"

"The custodian, but technically the staff isn't supposed to be here until 8:40."

I wondered why the teachers were allowed in the building only 20 minutes before the children.

I walked through the empty playground and bought a sandwich at a delicatessen across the street. Returning to the playground, I wondered why none of the 634 children in the school were playing there. I found a bench and sat to eat my sandwich, reassuring myself that this neighborhood was perfectly fine. But where were the children and teacher aides? I was impatient to get back to speak with the other therapist. She would be my partner – a key person to help me learn my way around.

At 1 p.m., I found Candy's locked office door and knocked. She wasn't back yet.

I waited until 1:30. Apparently Candy was too busy with her shower plans. The children on her schedule wouldn't see her today. Nor would the children who were supposed to get help from the absent therapist I was to replace.

As I started back toward Ms. W's noisy office again, I wondered just how much time that therapist did spend with the children who needed her help. Suddenly I knew this wasn't for me. I couldn't be a part of a place where the staff seemed to be putting children last. I walked down the stairs and out of the building – relieved that I had visited before accepting the position.

In the mail about a year later, I received an official license to teach in the New York City public schools. Now I was officially in the system, but I had already moved on.

Note About the School

While my visit to the school was more than 10 years ago, in the recent official New York City public schools assessments for the Benjamin Franklin Elementary School in the Bronx (PS 55), I saw that the school ranks in the lowest percentiles in most academic areas, in safety and in respect. Hispanic students make up the largest percentage of this school's population, 58 percent; African-American students make up 42 percent of the student body.

Mentors on Mentoring

Mandell: One of the things I wonder about when I think about your background is the relationship between mentoring and therapeutic work. You came to the college from the mental health field.

Gotti: As a clinician you learn to listen and work creatively, and I think that's true of mentoring. The "art" of mentoring and the "art" of therapy both focus on life stories and growth, though in different ways.

Mandell: What drew you to the college?

Gotti: After five years of administering community services in the mental health and developmental disabilities field, I missed the direct contact with the people getting the services. I started a private practice and began to seek out teaching opportunities.

Mandell: And you knew of Empire State College?

Gotti: A number of our staff were enrolled at the college, or served as adjunct faculty. And every once in awhile, Sylvain Nagler, who was to become my colleague at the college, would pop up in our office, following-up on a student. That was pretty unusual: to see professors coming into community settings. So I did have some knowledge of the college before I came. The funny thing was that I thought I was applying for a part-time job, but I ended up with a full-time position!

Mandell: Where you have now been for a great number of years.

Richard Gotti

Gotti: Yes, where I've been for 32 years. The Northeast Center was then a little hotbed of activity. When I came for my job interview, only a few people showed up. Something was going on, some kind of turmoil, but I didn't know what. I was told not to take it personally, and I didn't.

Mandell: So here was a first glimpse into the workings of Empire State College, now, some 30 years ago.

Gotti: I quickly got the feeling that this was an exciting, if quirky, place. I felt the energy. If people could get that worked-up over college issues, I thought, it was just right for me.

Mandell: Can I return to the specific ways in which your background as a mental health clinician has been helpful to you as you as a mentor?

Gotti: The roles are complementary. Being a psychotherapist requires you to listen very carefully, and that was something I could bring to the mentoring process. A basic aspect of mentoring is artful listening. I also learned to be comfortable with letting relationships and situations evolve, unfold over time, without the pressure of immediate

closure. Unlike traditional schools and even with our new calendar, we don't stop and start with a neat, clean slate and with things perfectly packaged. The answers aren't always apparent. The mentoring process goes on until students graduate.

Mandell: So the tolerance for these ambiguous situations is something that you knew before you came.

Gotti: I'd experienced it. We mentor students and they gradually move on, and while that's happening new ones come in. Even when we go on vacation, student work still comes in, there are calls and e-mails, and there are our own particular concerns about our students.

Mandell: Do you see significant differences between the kind of relationship that we develop with students and the kind of relationship that you develop with people with whom you're doing psychological counseling? Are there tensions between these two roles?

Gotti: Tensions? Only if the line between mentoring and psychotherapy becomes blurred. Once in a while, students have used their one-on-one time to talk about their personal issues because they know I'm a therapist. Mentors have to be comfortable with students sharing personal information. It doesn't mean we make it the focus of what we're doing or the time that we have together, but it's important to listen. I think we can talk about issues – personal issues – with students, and help them think about those issues and how they impact their learning without veering off into other parts of the problem. We do this as mentors.

Mandell: What's been most satisfying to you about your many years of mentoring, Dick?

Gotti: There's been a lot of satisfaction. We get to know a student as more than a face in the classroom; we become a part, sometimes an important part, of an individual's growth. That's incredibly rewarding, particularly

with people who wouldn't ordinarily have the opportunity for academic and personal development. And that connects back to my life as a psychotherapist and helping people to feel understood and to grow. To be understood is to feel empowered. It's one of the important things we as mentors and teachers can give our students. We try very hard to understand their stories – where they've been, where they want to go, what kinds of obstacles get in the way, how they like to learn, the ways they learn best.

Mandell: Over the last few years, there's been a good deal of discussion about changes in our student population – that students are more practical, less interested in learning, less willing to take the lead in their own studies. Has this been your experience?

Gotti: It's probably true that there are more students now who are vocationally oriented, and this has implications for the teaching and learning process. But the student is still at the center of learning. Despite the changes over the last three decades, and continuing debates over academic policy and the role of technology, we are still committed to student-centered education. The college – faculty, support staff, professionals and administrators – still tries to keep the student at the center of the learning process. As a community we still value this, which is part of what has kept me here all these years. Students who are more "practical" or vocationally oriented also want us to understand their goals and the urgency they feel about reaching them.

Mandell: Is it your sense that our students today as well prepared for study at Empire State College than they may have been three decades ago?

Gotti: I think one of the toughest challenges is to find a balance between a student-friendly admissions policy and the college's ability to promote student success. The college has a liberal admissions policy – we want to provide access – but when students aren't prepared for college work, the consequences can be serious for the student, personally and financially. The college took a big step forward with the hiring of our academic support staff, who have been an enormous help to students and faculty, as the learning coaches will be. We need to consider how far these resources can stretch to accommodate the students who have difficulty with reading, writing and critical thinking. We want to ensure that students admitted do succeed.

Mandell: And how about the changes in college processes and structures: How have these affected your day-to-day work with your students?

Gotti: You can look at it from two points of view: there are students who like the clarity, who like the structure, who like knowing that they're starting at a certain time, that they have a period in which to prepare and get their books; they know what they need to do, and they end at a certain time, they can plan out their year, plan out their lives. On the other hand, some of the flexibility and creativity has been lost. When I came here, we thought of ourselves as an "experimental" college. We don't refer to ourselves that way anymore. Other colleges have become involved in similar ventures. Institutions change, it's a fact of life. But you try to preserve what's most important.

Mandell: So, as you see it, is there something distinctive about Empire State College even now?

Gotti: Absolutely. The fact that attention to the individual student still has the force of the institution behind it is very "distinctive."

> *The fact that attention to the individual student still has the force of the institution behind it is very "distinctive."*

And despite geographic distance, the college is surprisingly cohesive. Take the All College Conference: Does any other college bring its members together – support staff, rofessionals, faculty, administrators – for three days of discussion, debate and celebration? And speaking of distinctive features, there's one that's especially important to me: the portable walls around our areas of study and the rich opportunities for faculty to reach across disciplines.

At the Northeast Center, we have an interdisciplinary study group on wellness that Cathy Davison, Elaine Handley, Claudia Hough and I have taught. We help students look at wellness holistically, through the lenses of psychology, biology, literature and writing. Last fall, we went to Atlanta to present our work at a national conference. The people who attended our session – faculty from other colleges, especially – were blown away by the idea that the four of us could collaborate so easily. They found it hard to believe that we connected with each other across disciplines, even talked to each other, and that we got past the red tape of our "departments." We were taken aback by their surprise. This kind of freedom energizes and renews us as faculty.

Mandell: And our students love it.

Gotti: Yes, they appreciate seeing how ideas are linked and how disciplines are not so discrete after all. They explore what it's like to work at the boundaries, they stretch, they see how knowledge connects in so many ways. And they like the group process, and often find the support empowering.

Mandell: I noticed that over the years you have been interested in the painter, Robert Henri. How did Henri's work become important to you?

Gotti: I got interested in Henri when I was riding the Amtrak train to New York City many years ago and reading *The Art Spirit*. I was excited by his book about the teaching of art and the many parallels to mentoring. Henri was an accomplished and important artist of his time, and an even more gifted mentor and teacher. So I began doing research and even started a biography of Henri. But I was more immersed in writing fiction and knew I couldn't do both. Someday, I might return to the Henri project, though in a different way. Not enough time, not enough years, to do everything.

Mandell: But what is striking to me Dick are all of the different kinds of interests that you have pursued: from the world of an M.S.W., to a Social Welfare Ph.D., to your ongoing work as a therapist, to research on Robert Henri, to your interest in writing. And, fairly

recently, you completed an M.F.A. in writing and literature.

Gotti: When I came to the college, I was at the beginning of a psychoanalytic training program in New York City. I commuted to New York for about six years. It was difficult, but it allowed me to develop professionally while I was mentoring. Years later, another developmental opportunity came along with Bennington.

Mandell: What moved you to enroll in the Bennington M.F.A. program?

Gotti: I started taking fiction writing workshops about 10 years ago at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. I wanted to be a writer when I was 19, and life finally started circling back to that. I found myself living for the summers when I could be part of a group and a community devoted to writing. One summer, I got into an advanced level workshop at the NYS Writers Institute at Skidmore and had a chance to work with Mary Gordon and Marilynne Robinson. I've been lucky to work with wonderful teachers like Alice Mattison, a Bennington faculty member, who taught a workshop in Provincetown and inspired me to apply to the program.

Mandell: That's fantastic!

Gotti: I didn't think I'd ever get an M.F.A. I wanted to, but I thought it was way too late in life. At home, Marta and I were casually talking about it, and I was dreaming out loud. She said, "Well, why can't you do it?" And I said, "Because it's impossible; I can barely keep up with my work now. I wouldn't be able to do anything else. It's exciting but it's scary." And she said, "Are you going to wait until you're 80? Apply. See what happens. Take one step at a time and … " And so I found I was going through the same process our students go through. The same apprehension and self-doubt – I can't do this, it'll be too much, how will it change my life, how about my responsibilities, etc. But I did take one step at a time. I applied. It wasn't until I got a

call from the director of the program, who said "You're in," that I really got anxious! I thought: What the hell did I do? And how am I ever going to manage this? I also was faculty chair at that time! And still had to maintain my practice. Right before I left for my first residency, I had a dream. I was on my way to register and when I got there the person at the registration table said, "Oh, you're not staying on campus; there's a nice rest home down the road." And I woke up in a panic.

Mandell: Ageism even in our dreams.

Gotti: It was the best thing I could have done. I worked all the time, had almost no social life, rarely went to a movie. I was up half the night trying to get out the work for Bennington; and I'd be up early again the next morning, still trying to crank it out and do my work for Empire State College. It was exhausting, but I was energized. I relished the necessity to write: I had to produce, I had to get the next story ready. And I had to read. It was so wonderful to be required to read, to read out of my field without guilt. It was a very rich learning experience for me and made me more aware of what our students go through.

Mandell: What an extraordinary "faculty development" opportunity.

Gotti: Yes, this was an opportunity to develop professionally in a completely new area. That's another one of the unique features of this college. It vigorously supports professional development and our ventures into new teaching areas. Our work is labor intensive; it's very hard to find time for our own research or writing or creative projects, but I think the college as an institution is very much behind our professional development. So many people here were supportive of my going back to school and helped me find ways to fulfill my responsibilities.

Mandell: Therapeutic work, teaching, writing: what a fantastic thing that your "development" has been so rich and varied.

Gotti: And I'm thankful for all of it. Including the opportunity to retire from full-time work and return half time, to teach both human services and creative writing.

Mandell: And I also know that you've been connecting with colleagues who also are interested in writing.

Gotti: The Writers Circle came up with the idea of building a community of writers. We were all struggling with finding time to write and wanted to support each other. We thought that an annual retreat where faculty could get away as a group and write would help us individually and as a community. We developed a proposal and sent it to Joyce Elliott and Anne Breznau who were very excited about the idea. The retreat became a reality. A varied group of writers ended up spending four glorious days in Rensselaerville during the May no appointment week. We worked in a solitary way, which we needed to do, but we also read our work to each other. Everyone was invigorated.

Mandell: Soon with a little more freedom in your work life, do you have particular projects that you're working on or that you're looking forward to?

Gotti: Right now I'm working on a collection of short stories and trying to get some new stories ready, along with a play. I also belong to a writers' group and in my new life I look forward to turning out more work and making all of the meetings.

Mandell: You mentioned your Bennington College dream. Have you had any dreams about retiring?

Gotti: Only good ones. I'm genuinely excited about staying connected to the college for the time being, and I'm eager to have time to write. I'll be able to move from thinking about writing to actually sitting down and doing it. No excuses. Now that's exhilarating and daunting.

Practice and Change at Empire State College: Ethics, Organizational Change and Experiential Learning

Roselynn Dow, John Lawless, Reed Coughlan, Central New York Center

In preparation for our All College 2008 presentation where the theme was "Reflection and Renewal," we spent some time doing our own reflecting on the many changes that have occurred at Empire State College in the last few years. While some of these changes may have struck us as cumbersome, unnecessary or unwelcome, we were mindful that others were due, welcome and effective. Rather than dwell on any negatives in our reflections, we decided to look at how changes we have encountered or will encounter in the future might facilitate our work and our lives, resulting in better service to our students and a renewal of our own passionate commitment to the college's mission of adult education.

The areas of greatest interest that surfaced as a result of our discussions were leadership and bureaucracy, ethical dilemmas and experiential learning. Certainly they were disparate topics; however, as experienced mentors of Empire State College, we found connections among the topics and presented our thoughts about them at the All College Conference.

Roselynn Dow

The early years of our college were earmarked by creativity, innovation and strong desire to help adult learners earn a college degree by developing individualized degree programs and by recognizing the value of their experiential learning. This exciting experiment in higher education was guided by an impassioned and energetic group who shared the same values and mission, and who were closely connected. Faculty, professionals, staff, technology and additional layers of bureaucracy were added slowly so communication was direct and more easily accomplished until recent years. At a time when we are experiencing a change in leadership, it seemed appropriate

to consider what type of leadership might work best at a stage in the college's life where it could be described as mature and stable.

We considered the leadership approach which is attributed to Robert Greenleaf (1977) called "servant leadership." which is an understanding and practice that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. When Greenleaf wrote his seminal book *Servant Leadership, a Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness,* it was received as an intriguing plan for the sharing of power and status among the leader, those led and the organization. Servant leadership is not the same as transformational leadership, which also is focused on supporting followers but does not stress the selflessness of the leader and does not focus on the spiritual or emotional aspects of leadership.

Servant leadership is tied to the efforts of the leader to expand the human potential of the individual follower while also looking at disparities in the organization. Greenleaf characterized the servant leader as one who listened receptively, had empathy, had an ability for healing self and others, self-awareness, was persuasive outside positional authority, could conceptualize and innovate, had foresight, commitment to the growth of others, and was interested in building community. The advantage to the organization that has a servant leader is that employees are satisfied, trust their leader, commit to the organization, believe the information provided by the leader, and do not leave the organization.

We asked ourselves: will servant leadership work for us at Empire State College and in our lives beyond the college setting? Is it possible for our leader and our organization to be humane, positive and generative instead of negative or expedient? Where are

the roadblocks? Who are the people who are capable of serving in this manner?

Greenleaf believed that the most suitable organization for servant leadership was one that was old, large and respectable, and where older employees have given up the struggle because they have achieved what they set out to do. The younger employee must be encouraged to cultivate a lifestyle at work that is "spirited" and keep the organization true to "virtue and justice." They are called on to understand the need and value of a bureaucracy to keep order and consistency while simultaneously striving for creativity and new initiatives, which are usually stifled by order and consistency.

> *[The "younger employees"] are called on to understand the need and value of a bureaucracy to keep order and consistency while simultaneously striving for creativity and new initiatives, which are usually stifled by order and consistency.*

Page and Wong (2000) developed a 99 item instrument to measure servant leadership, distilling them into four domains that simplify the approach. The domains are: personality (having a servant heart, integrity and commitment), relationship

(building up others), task (visioning and decision making), and process (improving the organization through modeling and team building). Clearly, this is a leadership approach that can be very effective at Empire State College both in our relationships with each other, our relationships with our students, as well as in our personal lives.

John Lawless

As an organization changes, members of that organization will reflect upon past ethical stances and question how past and current ethical reasoning will help or hinder future development. As a relatively new mentor, I have heard how Empire State College used to be and how it is changing. Some of the mentors that I have talked to see the changes as beneficial, while others view the changes as much more problematic. One of the most intriguing aspects of these conversations is the ethical dilemmas that we, as mentors, might face. This is a brief reflection on two of the ethical issues that I have contemplated as a new mentor.

One ethical dilemma is the issue of hierarchy. As I was contemplating coming to the college, the "flattening" of hierarchy was an attractive aspect. As I began to engage in my work as a mentor, I wrestled with the competing demands of "flattening" and equity. This was particular salient with the independent studies in which I was engaged. The flattening of the hierarchy allowed me to collaborate with students around issues of content, learning activities and pace of learning. I was excited that two students taking the same study could have two different "courses" based on what they needed for the career, degree plan and/or personal goals. Yet, I also wrestled with the question, "What is equitable?" What if one student has a richer background in the subject? What if one student demonstrates subtle movement in knowledge over the course of the term yet knows more than another student who demonstrated significant movement over the term? These questions were new. In my previous job, teaching was professing, and I compared student to student. Yet in this new environment, it was unfair to compare students but was it unfair not to compare students.

The second ethical dilemma was the issue of mentoring accountability. In particular was my responsibility/accountability to the center and unit regarding enrollment and the magic number of 800! How should I break up my indirect and direct credits? What types of studies should I engage in? The last five years of my academic career prior to Empire State College was spent teaching graduate-level family therapy. Would students take family therapy courses? What if my studies were too specific to obtain adequate enrollment? Should I offer Introduction to Psychology that might get many enrollments yet would not necessarily be academically challenging for me? As I contemplated these issues, answers tended to come from peers who have spent time managing the past system. Yet one dilemma was difficult to voice and that was the issue of hiring outside tutors vs. calling on my Empire State colleagues. If I had a student who needed to complete a general education requirement in Western Civilization, for example, I could send the student to a number of my peers. Yet, if I did this I would not receive credit toward my 800. If I sent the student to a local tutor, I could receive credit. Still, at another level, sending credit to another mentor in a different unit would generate a count for the unit and for the center. The dilemma revolved around defining the 800. Was this a personal, a unit or a center issue? What if I "generated" well over 800 credits evident by unit count but not evident in personal count? Would this affect my path toward tenure? If I padded my personal count, was I serving students well in terms of quality of instruction?

These two dilemmas are highlighted not for clarity of outcome but on struggles as a new mentor. I believe they have been navigated by being able to participate in the New Mentor Workshops and building relationships within my unit and center. As I prepare for the new academic year, I am excited to explore how these issues and new ones bubble up from our everyday practice as mentors.

Reed Coughlan

Roselynn's discussion of the mentor as "servant leader" led me to think further about the various ways we can conceptualize the mentor role and the ways that has changed over the years. Certainly, early in the history of the college there was a specific and intentional effort to define the faculty role in ways that differentiated it from more conventional models. One of the ways this manifested itself was through the decision to eschew academic disciplines as an organizing framework for the academic program. Another was through use of the term "mentor" as against "professor." Although we chose to retain academic ranks, there was a sense that everyone did more or less the same work and, rather than imparting specialized academic discipline-based knowledge, our principal responsibility would be to help nurture students intellectual development and assist them to achieve the academic objectives. Of course, there was the Baritz – Chickering debate over whether we should concern ourselves with moral and ethical development or whether we should confine our efforts to academic/intellectual issues. Nonetheless, it was clear that the academic program should be student-centered and would not begin with or be organized around faculty interests.

Initially, it seemed that mentors responded to students in almost all areas; they were advisors in a broad range of concerns, including outreach, recruitment, admissions, student services, academic support, as well as more traditionally conceived instructional roles. In recent years, the college has divested faculty of many of these responsibilities in order to allow mentors to focus their attention on matters of teaching and scholarship. For the most part these developments have been welcomed by faculty, although some complain that scholarship expectations have been ramped up without much clarification about what precisely is expected.

One perhaps unintended consequence of the introduction of the Learning Opportunity Inventory (LOI) system has been a reversal of the earlier decision to organize the academic program around student interests. Now faculty identify what they are willing and interested to teach and the conversations with students no longer start with the question, "what interests you and what would you like to learn?" Now, it begins with consideration of what is concretely on offer at the Center

for Distance Learning, at area colleges and on the Empire State College "term guide." One can think of many approaches to opening a conversation with students, but when there was no defined and limited range of offerings, it might have been more likely that a general query might begin with, "what going on?" or "what's new?" rather than, "what do you want to take this term?" In the former case it might be more likely that you would learn something about circumstances in the student's life that could lead to the identification of a study that has direct relevance to the student's life circumstances, and it might even be possible to develop a study that incorporates a dimension of experiential learning.

At Empire State College we are quite comfortable with thinking about experiential learning as something that occurs prior to the student's enrollment in the college. I wonder how often we consider designing learning contracts that incorporate experiential learning. Some examples could include the following scenarios: A student responds to a general query from a mentor, "what's up?" by saying, "well, I feel kind of overwhelmed right now. I resigned my job at the bank to take a position with a human services agency. I wanted to get out of the business world and wanted to get involved with work that I feel makes a difference in people's lives. I've been hired as an outreach

coordinator and there's so much to learn … … " Here's the potential opening for suggesting the design of a learning contract that anticipates what the student will learn via experience in the workplace.

> *Here's the potential opening for suggesting the design of a learning contract that anticipates what the student will learn via experience in the workplace.*

Or, a student might say, "I'm feeling overwhelmed, my son has just been diagnosed with autism, and I just want to focus my attention on learning about this condition and about programs and services that are available and about how policy is made … ." This is another opening for a contract designed to help her learn exactly what is relevant and about which she has passion. Or, a student might say, "I'm a caregiver for a parent who is terminal … ." Again, contracts could be developed to

connect real life experience with content that may actually be helpful in dealing with real challenges.

We conclude

In the spirit of reflection and renewal, we offer these observations as mentors representing three different stages of experience within the college. Clearly the questions that we raise about leadership, ethics and experiential learning are very personal and are related to our own personalities, goals and perceptions of our place in the college. However, we are also linked by a common desire to serve: our students, the college, our community, families and ourselves. How we respond to change as individuals and as members of an organization will characterize us as either innovative or generative, as Greenleaf wrote, or as negative and expedient. Our many questions and dilemmas should generate thoughtful discussion and may help guide us to a rejuvenation of our commitment to adult learning.

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Will Unorthodox Styles of Learning Spoil JP: A First-time Mentor's Chronicle

Peter Kountz, Head, Charter High School of Architecture and Design, Philadelphia

In an essay titled "The Authority of Uncertainty" appearing in the winter 1996 issue of *Educational Foundations* (a journal of the American Educational Studies Association), I found a compelling sentence with which to introduce this essay. The sentence reads, "What if teachers don't know what their students need to learn?" This refreshing and liberating question allows me to ask "What if the student knows what he/she wants to study? Will we as mentors/teachers know what and how the student needs to learn?" Over the course of two Empire State College terms, one in 2006 and the second in 2007, I had a most unusual experience encountering my own questions when I served as a first-time mentor for a student we shall call (for purposes of anonymity), JP. With this essay in journal-like form, I hope to chronicle my experience with JP through our first study together.

First, the background. In late March of 2006, I was asked if I would be willing to serve as a mentor for a student who was developing an Empire State College program in religious studies and wished to do a 4-credit study dealing with the Roman Catholic tradition as part of his program. I had not been a mentor at the college previously, so I was not familiar with the way things worked. The person who contacted me is an experienced/senior mentor (SM), and a very old friend who knows my academic interests and work. The request was, therefore, not inappropriate since one of my areas of interest is Roman Catholicism, in particular American Catholicism, about which I have written and published a great deal. After I asked about how the tutorial might work, this is what my friend specified:

"I would expect that you and he (JP) would connect on the phone every two to three weeks and that, during the intervening time, he would be reading, researching and writing based on a contract that the

two of you will have developed. There might be e-mail contact too (the key is the kind of connection that you and he can develop that would allow him to pursue his questions and the assignments that the two of you agree upon). During the period of enrollment (about 16 weeks), I would expect that he would be writing somewhere in the ballpark of 30 pages of text – writings that might be divided into a series of short papers and then a longer one, or any configuration that, again, you and he can agree on. (Your comments on those writings will be important to him.)"

I agreed to take on JP and within a very short time, I had heard from him via e-mail about what he thought he might wish to study. I responded with a series of questions which I intended for him to use to focus his point of inquiry. In this initial exchange of e-mails, my sense was that we were both already comfortably engaged in a dynamic which was leading to understanding how and what JP needed to do in order to learn what he wanted to learn. Out of this exchange came two "important things" for JP from me: "The most important thing is for you to let me know what you have read," and "The second most important thing right now is for you to tell me in one paragraph what you want to accomplish with this project."

Here is JP's "one paragraph:"

"As I've said I haven't done a lot of direct reading, but I don't feel completely ignorant of the tradition (Roman Catholicism) either … . I've always been personally interested in Catholicism, and with this project I hope to delve into its world from several different areas. I keep thinking of that line in Woody Allen's 'Hannah and Her Sisters,' when the priest asks Allen's character why he wants to convert to the Catholic faith. 'First, because it's a very beautiful religion,' he says. I would like to examine this beauty. Catholics often speak

of 'the Mystery' and I would like to take a look at the mysterious and miraculous aspects of this tradition … . It is a sense of the 'religious experience' that I would like to come away with. I would like to see how this functions in various ways, personal and communal and from different sources i.e. mystics, saints, priests, nuns, monks, lay people, artists, etc … . In my overall studies of religion, I am greatly interested in how the religious experience is presented in works of art, especially literature. So, I was excited to see that you suggested possibly reading novels. If I can gain a real sense of the beauty, the ritual and the mystery within this tradition through an examination of theology, spiritual autobiographies, mystical works and literature I will be more than satisfied."

The importance of this long paragraph was that it confirmed my belief that before the standard Empire State College learning contract could be crafted, JP and I needed more time together, perhaps around a grounding/organizing text. I suggested this to JP and proposed that we work with Andrew Greeley's *The Catholic Imagination* and use the text as (1) the foundation of our study and (2) as an instrument with which to craft the learning contract.

JP: "You were right. Greeley's book is the perfect introduction for me. It is a great way to begin to view the beauty and mystery of the religion. Flipping through it yesterday, I was excited to see that he discussed art, novels and films. The movies he discusses … are films I have seen so that helps … "

[two days later]

"I should say that his (Greeley's) overall thesis, the 'enchanted world' in which Catholics live and the idea of beauty as a teacher of truth, is fascinating and very much what I was looking for. To then find examples of this in autobiographies, novels, mystical writings, etc. would be perfect."

Early on in our exchange, too, I had realized that our work together was going to require a certain organic element, and that we would need to identify a series of organizing signposts to the learning. I also realized that we would need to craft something like a "pre-learning contract" proposal for ourselves:

JP: "I think this is a great idea, and I am ready to move forward in the direction in which you suggested. I am reading the first chapter of Greeley's book right now. A proposal is a wonderful idea, and I will outline key themes and elements that I discover in [the book]."

Because I knew so little about the orthodoxy of Empire State College tutorials, I was perhaps less inhibited by convention. As a result, as exchanges with JP continued, we determined that we would work exclusively via e-mail.

PK: "I prefer e-mail rather than the telephone, as I think the record of the written word is essential to a project like ours."

JP: "Written communication is fine with me. I have already begun to see how much it has helped me shape my ideas and communicate them … I feel that it will be a great help for me in regards to writing papers as well. Regular correspondence would be really great, so I can ask questions and keep you up-to-date on things I've found most fascinating. I will most likely do this, if that's okay with you … "

Our "written communication" would regularly involve e-mail exchanges of anywhere from 100 to 1500 words. Invariably, the exchanges were fundamentally Socratic and often inexplicably linked. For example, here is an exchange after only three weeks of "knowing one another:"

PK: "Based on your recent missive, I am thinking very seriously that our first unit after the 'Introduction' (Greeley) ought to be 'The Catholic Imagination in Autobiography' and that we should begin this unit with Thomas Merton's, *The Seven Storey Mountain* … .

JP: "We seem to be on the same wavelength! I was just reading Greeley earlier and I thought Merton's autobiography should be

the next book I read. This is perfect … I also thought 'The Catholic Imagination' would be the perfect title for the study."

Without question, the central standpoint of the course was the very process of putting together the learning contract, not necessarily the learning contract itself. With help from our senior mentor (who had JP in two other tutorials during the same period), we put together the learning contract over the course of three days and four separate e-mail exchanges. Because we had completed an informal "pre-learning contract" proposal and had been working together for almost a full month, we were much better prepared to construct a learning contract that was very focused but which retained the necessary organic element I referenced earlier. I drafted the learning contract and sent it on to JP for his review, hoping very much that he would make the draft his own.

JP: "I got your e-mail [draft]. I will make and attempt to construct a contract.

My only concern is in trying to keep the **key** ideas you have outlined. You seem to have a very good idea for how to shape this idea of the Catholic imagination. In other words, there are texts I would love to read, but I will attempt to choose from my preferences and your suggestions based on ideas you have raised. This is going to be a challenge but it is very exciting!"

[24 hours later]

JP: "I have given [your draft] a lot of thought and I have come up with a somewhat different vision of this study … . [I have realized] that while I liked the Greeley text as a starting off point, I wasn't sure I wanted to construct the study completely around his ideas … . A lot of [his work] covered didn't interest me that much … . There is a very real problem of time constraint as well. It's already the middle of May and I don't think I would be able to read as many works as you suggested, at least not closely … . What I want to focus on is the Catholic **experience** in conjunction with Greeley's ideas re. the Catholic imagination … . This has been quite a struggle trying to pull together what I see as the **core** of this study … I tend to work in a slightly idiosyncratic fashion. And I am just learning what this process is … … I hope all this makes sense to you … "

As I look back at the written record of this important moment in our study, I recognize how critical it was to have allowed – indeed, to have encouraged – JP, early on, to find his own way. In the end, we agreed on all

> *As I look back at the written record of this important moment in our study, I recognize how critical it was to have allowed – indeed, to have encouraged – JP, early on, to find his own way.*

the substantive issues, especially the texts, and our exchanges reveal that we were essentially in agreement about how to organize what JP wanted to study. I was mindful of JP's "slightly idiosyncratic" way of working and tried to lead him to discover his own larger course-shaping questions by paying attention to the nature of his "smaller" questions. Here's an illustration:

JP: "One question: When Chesterton writes in his discussion of fairyland 'An apple is eaten and the hope of God is gone' (p. 61) is he comparing Eden to fairyland and the story to a fairytale? Does he see a similarity? I also wanted to know if you were familiar with the novel *Viper's Tangle* by Francois Mauriac?" …

One advantage of using e-mail was that I could include the senior mentor in the exchanges with JP. And as I struggled with how to respond to JP's questions and turn them into learning tools, the senior mentor could be helpful:

SM: "What is striking is both the specificity of his [JP's] questions and then, of your responses. I wonder, for example, about how he might look for some of these responses on his own? He knows he can turn to you (that's easy, especially if he recognizes that you are such a responsive interlocutor and that you will give him an 'answer'); … . but could you, for instance, say to him that there may be some place he can search for

some responses to his questions? This is not about forcing him into impossibility; it's about asking how he can gain more facility looking and thinking and wondering for himself … "

Interestingly enough, the very next day after the words from the senior mentor, JP and I had an exchange which allowed me put the SM's suggestion into play:

PK: "First off, find a copy of the New Testament and look at the 12th Chapter of Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, verses 7-10. It may help clarify and illuminate [your questions about] Therese and suffering."

JP: "I just had a look at II Corinthians 12: 7-10. This is very interesting and you were right, this does clarify Therese's view and **experience** of suffering. This also helps re: the role of Satan as well. 'A thorn in the flesh' – very interesting!"

The insights of the senior mentor about JP as a student were of constant help, as well.

SM: "One of the things that has struck me about JP is that he takes ideas seriously and tries, sincerely, with desire and in his own way, to express what he is thinking and feeling. This is unusual … I am not sure it is always successful – some ideas float and more experience in tightening arguments and presenting them in a clearer way will help – but how wonderful that he is there and playing around with ideas and important concepts.."

[three days later]

SM: "The level of detail of the assignment (a paper topic for JP) is intriguing to me. That is, you have offered him a quite specific way into what you also think will be a way for him to branch out and work with some ideas, and even 'play.' … I look forward to seeing what he will choose to do with this … "

In the end, the learning contract called for 12 texts (a mixture of autobiography, fiction, Western theology and Eastern mysticism), one long prose poem, a reference book on Catholicism (Richard McBrien's *Catholicism)* and three papers of 10-15 pages each.

As I look at our work, I realize (much to my delight) that JP really did move from the

"Catholic Imagination" to the "Catholic Experience" and in doing so, shaped the course as much as I did. Perhaps I can best illustrate this by including here short sections of my responses to his three papers. It is important to affirm again that the way we came to the topics for the papers was through the "organic process" I discussed earlier: I would suggest ideas, JP would respond with his reactions to the ideas (and in doing so, make the ideas his own); we might have another round or two of exchanges to reach agreement on the topic, and JP would be off.

Ten weeks into this independent study came Paper #1, an essay on the essentials of Catholicism as revealed in a series of autobiographical texts:

PK: "In any number of ways, your first paper is impressive. You are faithful to our agreed-upon outline of (1) strengths of Catholicism; (2) focus on specific texts; and (3) the transition into our next section on mysticism and the mystical life. You use the texts widely and comprehensively, and you do not practice the 'free and easy' method of textual reference, i.e. what you use, you cite, and you are careful to build the referenced text into the larger fabric of your narrative. You reveal, as well, a certain freedom (as in willing to take risks) in the way you shape your narrative and you are able to retain a very personal element in the discussion of the texts. What I am most impressed with is your willingness to 'use' and 'analyze' the texts as you understand them without the fear of being wrong. We talked about the

> *What I am most impressed with is your willingness to 'use' and 'analyze' the texts as you understand them without the fear of being wrong.*

importance of moving from the 'objective to the subjective' in the development of the essay and, in my view, you do this exceedingly well … "

Five weeks later came Paper #2, an illumination of the Catholic Western Mystical Tradition and how it developed specific Eastern characteristics:

PK: "First and foremost, you are faithful to both elements of the essay. Your 'summary' and 'illumination' of the texts is sound and your explication of the possible limits of the Western mystical tradition is provocative and expansive. You have a remarkable instinct about the core elements of the Western mystical tradition and you are able to let these elements shape your discussion: castle, dark night, knowledge (of God), mystery, union, transformation of self, purgation, illumination, suffering, patience, humility, introversion, immediacy, conformity to God's will, self-knowledge, the 'twilight zone' (the 'strange, in between state in which [mystics] have become united with God but alone with humanity'). Visions, surrender, discovery, Therese's joy out of 'introversion,' and conformity to God's will."

Just before the completion of the third paper, the following comment came from JP about the way I commented on his first two papers:

JP: "You illustrate specifically that I have made accurate points, arguments, etc. This is very helpful for me … ."

And, lastly, we come to the final essay, JP's work of 16-pages on the Catholic imagination and the priesthood in Catholic fiction, certainly the culmination of our work together.

PK: "This is by far your best work in the course. The essay is powerful in its order and precision and it reveals a remarkable grasp of the two novels, especially … You integrate 'The Hound of Heaven' in a wonderfully understated way but it is still evident to the reader how central it is to your thinking and you exposition … . You use Greeley in an equally understated but 'central' way … . Your sense of the two protagonists in the two novels is remarkable, Your exposition is penetrating but seamless and, seemingly, effortless … . Sometimes, as I was reading your essay, I was left breathless with how much you understand about what Catholicism is, day to day and who and what Catholic priests are and **how** they lead their priestly lives … ."

By way of concluding this chronicle, I think it would be instructive to have some response from JP about the course, about what he learned, and about how we worked together to get to where he wanted to be.

JP: " … . It is apparent to me that you signed on to do this tutorial with me out of a love for the material, and, perhaps more importantly, out of a love for teaching. All of this is apparent in the way in which you assigned the readings, paper topics, and, of course, in your many responses … What has been so wonderful for me has been your encouragement in specific areas such as the 'fearlessness' that you see in my analyses of the materials, and in my writing and thinking. You created paper topics that fostered this, and I appreciated this. You recognize the importance of creativity and the imagination in academic study … … . This section [second section of paper #3] was a perfect example of how you constructed a topic that would allow me to really **think** and express my thoughts with that 'fearlessness.' It was hard, [and] I was afraid I was being too hard on St. John of the Cross. I can't overstate how much your comments have helped me and how encouraging they have been. They have given me confidence to continue to write and think creatively … "

And, lastly, we have my sense of JP, as documented in my final evaluation:

PK: "JP was a superb student and we quickly found our medium. Our exchanges were constant and detailed and always provocative. I was most taken by JP's ability to open up the questions and go beyond: he took enormous risks with the materials, raised exceptional questions out of and beyond the texts, and wrote with fluidity and substance. No doubt JP read all the texts with great care and interest and his ability to use these texts to ground his inquiry was quite extraordinary."

To go back to the original questions of this essay/chronicle – "What if the student knows what he/she wants to study? Will we as mentors/teachers know what and how the student needs to learn?" – is to understand that our course together (PK with JP) was successful because the dynamic and the medium allowed the student to help the mentor learn what the student needed to learn and how he needed to learn it. What a remarkable experience for this first-time mentor.

> *"When we are teaching, exclusion is usually an indirect act, an omission of opportunity or of someone's voice. We're usually not mean-spirited but, more likely, unaware that a perspective is missing, that a biased myth has been perpetuated, or that we aren't covering topics of concern to certain adults. In fact, most adult learners, usually those who have been socialized to accommodate our method of instruction, may like our course or training. Things seem pretty pleasant. Why go looking for trouble?"*
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> – Raymond J. Wlodkowski (1999). *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults.* Revised edition. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Processing a Sabbatical

Betty Lawrence, Center for Distance Learning

A sabbatical is precious and I had waited far too long before requesting one. When I decided to take the plunge, I went to a natural source of inspiration – my colleagues in "Process Education." In 1994, I had co-authored an article about Process Education (Apple and Lawrence) and the ideas have influenced my approaches with students since then.

What is Process Education? Tied to constructivist theory, Process Education is built on the belief that learning can be improved through the development of learning skills. That is, the environment for learning is made more effective through careful identification of learning objectives as well as measurable criteria for how those objectives are being met. Assessment of those criteria through an SII method (strengths, areas for improvement and insights) is a key component for the process educator. My challenge for my sabbatical was to make these ideas real for students through extensive revising of the book, *Foundations of Learning.*

Writing a book is a challenge in itself; writing one as part of a team of four presented additional challenges, especially

Betty Lawrence

as we did not seem to naturally adopt the strategies we were advocating in the book. So one important lesson from this experience is to not assume proponents of a methodology necessarily are adept at practicing that methodology!

What else did I learn? First of all, I've learned to seek clearer objectives in online courses, as well as in agendas for meetings of all kinds. For example, in a recent revision of an introductory course in information systems, a review of the stated objectives of the course revealed that they were primarily related to knowing factual information, while the assignments for the course related to much higher levels of understanding, including applying to real-world situations and integrating ideas in different ways to solve complex problems. Using concepts from levels of learning that were discussed in *Foundations of Learning,* I was able to rewrite the objectives so that they matched the actual content of the course and then tie those objectives to the evaluation of student work.

I'm far more sensitive to the difference between assessment and evaluation, which as the latest round of discussions about narrative evaluations continues, has come to good use. The words "assessment" and "evaluation" are often used in conversations and policies about education, yet their meanings are not always clear. To a process educator, "evaluation" is what occurs at the end, measuring someone's level of attainment of stated objectives. "Assessment," on the other hand, has the primary goal of improvement and, therefore, provides feedback to the learner in order to lead to that improvement. Both involve measurement, but for different reasons.

I've also been investigating effective ways to work collaboratively. Many of our online courses include teamwork and not all collaborative work has been beneficial for the learners. In revisions I've recently done, I've added specific directions for teams.

In addition, we're considering providing students a rubric from which they can assess their effectiveness as a team member.

From my co-authors, I also learned the power of storytelling. To give some vitality to the concepts such as effective reading, effective writing, problem solving and collaborative learning, we created characters. We then used their stories to illustrate these concepts that could easily have become dry and lifeless. For example, I showed how one of the characters applied the Learning Process Methodology to learning tennis. We even created Web pages for the characters, giving them different learning styles as well as goals and levels of learning.

And, as a result of this work, I have become a maker of rubrics. Only time will tell if they meet the goal of providing clarity to assessment for students and facilitators of learning. They certainly have provided a learning experience for me. What follows (page 66) is an example of a rubric that I developed for participation in online discussions.

Several goals are met with this rubric. First, and most importantly, it informs students about what constitutes quality participation in online discussions. Second, since this course is taught by a variety of instructors, it assists them as they evaluate student participation in discussions, steering them away from bland statements in contract evaluations, such as, "The student was an active participant in online discussions."

The process of my education continues.

Ruberic for Participation in Online Discussions Ê

Characteristic/ Level	Unacceptable	Minimally Acceptable	Acceptable	Excellent
Quantity	Does not participate or submits at end of time period	Submits one response to original question	Submits a thoughtful response to original question and to at least one other student	Engages with questions and with other students in a way that their presence is apparent
Quality	If there is a response, it is brief and does not contribute to the discussion.	Response is given in a timely manner and moves the discussion forward.	Response to original question and to other students helps class interpret material in a novel way.	The response is one that heightens the interaction and leads group to a higher level of understanding.
Overall Impression	The student doesn't care about online discussions.	The student is perceived by others as "there" but not fully engaged.	Can be depended on for a helpful response.	When this student has contributed, others make sure they read the contribution because they know this person will make a worthwhile contribution.

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The Overlooked Man

Robert Congemi, Northeast Center

My Uncle Edward was the overlooked man, at least, that's what people said about him. I guess what they had in mind was that he was some sort of symbol for all those people who nobody particularly thinks about, cares about, even notices. I have to confess it was hard not to think that way about him, and maybe even laugh a little about it.

"Edward is like a neutrino," my father once said to me. My father was a physicist. "We know there are trillions of them out there, filling in all the empty spaces in the universe, pretty much making up the universe, but nobody ever sees them, really knows they're there. A neutrino can pass right by you, go right through you, and you'd never know it."

If you asked me how I'd describe my uncle, I'd say that overall he was a lot like those stocky, Belgian men in the paintings by Magritte. You know the ones – the innocuous men in plain, tight-fitting black suits, in black bowler hats, usually holding umbrellas, floating in midair, like large, bemused Charley Chaplins. Yes, he was a lot like them, except that my Uncle Edward didn't have a bowler hat. Someone without a cultural background would say he was just an overweight, 40-year old man, perpetually in suit and tie, who always looked a bit lost.

Getting lost must have been something that had happened to my Uncle Edward early in life. In the family, there's a story of him as a teenager, surrounded by young men and women of high school age possessed of course by devilishness and sexuality. To tease him, almost on a daily basis, my Uncle Edward was urged to invite out on a date the 16-year old girl of his dreams, one Miss Vanessa LeMoyne. He was manipulated into thinking that she was receptive to such a gesture on his part, so that when he finally did approach her, on one of those rash, inexplicable occasions that afflicted him two or three times in his life, she recoiled in horror, in absolute terror and horror,

instinctively, she was quick and sad to say, whenever she told the story later.

"Ohhhhh, nooooooo," she told him to his face. "How could you think I would want to do that with you?"

Perhaps to compensate for fate's decree to have him a rather portly, lifelong, ineffectual, invisible man, my Uncle Edward became an unobtrusive and passionate collector of things, most notably stamps, coins, old phonograph records, books, innumerable books. With these things, especially books, he could fantasize about places he'd never gone to and perhaps never would.

"Why live and never know about life?" he'd say to me. "I can study about any place in the world, learn about anything. It's like going to the movies, even better."

My grandmother, with whom he lived until her death, as a gentle, caring son, was really very good about it all, this proclivity for possession of inanimate objects and intimacy with them. As long as Uncle Edward kept his things and did his fantasizing more or less in his own room, well out of her sight, she was happy enough. What was most important to her was that he shop for her, dispatch her financial affairs, pay attention to her personal needs.

"Edward is my godsend," she once told my mother, who was scrupulous about her visits to Granny. "He buys my tea, he files all my medical insurance forms and shovels the sidewalk in front of the house when it snows. I cannot do without him. And I won't."

There was a time when my uncle thought to be a school teacher. He was working in a lab, for the Department of Health in our area, compiling statistics on how mice reacted to various new antibiotics, a job my father managed to get for him through connections, when it occurred to my uncle that perhaps he could do more in life.

So, once again subject to what might be described as a fugitive existential gesture, a sudden, inexplicable attempt at personal redefining by a most domesticated man, my Uncle Edward left his position at the lab, in midlife quickly earned his university degree and teaching license, and one day stood at the front of a sophomore English class of a large, suburban, contemporary American high school, a terrifying prospect even for some more robust personalities.

How he survived nearly two weeks of such an exposure is one of the mysteries of family lore, but, inevitably, inexorably, the time came when Uncle Edward found himself at the crossroads of his pedagogical career. Members of his class were streaming at will in and out of his classroom, willy-nilly, oblivious to my uncle's presence. He had just given up his attempt to instruct his students in the intricacies of the predicate nominative and predicate adjective, and was hoping desperately that the dating and mating colloquies of his students would at least not be heard too far down the school corridors, when the debacle began.

"You really shouldn't be talking and leaving the classroom whenever you want to," my uncle tried to say to his students. "The principal himself might be right outside, and we don't want him to think there's any trouble going on in here."

"Quack, quack," came a sound from somewhere in the back of the room. "Quack, quack, quack!"

"What is that?" my Uncle Edward asked, in general.

One of the girls in his class who always sat right in front of him, who always sat in front of all her teachers, said, "It's the sound of a duck, sir."

My uncle was confused. "A duck? A duck? Why make the sound of a duck?"

The girl tittered, and so did some other girls and boys sitting close by, overhearing.

"Because they don't know how to make the sound of a penguin back there," the girl continued to explain.

"But why make the sound of a penguin?" Uncle Edward asked.

The tittering continued, despite the fundamental kindness of these least cruel of his students.

"Is that a sound for me? Are they making that sound about me?" My Uncle Edward simply could not give credence to the facts. "Why would that be a sound for me?"

"Quack, quack," the aria continued, from another corner of the room. And then students started throwing things, though only at each other, not directly at Uncle Edward as the principal of the high school was fair-minded enough later to point out to other officials of the school.

At my Uncle Edward's return to the lab, which was again accomplished with the help of my father's influence, my uncle decided to stay with statistics and mice for the next several years. Whenever he was asked about his life, during some errant conversation, my uncle was quite forthcoming.

"Apparently, I am a man for whom people find little value. It is not that I mind their opinion so much, as it is my belief that I have never been given enough of a chance. I know that smacks of some kind of poor sportsmanship, or self-pity. But I don't really see it that way, if I may be allowed to make an observation. I truly believe that if things could be different in my life, other things could be different."

I am ashamed to say that no one entirely followed him on this point.

At any rate, one spring afternoon when he was nearly 50, with the sun shining through my Uncle Edward's lab window like a messenger from the gods, my uncle suddenly decided to take himself on a trip. My uncle's aspiration, typical of him, of course, was not extraordinary. Not much time was needed to elapse before he settled on a trip to New York City, a brief, almost-shy trip to a land whose fabled places of culture long had beckoned to him. It was arranged that he would go for one entire week, that my mother and father would look after Granny, who had now shrunken to a tiny

lady necessitating exotic and perpetual care, and that my uncle would take himself on a whirlwind tour of museums, monuments, historical spots, famous neighborhoods, et cetera.

It fell to me, it became my lot, if I may be a bit poetical, to take him to the train station in our town, for my uncle had never learned to drive an automobile. I remember him standing on the platform at the station, amidst other passengers, not alien as he, but solid, respectable, serious-looking business men and women, families, couples, goal-oriented, bright-looking young people impatient, eager, to be on their way, wherever that was. Uncle Edward held his valise in his hands, grinning, as cute as a pumpkin.

"Lawrence, it's all right," he said to me. "I'm just fine. Go on your way. You have your things to do, I can guess. I'll be just fine."

"No, Uncle Edward," I said, to my eternal credit. "I'll stay until I see you safely off, until I see the train disappearing down the track." At that, we both laughed.

I would have given him the heavens if I could.

According to how I heard the story of what happened to my uncle in New York, he arrived at Grand Central Station, on time and happily enough. He checked into the hotel where he had a reservation, at low government rates, and was quite satisfied at the sight of what would be his tiny home for the week – a tidy bed, a chair, a lamp. It was only when he descended into the busy streets of New York did his courage finally desert him. Inexplicably, the immense energy and opportunity of the City did not cause his spirit to soar, as he had every reason to believe it would. Instead, the numbers of people suddenly engulfing him, with their hurry and certainty, overwhelmed him, depressed him, and, in a moment not unfairly described as hysteria, my uncle retreated to his room after only one or two more of these sorties into the streets, and occupied himself exclusively by watching old movies on the well-used television set provided by the hotel. My uncle was a veritable connoisseur of old movies – comedies, Westerns, mysteries, cine noirs – and so, on his bed in the security of his hotel

room, he watched movies for most all of his week, venturing down in the hotel elevator and outside into the streets only to get something to eat – that is, until the last day of his trip.

On the afternoon of his last day, before he was to leave New York quite early the next morning, Uncle Edward, after several hours of watching a Western film festival, just as suddenly as he had done things several times before, decided that he had enough of himself, that he was entirely disappointed with how he was behaving. In a repudiation of his fate, or at least in an attempt to repudiate his fate, he left the hotel, hailed a cab and had the cab driver take him through various neighborhoods of the City – midtown, the diamond district, the fashion district, Chelsea, Tribeca. On and on he went: Greenwich Village, Soho, Little Italy, Chinatown. In the end, he had the cab driver let him out on the Lower East Side, by now Uncle Edward wild with momentary abandon.

"This is where you want to be, mister?" the cab driver asked him, surprised.

"That's right," Uncle Edward said. "I feel like finding a jolly-good bar on the Lower East Side and having a good, stiff drink."

"But do you know where you're going?" the cab driver further asked. The cab driver, a person could see, was a pleasant enough man underneath his quintessentially skeptical, urban exterior.

"No. Why should I?" Uncle Edward asked. "Why should one always know where one is going? Is that the path to greatness?"

"Well, I don't know about the path to greatness," the cab driver said. "But in this neighborhood you should have an idea of where in hell you're going."

"I'll take my chances, sir," Uncle Edward told the cab driver. "I have been careful long enough in my life."

"Boy, you meet all kinds of weirdoes in this town," the cab driver mumbled to himself, as he took Uncle Edward's money, watched him get out of the cab, and prepared to drive off. "Try McGeary's then," he said, as parting advice. "On Second Avenue. You might have some fun there, and maybe you won't even get mugged."

"Thank you," my uncle said to him, as the cab driver moved the cab into traffic, and then indeed vanished into thin air.

Looking about, my uncle oriented himself, enjoying the worn, old buildings, the people around him in ordinary clothes rather than high fashion, their faces generally frank and undistinguished rather than high-powered and affluent. There was litter in the streets, and my uncle could see overflowing garbage cans against the buildings, but the sight of all this made him happy, even exhilarated.

"Ah," he said aloud to himself. "This will do. Yes, this will do."

Walking in the direction the cab driver had indicated, Uncle Edward found himself smiling broadly at people as they passed him, and in his exuberance would have tipped them his hat, had he had one. A few blocks later, somehow finding his way, he crossed a street and went boldly into the bar the cab driver had recommended.

McGeary's was crowded, a few people eating at tables, but mostly drinking, men surrounding the bar with their whiskies or beer in front of them or in their hands, the bartenders furiously working to fill orders. My uncle saw that everyone obviously was having an extraordinary time, and this, too, pleased him greatly. It took him a few moments, but then in one far corner of the bar he saw a particular stirring going on, and when he managed to position himself better, he saw that a portly man with a round, meaty face and tired, shinning eyes was reading from on open book that he had in his hand. The man's gray-black hair was furiously tousled and his clothes were rumpled, but he was reading with terrible,

glorious energy, booming out his words to the delight of his audience.

"What is going on?" my uncle asked a man beside him, who was holding a glass of whiskey and had his eyes fixed on the figure before them.

The man gestured with his head toward the reading figure. "It's himself," the man said. "It's the great man himself, Shamus Flanagan. He comes to McGeary's when he's in this country. He feels at home here, and he doesn't mind reading to us. It's a wonderful thing he does."

"What? What?" my uncle stuttered.

At the words of the man holding the glass of whiskey, my Uncle Edward couldn't believe what he had just heard, what was apparently happening to him. He had read much in his time, and the famous poet only a few yards before him had of course been a favorite of his, we all knew that. My uncle had gone to the poet's lyrics and books many times when my uncle's soul, so starved, yearned for something else besides the ordinariness, the banality, the emptiness of his own life. The poet, as others writers, had taken my uncle to a higher reality, a finer reality that soothed my uncle's sadness, that comforted him in his despair.

As if following a script that he already knew, my uncle made his way up close to the bar, got the bartender's attention and, though he was not a drinking man, ordered himself a whiskey, took it from the bartender with gladness, and turned back to the poet. The poet was now declaiming louder than before, booming and bombastulating out his lines, sending them with welcomed

passion to the delighted audience about him. The poet swayed back and forth with the emotion of his poetry, waving his free hand in the air, the crowd cheering him on. My Uncle Edward began swaying back and forth himself, in sympathy, grateful sympathy, in hungry union with the great poet. Suddenly, my Uncle Edward was raising his glass high into the air, above all the others, now for the moment someone other than himself, saluting the poet with the grandest exuberance, shouting out.

"Yes, yes, that's it, sir," he called out, his voice above those of all the others, almost above the voice of the poet himself. "Yes, yes, that's it. Read on. Please. Read on, Shamus Flanagan. Take us to where only you can. Please, please."

The others in the bar began turning and looking at my uncle as he went on, outside himself. The great poet himself heard him.

"I am glad I am here, sir," my Uncle Edward said, shouting. "I am glad … I … am … here!"

The great poet, immensely pleased and amused, actually paused in his reading, grinned, took up his own glass and raised it to my uncle. My uncle returned the gesture, smiling back, a beaming Charlie Chaplin. My Uncle Edward perceived that he was a part of history, at the center of the world, finally, and that he would relish every moment of it.

"Yes, sir, I am glad I'm here," he said one more time. "This is where I should be. Where I always should be. Where I always should have been."

Intellectual Underpinnings

Leslie Satin, Metropolitan Center and New York University

Leslie Satin, a long-time mentor at the Metropolitan Center and now on the faculty at New York University, originally wrote this piece as her contribution to the Society of Dance History Scholars conference at Skidmore College in June 2008. A version of the paper also will be included in Dance Research Journal, *2009.*

A few family snapshots:

1. One day, my father and I stood, chatting, in a bank lobby. "I just don't get it," he said. "You've got more brains in your head than you have in your feet."

2. My husband sings in an a cappella chorus, and for one Mother's Day concert, we all wore necklaces emblazoned with words our mothers had never said: "Choreography and dance," mine proclaimed, "What a wonderful career choice!"

3. After watching me perform some years ago, one of my children offered the following critical précis: "Your bra was sticking out."

I could go on with tales of familial, as well as fraternal and collegial, disinterest and disappointment, not to mention resentment and the occasional frisson linked to artist children and parents, associated with a career that seemingly joins the extremes of narcissism, the temporal and physical limitations mandated by the life cycle of the human body, and the apparent separation from the left-brain activities supported by other fields and disciplines. Common Western wisdom has it that dancers are dumb, in both senses: the silent wordlessness of traditional concert dance, and the absence of intellect long associated with the profession. Dancing is viewed as an articulation-in-motion of the Cartesian split, its thoughtless activator lulled by the gentle tapping of computer keys coming from the other, smarter side of the room. As far as

family goes, I'm mostly over it. And I've sounded off on this before, complaining, for one, about a brilliant theorist who refused, at a workshop, to remove her socks – to engage her material body when her discursive body, however contingent, was so comfortable.

Aren't we past this tired rift? Yes, I think, and no. Like others of us who are both dancers and scholars, I live on both sides of the room; exploring the mind/body relationship is central to my dance practice, my teaching and my writing. It is precisely that interaction of the experiential and the intellectual that draws me now to the studio, now to the computer, imbuing one temporary situation with the implications of the other. I – we – revel in both our material and our discursive bodies.

> *It is precisely that interaction of the experiential and the intellectual that draws me now to the studio, now to the computer, imbuing one temporary situation with the implications of the other.*

In the dance world, there is a long history of intellectual inspiration and involvement, however suppressed in the discourse. Ideas and language, spoken and written, have a prominent presence in the dances themselves, among dance practitioners, between dancers/choreographers and critics/scholars. Choreographer and film-maker Yvonne Rainer's twin 1960s sentiments, "the

mind is a muscle" and "my body remains the enduring reality," continue to function as skeletons, as it were, for continuing discussions and debates about what it means to see dance, to do it, to get it.

But even in much of academia, dance remains suspect as a field for research and as an epistemological source for that research. We encounter the perplexing aesthetic and intellectual conservatism of college dance students who talk the talk but are proudly antagonistic to post-modern dance, historical or current, often not having actually seen any of it. And in the studio, we pine for, or insist on, or maybe have bodily experience that transcends or bypasses cognition.

What I focus on here is an uplifting observation from the contemporary dance world. (I'm talking about the "downtown dance" world of New York City, not the world at large.) This is the resurgence of interest, especially among younger choreographers, in the explicit interplay of ideas and dance-making that resonates in their dances; that embodies their knowledge of their experimental choreographic and artistic forebears – not only the Judson Dance Theater (the group of choreographers whose early 1960s experiments initiated what came to be known as post-modern dance) but adherents of a range of improvisational, theatrical and performative practices; and/or that recalls the intellectual excitement underlying earlier avant-garde choreographic movements. There is much to say about these performances and the ideas that inform them. In this panel, though, the topic is dance and writing, and so for the moment I am keeping my eye on the discourse: how we talk and write about dance.

There are many reasons for the resurgence of public thoughtfulness, primary among them our extraordinary access, via the Internet, to information and communication. Clearly, technology has changed our

beliefs and practices of developing and sharing ideas, not to mention developing and sharing dances themselves, in effect redefining choreographic and critical (and pedagogical) practice and radically extending the possibilities for improvisatory and scripted conversation. This immersion in communication is playing out in dances that articulate their makers' informed ideas about dance and movement, their relationships to dance historical ideas that have been passed on to them and/or reverberate through the zeitgeist, and their assumption that it is important to know about how their choices are representationally charged: how dance makes meaning.

Several institutions have long played a key role in guiding the advancement of contemporary dance. Movement Research (MR), Dance Theater Workshop (DTW), and Danspace Project, in their programming of dance performances, including works-in-progress (such as DTW's Studio Series, MR's Judson Church and Open Performance Series, and Danspace's DraftWork Series); workshops on choreography, video, grant-writing, management and many other topics; MR's Studies Project; presentations and panel discussions on a range of areas of concern to dancers; publications – especially Movement Research Performance Journal – in which writing by and about members of the dance community addresses significant issues, often experimenting with the form as well as the content of its writing; and other programs and strategies contribute both to building the dance community and to fostering the integration of the artistic and intellectual concerns of its members. And now, critically, newer experimental laboratories like Chez Bushwick and the Center for Performance Research extend the facilitation offered by these more established institutions and by other arenas for dancers to re-think their way through the form, in words and actions.

Two circumstances, one fairly recent, one ongoing, strike me as notable in this regard. The first is the Nothing Festival, conceived by choreographer Tere O'Connor and presented at Dance Theater Workshop in the spring of 2007. The second is *Critical Correspondence,* an online program on the Movement Research Web site for discussion of contemporary dance-world practice.

The Nothing Festival was set up as a way for choreographers to bypass the usual routes to production, in particular the grant system – which requires that we describe a dance that doesn't yet exist, or identify a theme or subject for that dance – or the marketing system, which, similarly, urges artists to discuss (in a commercially efficacious way) what may only be a sensation, an impulse, an image. Moreover, when O'Connor got funding for the project itself and offered eight choreographers the opportunity to make a dance, skipping those systems, he also asked them to include "nothing" as a choreographic point of departure: no predetermined music, collaborators, ideas, etc. This last aspect was confounding to numerous viewers, who pointed out that in some ways, every artistic project starts with nothing – the proverbial blank page – and at the same time is loaded with the artist's aesthetic history. Jennifer Dunning, of The New York Times, reminded us that the grant and marketing system is beside the point for most unfunded or underfunded dance-makers anyway. And Deborah Jowitt began her supportive review in the Village Voice with the admission that she had forgotten O'Connor's suggestion that critics, too, start with nothing, and take no notes.

Whatever the complaints and disagreements, the festival itself was hot. The dances themselves were, in most people's view, a mixed bag insofar as how, or for that matter whether, the choreographers incorporated the creative directive … and if the dances worked, or were good, according to whatever evaluative criteria viewers had. What especially engaged me was the discussion, in person, in print and online, that accompanied the performances. There were panel discussions with all the choreographers from each of the two programs after the performances, and on one weekend afternoon, there was a well-attended three-hour-long open discussion for O'Connor, the choreographers and the community. It was not entirely easy going – there was some dissension over what that community was, especially in regard to the presence of critics – but there was a spirited, stimulating conversation in which a wide range of dancers and viewers considered what they had seen in terms of aesthetics, philosophy, theory, history, criticism,

pedagogy, pleasure and practicality. And the discussion continued not only into the street outside DTW but, later, into the pages of blogs and essays and into the next semester's classrooms and studios.

Critical Correspondence "aims to activate discourse on dance and movement-based performance work." It offers an open forum for dancers and choreographers to publish their own statements and interview each other about choreography, dance and curating. There are discussions by choreographers and dancers of specific works and personal and professional circumstances; individual essays and recurring blogs; formal one-on-one's and casual round-tables; plugs for shows; thoughts on writing, funding, and presentational strategies for dance, and how these elements are linked to political and aesthetic frameworks. Critical Correspondence, whose very name and Movement Research address position language and dance as parallel structures of signification, exemplifies post-modern dancers' critical, analytical approaches to making and reflecting on dance as a cultural practice, an individual and collective effort, and an opportunity for subverting conventions in and out of the dance world.

A few excerpts suggest the span of concerns, ideas and modes of writing:

Choreographer Clarinda Mac Low, in a June 2008 blog, on the language we use to interact with dance:

Is there a way to talk and write about performance that mirrors the experience of the experience? Rather than a value judgment or a critical analysis, can we share a sense of our inner reaction? … A nonverbal performance form leaves a poetic trace that is difficult to represent in narrative language. Maybe the most appropriate review of many dance works is actually a poem rather than a description of events of [sic] a series of critical thoughts.

In a 2006 interview, choreographer Levi Gonzalez talks about curating, and the critical aesthetics of AUNTS, the experimental Brooklyn dance space. "There's a little bit of a D.I.Y [Do-it-Yourself] aesthetic," he says, "and I totally see rock show … and that it's a very

social environment." He reads from a "manifesto:"

AUNTS is about … [t]he dance … that is known and expected and unknown and unexpected … . that seeps into the cracks of street lights, subway commotion … drunk nights … . AUNTS constantly tests a model of producing dance/performance/parties[,] that supports the development of … contemporary dancing[,] that expects to be adopted, adapted, replicated and perpetuated by any person who would like to use it. Where performing can last five seconds or five hours; never a "work in progress." Where the work … defies the regulation of institution, capitalism and consumerism.

In 2007, French choreographer Jérôme Bel, talking to Becky Hilton, explains his evolving belief, buoyed by philosophy and everyday screw-ups, in talking as dance performance. He describes Véronique Doisneau talking, in their dance, about her life in the Paris Opera ballet, and says that his duet with Pichet Klunchun was supposed to be the same but about the Thai traditional dance called Khon. [Then] I couldn't reach him in Bangkok because I missed many rehearsals because I didn't hear the clock because I was jetlagged … blahblahblah. I didn't have time to make the solo for him so I was forced to perform the meeting onstage.

Finally, in a 2006 interview, dancer Carolyn Hall describes her decision to leave dance for a career in environmental biology. "It's just this other part of me that needed to speak up again," she says. "It's time." Describing her difficult decision, and her intentionally packed schedule of last-time dancing, she says: "It's not that I wanted to leave dance, it's just that I wanted to do this other thing."

> *Some truths prevail: bones are bones, muscles are muscles, and, as Merce Cunningham once said, the only thing you can do with your leg is bend it or straighten it.*

There are many other sites, online and in cafés, living rooms, classes, studios and conference rooms, offering opportunities for excited conversation about dance. It is enormously important to keep talking and writing, in and out of the studio and performance space. Some truths prevail:

bones are bones, muscles are muscles, and, as Merce Cunningham once said, the only thing you can do with your leg is bend it or straighten it. At the same time, everything changes: bodies, ideas and how we understand them. Dancers recognize how lucky we are – it's why I'm still in this game – to do work that offers the potential, even the likelihood, for daily revelation. Sometimes that happens at what I think we experience at the body level. Sometimes it takes place in some conscious scholarly effort, or in a left/right-brain merging of everything we know from our first Semiotic stirrings to our latest grapplings with Kristeva or Beckett or Rainer or Thich Nhat Hanh. When it comes to dance, as practitioners and as viewers, all we have to do is show up, fully, fortified by knowledge but unbound by expectations.

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Enhancing Commitments to Adults as Developing Learners

Catherine Marienau, School For New Learning, DePaul University

The following is an edited transcript of a talk given by Catherine Marienau as part of a workshop she facilitated at the Niagara Frontier Center on June 22, 2006. Many thanks to Empire State College colleagues Nan DiBello and Sandra Johnson for arranging this visit, to Jonathan Royce for help in the transcribing process, and to Catherine Marienau for her ideas, her generosity, and for her willingness to be a part of this effort to capture the heart of what was an interactive presentation.

Back in 2000, Kathleen Taylor, Morris Fidler and I wrote a book called *Developing Adult Learners*. In that book we challenged ourselves to articulate what drives us and what we stand for. This is what I wrote:

"I entered the adult learning field in 1971, through the alternative higher education movement, wanting to make a difference in individuals' lives and to reform higher education. In the fashion of many of our adult learners, I was working full time while earning my advanced degrees. I've made my professional home in individualized, outcomes-based programs for adults at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral levels. And as a practitioner, I've always been hungry for theories and models that would help me understand more and act more effectively. Because I love to work directly with adult learners, I felt that my emphasis would be as a practitioner. I've directed my teaching, my mentoring, administration and consulting work towards fostering individuals' growth and development, in order to be with them on that journey (XVI)."

Challenges to Our Ideals?

The focus of this session is to use the lenses of adult learning and development to both affirm the philosophy and practices that I understand represent Empire State College and help to expand your thinking about ways in which you might improve or enrich your practices. Through these lenses, I hope to help you explore some of what's so powerful about your own practices. From where I've stood over the years, that means the individualized learning model, the emphasis on learning from experience, contract learning, mentoring and attention to the whole person.

[The following is from audience responses:] Here's my summary of what you've said: You want adult learners to walk out of Empire State College with the capacities to be: lifelong learners, critical thinkers, agents of their own learning, self-confident, well-rounded, aware of living in a diverse society, strong communicators, serious inquirers/researchers, self-disciplined, and informed citizens of the world. I know that Empire State College has faced and continues to face some challenges to these ideals; The School for New Learning of DePaul University where I work does also.

The constant reward for me in working with adult learners is the opportunity to participate in their learning and their growth. The constant challenge for me – and this is a real challenge – is working to better align the ideals of adult learning with the structures and practices in our institutional settings and to make education more hospitable for adult learners in every possible way.

Standing here today, I believe that we – and by "we" I mean those of us in adult higher education programs that are built on innovative practices – are at a crossroads in higher education. I think it's a pivotal point for us. I believe that we are increasingly vulnerable to the erosion of our practices by decision-makers who don't know – or don't care – about the impact of some policies on adult learners and their learning. I also think we might be vulnerable to our own complacency, especially as many of us have been doing this work for such a long time. My own experience, and that of my

Catherine Marienau

colleagues, is that there's a tendency to take the work for granted. As we think about these kinds of issues, we have to also think about our role as educators of adults and what we prompt our learners to do. We want them to examine and question their assumptions; we want them to move out of their comfort-zones; and we want them to expand their knowledge and skills to enrich their lives. I keep asking myself two key questions: Are we doing the same for ourselves? Are we asking those kinds of harder questions and examining what we are doing? Just look at Empire State College or the School for New Learning or many other institutions: we have over 30 years' experience. I wonder: what are we really learning from that wealth of experience? How are we using that to motivate ourselves to ask the next series of questions?

The practices associated with alternative adult degree programs – the individualized learning model, contract learning, recognition of prior experience, learning from experience, mentoring, whole-person-oriented student services – may seem like old hat to us. But when you look at what's going on in higher education today, these kinds of models and approaches are still relatively on the periphery, and most institutions aren't going to get close to the gold mine that is Empire State College. They could. But I'm not wildly optimistic

that they will, even though this model and similar models have proven effective and powerful for adults.

A few years ago, the Alliance of Alternative Degree Programs for Adults changed its name to the Adult Higher Education Alliance (AHEA). The organization intentionally dropped "Alternative" from its primary identity. I was concerned about that because I think that even after 30-plus years, we need to keep the notion of being innovative and alternative in the forefront. Some people felt very strongly that this change was a bold statement, one that communicated that our innovative practices and philosophies are now more a part of the mainstream and that we need to claim our place in the mainstream. I think that's a noble goal, yet I wonder about actually realizing it. I worry that we are subject to erosion by mandated policies or, as I suggested, by our own complacency.

At the same time, this is an exciting time in adult higher education, in particular because of the wealth of experience we have garnered. Research and theory are starting to catch up with our experience. We have exciting work coming out, and your colleague Sandra Johnson is representative of some of that work. Her monograph, which is part of the Jossey-Bass "New Directions" series, is on the neuroscience of adult learning. It's a great opportunity to bring together the emerging area of brain research with what we know about adults as learners. It underscores so beautifully why what we're doing at Empire State College and at the School for New Learning works for so many people. We haven't had that kind of evidence-based research before. It's on the cutting edge with much more to be done.

Forms of Learning

What's interesting about the desired outcomes for adult learners that all of you just named is that they represent a higher order of thinking. While this list might describe the goals of any good higher education, much of what traditional higher education focuses on is reproductive and not reconstructive learning.

In reproductive learning, the emphasis is on increasing the knowledge base, and that

is done mainly through memorizing and reproducing what other people already know. So much of our traditional education has emphasized being able to memorize and reproduce knowledge. This is an important aspect of learning, especially when people are learning something new. They do need to know definitions, terminology and foundational ideas. But we don't want learners operating at just that level; we want them to be able to move into a realm of deeper understanding, of being able to see things in a different way, of being able to change as a person. When we talk about "understanding that we live in a diverse society," and having "a wider understanding of the world," and becoming a "lifelong learner" and developing "critical thinking skills," and "owning your own education" – these are all aspects not of reproductive but of reconstructive learning. They involve not just acquiring information, but also interpreting it, and that's where the critical thinking skills come in.

Reconstructive learning engages learners in "meaning-making" and meaningful or significant learning. Such learning helps people make connections between what they already know and what they're going to learn. It helps either affirm or challenge existing beliefs, and it can guide people to action. It's the reconstructive side that we're especially interested in, particularly when we're talking about the intersection between adult learning and development. One other way in which people think about this is by explaining that the reproductive learning is the surface approach, and the reconstructive is the deeper approach to learning.

Adult Learning and Development from a Practitioner's View

What I want to do here is provide a selective overview of adult learning and development perspectives that, as a practitioner, I have found useful in mentoring and teaching adult learners. I will focus on learning from experience (on the learning side) and how "meaning-making" offers a bridge to change and growth (the development side). There are several models that I think can help us better appreciate the complexities of our students' lives and what that suggests for our teaching and mentoring. Rather than subscribing to a particular theory or model,

I favor developing a repertoire from which I can draw, depending on the learner or the situation. I look for clues to what might be going on with this student or with this group of students.

I am drawn to constructivism as a frame for looking at both adult learning and development and for thinking of the individual as a meaning-making system. As humans, we construct our own realities, we create our own meanings, rather than seeking a set body of knowledge or truth out there to be discovered. In this sense, we are constructing and co-constructing knowledge and different realities with other people as we encounter new and different experiences in the world. [Note: what follows represents revised text based on feedback from the audience.]

Let me offer a couple of quite basic premises: one is that learning and experience are inseparable, but they're not equivalent; the other is that learning from experience is not possible without reflection. Your identification of critical thinking skills as one of the key outcomes of an Empire State College education is very much in keeping with that notion. I place – as do many other people – experience at the center of learning. I appreciate Jack Mezirow's definition of learning: that learning is a process of "using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of [the] meaning of one's experience to guide future action." I like this notion of "guiding future action (p. 162)." This definition basically says that a person is going to relate a new situation to a previous one, and go from there.

According to Sandra Johnson's new book about the brain, this is how our brains work. We look for what we already know, or something that is familiar, or similar to this new thing in front of us – our brain searches for that. Being able to connect what we know with what we're going to be learning is critical. Mezirow says we're interpreting what we're learning through the lens of what we already know. The process of learning means that we can interpret the past differently, if we choose, so that we can come up with new interpretations. Doing that is going to guide our future actions yielding a new, slightly enriched set of interpretations.

Development of critical thinking skills is a key feature of an Empire State College experience. Warren Bennis says: "experiences aren't truly ours until we think about them, examine them, question them, reflect upon them, and finally understand them. The point is to use one's experiences, rather than be used by them; to be the designer not the design, so that experiences empower rather than imprison." I resonate with this notion – that we are informed and guided by our experiences, but we are not held subject to them – we can move beyond them.

In my work with my students, I'm always curious about how people actually learn from their life experience, and what and why individuals learn from certain experiences and not others. Why do some experiences have a greater potential for learning than others?

When we talk about giving credit for life experience in our field, those of us who are careful say that we are giving credit for learning from life experience. I'm interested in the potential for learning in any given situation. One of the notions is that unless we attend to it very carefully, little or no learning is going to take place. Jarvis said that "life is about experience and wherever there's life there's the potential for learning, and we need to emphasize that potential." Sometimes if an experience is very foreign, or quite new to us, we might reject it because it doesn't connect to something that we already know, so there's a tendency to avoid it.

[Comment from Sandra Johnson]: "If the brain can't find something that's familiar, it's stuck, and so we have to find ways to make that familiar and then the brain can start to make connections through metaphors – through finding meaning. It's like Vygotsky's work: we need to find out what kind of learning a student can do on her own versus what kind of learning can the student can do with a mentor."

[Question from audience]: "So is it that the more senses that you use – maybe reflecting on things that you've experienced using all of those senses – the more meaning it might have?"

Catherine: "Right: the more senses that are involved, the more likely you're going to connect with these experiences. And when

things are really foreign or new, we can't assume that the connection is going to happen at all, because as Sandra mentioned, internally people might avoid it, or retreat because they don't have something to hang on to. The other side is that if something is very familiar or similar to what we do know, it doesn't get on the radar screen because it's so commonplace. John Dewey told us that not all experience educates, and some can actually be mis-educative. I think we all know about that."

John Dewey: A Digression

I just want to say a little something about John Dewey because he helped set the course of my professional life. This was in the early '70s when I had started working in the University Without Walls (UWW) program at the University of Minnesota, one of the first 12 UWWs to be started. I was passionately committed to reforming higher education. One of the problems was that I didn't know much of anything about the field of education. I didn't even know what curriculum meant. I didn't have any sense of the history of education or its role in society. I had been an anthropology major. Basically, I just didn't understand education. But I was going to change it! My knowledge base (or lack thereof) made me a kind of reckless change agent, because I wasn't able to look critically at higher education. I was going on instinct and zeal.

I was influenced by working, during my undergraduate years, in a place called the H.E.L.P. Center (Higher Education for Low-income People). It was a one-stop center for minority students, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) recipients, and ex-offenders. All the types of people who typically weren't being served by higher education came through that center. We weren't even talking about adult learners at that point; we were talking about the underserved, the disenfranchised. I went back to graduate school and found John Dewey, who gave me this whole framework for thinking about what we were doing and why it was so important.

Many of you know David Kolb's work: learning styles, experiential learning – I don't want to spend much time on the learning cycle itself except by way of illustration with my experience at the H.E.L.P. Center those

many years ago. I was a white, lower-middle class, farm-raised person who came to work with people whose life experiences were enormously different from my own. As an academic tutor, I was exposed to different life circumstances, different life issues, and different ways of seeing the world. All of that really got my attention, but I didn't quite know what to make of it.

During the couple of years that I worked there, I saw people dealing with serious distractions to their learning and education. They were terribly motivated to be in school, they wanted to improve their lives, but the barriers were enormous, even with the help from the center. And, people made harsh judgments about the students: "Why don't they come to class? Why don't they show up for their exams? Why do they keep running back to the reservation? Why? Why aren't they acting the way 19 year-old, middle-class, full-time students are supposed to be acting?"

Then I began to think about what it means to help educate people. It's not just about what we're helping to put into their minds; it's about the whole support system that surrounds them. I didn't know I was interested in student services, but I became very interested because I was thinking about how you provide tutoring and personal counseling and support groups and financial assistance and child care, and all of those supports that are important, so that an adult learner can put his or her attention on learning.

Emotion and Learning

A lot of what I have been talking about so far has to do with "heads-up" stuff: learning and cognition. But the H.E.L.P Center experience and years of working with adults have shown me that there's more to it than that: there's the emotional and the physical response that one gets in any learning situation. In education, we've recognized for a long time that emotions and feelings are an important part of the learning process. But if you're like my colleagues and me, we tend to skirt around that, because that's sometimes an uneasy area in which to be involved. Now what we are learning from the neuroscience research is that there is a very tight connection between emotions and learning and critical thinking. In effect,

our feelings and emotions are precursors to learning and to be able to think critically about something. As James Zull puts it, "If we don't react and feel, we don't think (pp. 73-75)."

This perspective got my attention because when I was introduced to critical thinking back in college, the focus was on distancing yourself and being separate from. But this notion that our feelings and our emotions are prompting our thinking is an important piece. Zull says that the brain is an organ of emotion, and that emotion, reason and memory are all linked. When we become aware of a bodily feeling, when we're in a situation where we're in a classroom and praying that the teacher doesn't call on us, and we have that feeling in our gut and can't concentrate, or our brain suddenly is paralyzed. All of this is crucial to learning, or not learning. Think about the many situations in which we feel paralyzed or confused, or we get impatient. In the neuroscience of adult learning, we see just how our brain goes into a purely survival mode.

When we're in situations where fear, anxiety or confusion are the driving emotions, it's going to interfere with our ability to be open to learning and to use our critical thinking skills. But there are other feelings that can be aroused also, and those are the more positive ones of feeling excited, motivated, stimulated and curious – curiosity being a huge one. We need to think about how we can work with our learners in ways that invite this kind of curiosity and reduce the fear or the anxiety.

Kegan's Orders of Consciousness

This recognition is very challenging because as the teacher or the mentor, we see the behavior, but we don't know what's going on internally. And, often the learners themselves aren't all that aware of what's going on inside of them. Robert Kegan developed a scheme of how do we deal with students who have negative feelings that interfere with their learning. Kegan says that one way to help us understand whether a student is in a "second order of consciousness" is to be aware of whether they are more likely to rely on dualistic thinking: what's right, what's wrong. If so, they're going to need very concrete step-by-step directions. You need to walk the

person through, get the person to feel calm and a little more confident. If they're in a "third order of consciousness," their sense is, "I am my feelings." In such a state, they really are not able yet to step aside and reflect critically on what those feelings are about. These are difficult learners to work with because they are going to need a lot of affirmation and support before they will be able to step out of that paralysis, or that state of: "I am my experience."

Let me just add one other piece. This also comes from Kegan in his book, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (1994). Kegan is a constructivist developmental psychologist at Harvard. He has worked with adult learners for years and has a keen understanding of the complexities of adults' lives. His work helps us appreciate that our students are coming to us as parents, as intimate partners, as workers, and as citizens; and they're also coming to us as students and learners. When we think about what Kegan argues are the "demands" of living in this world, it's pretty daunting. We need to be able to:

- Institute a vision and induct your family members into it.

- Have a well-differentiated and clearly-defined sense of self, and still be able to engage in intimate and growing relationships.

- At work be self-initiating, self-correcting, self-evaluating, rather than be dependent on others to frame and solve the problem.

- Look at and evaluate the values and beliefs of psychological and cultural inheritance, rather than be captive to them.

- Be a self-directed learner (and all the things that come with that).

Kegan argues that these are at the "fourth order of consciousness," not the second, not the third. It's not dualism or multiplicities; it's not received or subjective knowing; rather, for him, the demands of being adults in the world we live in today really call on us to be operating in a way that many of us don't know how. And many of our students are not there either. His basic message is that we would take as our challenge and our goal to help move our learners though these different levels.

Realizing Our Ideals

In keeping with Kegan's perspective, one of the central pillars that supports your practices here at Empire State College is that we cannot take this fourth order of consciousness for granted and that students need this help, this guidance, this attention, and this support. We always need to be alert to how the policies and procedures support or get in the way of supporting our learners in their development. The individualized learning model to which you subscribe is crucial to providing really powerful learning for adult students. I also find that it's a hard model to sustain. I know that where I am at the School for New Learning , much of the movement is to believe, "OK we've had enough of you being alternative all of these years, so could you just start acting like everybody else, please? Because we're tired of making these exceptions." I guess we still haven't educated the system well enough to know that they're supposed to accommodate us.

Many pressures and forces mitigate against sustaining an individualized approach, yet in my view, it is one of the most important and central aspects of what we can provide for our students. We know that all human learning is individualized. All the research points in that direction. The 37 years of experience you've had working at Empire State College with individual learners needs to be mined as much as possible to show the field the evidence of that.

> *Many pressures and forces mitigate against sustaining an individualized approach, yet in my view, it is one of the most important and central aspects of what we can provide for our students.*

Art Chickering, one of the founders of Empire State College, published an article in the May/June issue of *About Campus*. He's

been a champion of individualized education for 57 years now, and he said that we're still far from creating conditions in which all students can learn. He says we need to learn how – he talks about the three Rs: "to recognize, respect and respond" to the wide-ranging individual differences among our learners. If we do this – and he says it's a really big if – then "many more of our learners are going to achieve learning that lasts." And Chickering argues that it comes down to asking three central questions:

- What does each student know, and what can he/she do?
- What does each student want to learn?
- How does each person learn best?

Chickering says if we keep those three questions at the forefront, and "recognize, respect and respond" to the individual differences, we are going to be contributing to an individual's learning and development.

I think that's what you're about here at Empire State College. I think that you are helping people to learn from experience, helping them make meaning of their experience so they can use that as a basis for new and deeper learning. I hope you've all read Elana Michelson and Alan Mandell's book on prior learning. They've focused on the portfolio, on the PLA process, on portfolio development. The points they make about PLA can be generalized to learning from experience more broadly, because they write about some of the benefits to people who engage in learning from experience. Through that process they can do more personal exploration, become clearer about their goals and their values and, at the same time, can often gain insight into the nature of culture, social, racial, gender – social constructs that we live in. It can help people see themselves in the context of work, not just "I'm here to get a degree so I can make more money or advance to the next position," but work in terms of "What's the historical, social context of work? What does work mean? How do I define myself as a worker? What is the nature of my profession? What are the standards of my profession?" And it can also help people gain a better understanding of what expertise means: what it means to really know something and to recognize that expertise is not a one-time, static, "I've

arrived" kind of attitude, but one that is changing and dynamic.

I'd like to make just one more comment, and it comes out of the "contract learning" feature of Empire State College, which gets us into the whole area of self-directed learning. When I was early in the field of adult learning, I heard often (and probably said this myself) that these people are adults, so they ought to be self-directed. They should be able to come in and know what they want to do, and figure out how they're going to do it. I'll sort of coach and help along the way, and they know they can do all of this. Yes, a few people can. A few people can learn that way from the start. Kegan quotes Gerald Grow who describes self-directed learners in this way:

"[They] set their goals, standards, with or without the help of experts. They use experts and institutions, and other resources, to pursue their goals. They're able and willing to take responsibility for their learning, direction and productivity. They exercise skill in time management, project management, goal setting, self-evaluation, peer critique, information gathering, and use of educational resources … (p. 274).

Now isn't that a tall order. Do we really expect people to walk in the door with these skills, habits and attitudes? Our programs – our individually-designed contract learning-based programs – can err on the side of assuming that people come with these skills, rather than for us to recognize that part of our job is to help them develop these skills. On their way out, one can see indicators that they're life-long learners, that they have good critical thinking skills, and that they've achieved the kinds of goals we identified earlier.

Kegan suggests that if we were to put a little less emphasis on self-direction per se and more on helping people develop these fourth order consciousness skills, we would be engendering self-direction rather than assuming it already exists where it doesn't. We would be practicing our ideals with intentionality and compassion. Whatever we do as mentors and teachers, however we improvise with any given learner, our ultimate aim is, as Larry Daloz says: "to promote significant learning … and that entails development. And development, in

most cases, is fostered by support of another (p. 236)."

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Found Things:
Convocation Address

Ernest Boyer

Ernest Boyer 1981 keynote address

Several years ago, a reporter in Washington asked me what my greatest satisfaction was reflecting back on the State of New York, and I, without a moment's hesitation, blurted out: Empire State College. And then she did one of those mean things that reporters are inclined to do, she said, "And what is your greatest frustration?" Well in a kind of ironic twist I said my greatest satisfaction was starting a college without walls, and my greatest frustration was not being given the privilege of starting a college behind walls.

You may not recall, but the trustees of the University approved a college at Bedford Hills. The Commissioner of Corrections and I, following Attica, agreed that if we could have a two-year institution that would serve the incarcerated citizens of this state and give them hope, within the prison system, we might capture the spirit of Empire State College in a curious ironic twist: The College Behind Walls Without Walls.

Those were hostile, angry days and what the trustees approved, the legislature of the state rejected, but in a kind of irony, the

educational visions moving outward and moving inward were on collision course. But we are here today to recall a victory.

Ten years ago, I dreamed a dream. My dream was a college of great excellence. A college where the focus was not on buildings or bureaucracy or on rigid schedules – not on mindless regulations but on students and education: the essence of the enterprise. My dream was a college located all across the state to serve the student, not the institution or the process. And one of my first moves as Chancellor of the State University was to propose a new, radical, noncampus institution called Empire State College. This unique institution has become known as the Cadillac of nontraditional institutions. Empire State has a reputation for excellence all around the world, and most importantly, thousands of students have been served.

On this day of special celebration, I wish to thank President James Hall. I thank Jim for leading this institution with exquisite skill. When we looked for a president 10 years ago, we looked from coast to coast. I interviewed many promising candidates, and I concluded that the best nominee was the young man in our office who had helped draft the first prospectus. No one has ever regretted that decision. I wish also to think Wilma Hall. I thank Wilma for giving endless hours of her time and great talent. Both politically and in the public eye, and privately in the quiet of the home, she has helped move this institution forward. Third, I wish to thank a superb faculty on which all of this has rested. Working in Empire State College is a very tough, demanding task. I knew it would be, and only realized it partially. But then I watched one student, my wife, engage in an intense, persistent and enduring relationship with a mentor of great skill. With conversations late at night, endless critiques and writing through the mails, I am convinced it was one of the best educations in the nation, and that Empire State College is teaching at its best, and I am convinced that one of the most outstanding faculties in the world works in this distinguished institution.

Finally, I wish to thank the students. You have believed in this experimental college. You went to graduate school. You entered your professions. And because of you,

Empire State College is respected all around the world.

When Jim Hall asked me to speak today, he urged that I focus on the future and not the past. I must tell you that I would have much preferred to be maudlin and sentimental. I would [have] loved to have dealt with the memories and nostalgia I know and recall best. Jim would not have it so. He suggested that the future is the issue on the agenda here today, and so to honor that request, I played a simple game last evening. I played the game of "What If." What if, I asked myself, Empire State College was being launched not in 1970 when we were still cleaning up after Cambodia and the chaos of Kent State, but in 1981? What challenges are there today? What, in short, would I say this afternoon if this were the opening ceremony for this funny institution? Well I would surely say that just as I did 10 years ago that the quality of education is not the campus – it's not the hours in the classroom – it's not the academic credits. Quality education is the vision of a mentor and the dedication of a student. I would also say that we need a college where adults can go back to school without the indignities of bureaucratic hoops – where corporate executives can run their corporation and still finish their degrees – where young men and women can travel and still stay academically in touch – where mothers can care for young children and still read Shakespeare and move toward academic fulfillment.

But today, in 1981, I would emphasize some priorities that seemed less urgent 10 years ago. Simply stated, I think I would urge upon Empire State College the following motto: I would say let's call this a "College with Connections." First I'd suggest that in

Simply stated, I think I would urge upon Empire State College the following motto: I would say let's call this a "College with Connections."

the decade of the 1980s this college must establish close connections between the nation's colleges and schools. Everyone has heard that America is growing older, and if you check your hairlines you will understand. But we know that in just 10 years we will have heard that the number of 18-year-olds in this country will drop by 25 percent by the year 1990. But I am increasingly impressed that the real story of demography in America is the change that is occurring within the student pool. The simple fact is that the face of young America has taken a dramatic turn. Today, in the United States, 26 percent of all white Americans are 18 years of age and under. Thirty-three percent of black Americans are under 18, and 49 percent of all Hispanics are 18 year of age and under.

Not all of America is aging. Today the immigration pattern has dramatically tilted away from Europe toward Latin America and the Pacific. Today America is the fourth largest Spanish speaking nation in the world. And this fall, 50 percent of all children who enroll in kindergarten in Los Angeles County are Hispanic. The point I make is this: America is changing, and these minorities which are fast becoming the majority of populations in many schools are precisely the students who have not been well-served by the educational institutions of the past.

Consider also the failure rate in the academic institutions. Eighteen percent of all whites who enter school will drop out before they graduate; 30 percent of all blacks, and over 40 percent of all Hispanics, leave before they finish high school. Today it seems to me we confront a situation in this nation not unlike the early immigration periods, times when there were great waves of Irish, Italians, East Europeans who enrolled in the nation's schools. It was interesting to read Larry Cremin's recent summary of American education around the turn of the century, and one of my predecessors as the Commissioner of Education established as his first priority a new bureau of Immigrant Education because in many of our schools 80 percent or more of all children were first generation Americans, and in some classrooms, 70 percent spoke no English. I do not think that this nation has confronted the urgency

of the new immigration pattern which is as great as it was at the turn of the century, and the implications are possibly more awesome because this time there is great resistance to the Melting Pot assumptions of those days gone by.

Now I do not have an easy answer. I merely say that those who are sanguine about education in this country miss, I think, the churnings just below the surface – and the battlegrounds, the frustrations, the tensions that surround the changing face of young America will be the schools themselves, and while I was commissioner there was no issue that caused more anxiety – no question that caused the White House to call me more frequently – than the code word "bilingual education." And the longer it went, and the more I saw anxieties, the more I understood that we are not talking about bilingual education: we are talking about the cultural tensions of this country about which there is great unease.

I merely suggest that as we begin this marvelous institution called Empire State College I think is important we consider the fact that education is a seamless web. The tensions and the battles and the cultural collisions in the early years of schooling in this country are inexorably moving along, and I would urge this college to think carefully about its obligation to the schools. For example, should Empire State College in the decade just ahead place mentors in selected schools to test the capacity to promote students into college at an early rate? I am delighted to know that there are plans to move centers of Empire State into the ethnic and racial pockets of this nation, and I am doubly pleased to know that a busload of the students of Empire State from Bedford-Stuyvesant came to the celebrations yesterday to affirm their legacy in this important institution.

I am suggesting this be a "college with connections," and the connections of the next decade are the connections that bridge the cultural and ethnic gaps that perhaps could drive great cleavages into the heart of this united nation.

Second, I suggest as we move into the 1980's that this college make connections with mass communication. Ten years ago, quite frankly, we talked about TV. We

thought about the Open University in Great Britain. There was neither the money nor the capacity to link this to the other teachers of our culture. I believe this coming decade will not allow us the distance that 1970 provided. We face, I am convinced, an information revolution which will explode in the decade of the 80s, and this revolution will have enormous impact on our colleges and schools.

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I think somewhat romantically of my own early days, marching off to school in southwest Ohio over 40 years ago. I came from a home where we had no television. I first saw TV when our high school class traveled to New York City and visited NBC, and they demonstrated a 10-inch tube, and said the man we saw was three floors below. I watched it with my girlfriend, and in disbelief I said nothing will ever come of this. She thought I meant our romance, and walked off in a huff. I lost a friend, but television gained a nation. We didn't have radio until I was 12 years old. We had a model A Ford, which, with a bit of luck, some gas and air in the tires, made it to Cincinnati, 60 miles away.

When I marched off to school I was a body of innocence. I met Miss Rice, my first grade teacher. I fell in love with her. She was the walking encyclopedia – the classroom was my window to the world. There was no competition. If Miss Rice said it, it was true. I fell in love with her, and asked my mother if I could flunk first grade so I could have her a second year, and Miss Rice almost obliged, but for quite different reasons. It was only later that I understood that Miss Rice gave me a vision of the world was very

primitive, and very narrow. But to me she was all that I had.

Today, in America, students watch television four-and-a-half hours every day – before they ever got o school they will have watched it 6,000 hours. They spend 16,000 in front of television, and only 11,000 hours in front of teachers before they graduate from high school.

Christopher Evans, in his new book, *The Micromillenium,* talks about the impact of yet another form of language: the computer. He says that during the 1980's the book will begin a slow and steady slide into oblivion. Computers will take over, he declares, because they store more information and their information can be more easily retrieved. Evans says that, in the future, books will be tiny silicone chips which can be slipped into small projectors, and can be read from viewing screens or against the wall, or even on the ceiling if you like to read in bed. And those who do not understand the power of those satellites, and the dishes in the lawns, do not understand the connections of this world. Last week, in Aspen, I talked to a glassy-eyed enthusiast who says he spends three hours a day at his computer talking to specialists around the world. He gave me his code name – their code names. He has a love affair network with similar computers that span the globe. Cable television will now bring not three channels but perhaps 60 or more into our homes. The awesomeness of being plugged in with all of the imagination and all the terror that provides will, in my view, have unbelievable influences on those of us who enjoy the coziness of a system of learning that we well control. I do not, in this remembering, worship the machine. I only suggest that the nontraditional teachers in our culture will have an impact on our generation we hardly understand.

A recent survey revealed that 20 years ago in 1960, teenagers were asked, "What influenced you the most?" You will be pleased to know that parents were number one, teachers were number two, and peers rated number three. In 1980, American teenagers were asked, "What influenced you the most?" – parents have been replaced by peers; parents are number two and television is number three, with teachers number four. If you study those shifts, it

seems to me, clearly observed, that what has been happening is a shift in influence away from the traditional structures with their formative values, good or bad, parents and teachers, to the much slipperier, more open-ended, more culturally normative teachers of peers and television. And the traditional structures have lost both their authority and prestige.

In my view, then, the traditional and the nontraditional teachers must somehow be combined. I think it is absolute madness and wasteful energy to rail against the new technologies and the potential they provide. After all, television can take students to the moon. Television can take students to the bottom of the sea, and we can listen to the burping of the whale. When Sadat and Begin met on a Tel Aviv airstrip, they tell me that 500 million human beings watched those two former enemies embrace. And anyone who misses the potential of that kind of shared experience, I think, lacks dramatic vision. Television can teach. Calculators can solve problems, and computers can retrieve instantly millions of information bits, but, perhaps, old-fashioned, I declare television, calculators and computers cannot and will not make discriminating judgments: they cannot or will not teach the students wisdom.

The challenge of the future is not to fight or imitate the electronic teachers in our midst. Rather, the challenge of Empire State College is to build a partnership between traditional and nontraditional – letting each do what it can do best. With all our lamenting of education in this country, we do it in the context of an overload of information. The irony of that is incredible to me, and I feel quite certain that if we could ever get the nontraditional teachers to join forces, we could, in one decade, be the smartest the most informed, and – one would hope – the most humane society on earth. The connection stands to be embraced, and Empire State College, with its great imagination and flexibility, can lead the way.

Third, I believe in the 1980's this college must make connections with corporate education. The harsh truth is that education in industry and business is the fastest growing sector in our culture, and in the 1980's more and more students may be

going to school, not on the campus, but at the corporation. Latest data suggests that if you add up all that is being spent for schools and colleges in this country, it's $60 billion.

Ten years ago, more or less, I stopped at a hotel in Buffalo, New York, on my way to one of the campuses, and I picked up the in-house magazine which was placed conveniently on the table next to the Gideon Bible. The Holiday Inn magazine, I discovered, had a front page story, in bold letters, announcing Holiday Inn University. I opened the magazine, and there it was: a beautiful campus in the South. It had a board of trustees, and a few of my friends were named on it – I thought they were hedging their bets. That has been, however, taken over now by endless variations. The McDonald Corporation has – and I do not kid you – Big Mac University. Arthur D. Little now offers an accredited master's degree.

Accredited degrees are being provided by several major corporate enterprises, and if you read the literature carefully, it is absolutely true that businesses and industries are offering every educational program, in some form, that colleges, schools and universities traditionally have claimed. The other evening on television a firm announced its new program to teach the basic skills. Just last week in the Chronicle of Higher Education, Harvard and Du Pont Corporation have joined in a $6 million merger so that Harvard does the research and Du Pont Corporation gets the findings. I am convinced that in the next 10 to 20 years, higher learning in America faces an interesting prospect: having lost its

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allegiances to the church, having diminished its connections to the nation state, it will find increasingly its affiliations in the business and corporate world. I see this as an unacceptable trend because business, if left to its own devices, will mix ends and means. I believe connections must be made – not to serve business on its own ends; that will lead us, I think, only to a world of technical sophisticates lacking values and traditions.

Thomas Jefferson was greatly concerned that higher learning serve the nation's interest and, no doubt, business interest too. He urged colleagues to offer what he called a practical and useful education, and he listed as practical courses botany, chemistry, surgery, agriculture and modern language. But Jefferson also included the useful arts: ethics, history, art and moral philosophy. I suggest that vocational and moral education belong together.

As I dream of Empire State College in the 1980's, I see it going into the workplace more and more. That connection must be made. However, with the strong caveat not to imitate or be consumed by business, but to bring to business and to labor the perspective, the heritage and the civility of liberal learning. Empire State College is the leavening process as it meets those who need it most.

Finally, I would like to suggest the last proposal, and that is that we make connections for public good. A long time ago this college dreamed of the possibility of becoming a public institution with a public agenda, and I believe that that commitment must increase. The idea that I see ahead of us is the possibility of a nation that will become so consumed by the technology of our time that we will not, in any way, be able to keep our moral perspective. Professor Carl Shorsky described 19th century Basel, Switzerland as a place where civic life and university life were tightly locked. It is a historical lesson worth our consideration. Carl Shorsky said to understand the special qualities of Basel, it is important to remember that the primary function of a university was to foster a civic culture. The city state, he said, assumes some political obligations, but the broad purpose was the advancement of learning. And I believe that as more and more adults

come back to college – for degrees, for new careers, for enrichment – I think the nation's colleges should become more systematically engaged in the civic education of adults.

Now this goal can be achieved in a variety of ways: through weekend seminars, through special public issues institutes, and through alumni colleges that bring alumni together for a day or two. What we need, perhaps, is a network of town meetings all across the country in which the people will meet to deal more carefully with the issues of public conscience and public consequence. After all, the public agenda is getting enormously complex and yet the information that we have to think carefully about such matters seems increasingly beyond our grasp.

I don't know how you felt during the Three Mile Island crisis two years ago, but I was sitting in front of the television and I listened to talk about rems and cold shutdowns, and to me it seemed like a foreign language. It occurred to me that I just didn't know how to make sophisticated judgments. The point is this: as a nation we are becoming civilly illiterate, and unless we find a better way to educate ourselves as citizens we run the risk of drifting unwittingly into a new kind of dark age: a

kind of pre-Gutenberg time when a small band of specialists will control knowledge. These high priests of technology will understand – or claim to understand – the complicated issues, and they will tell the rest of us what we should or should not believe. In this new age of intellectual darkness, citizens will make critical decisions, not on the basis of what they know, but on the basis of who should be believed.

Now some conclude that our circuits are already hopelessly overloaded, and that representative government is not likely to endure. But I believe for those of us who care about government by the people, this prospect cannot go unchallenged. And so my dream would be that in the future, in the decade of the 1980's when this college moves ahead, Empire State College might make connections with the public issues of our time – providing perhaps forums for issues to be examined with great care so that the dream of Thomas Jefferson, which combined democracy and intelligence, could be sustained at a time when the issues of awesome complexity confront us all.

In 1750, Benjamin Franklin wrote to Samuel Johnson as follows: he said, "I think with you that nothing is of more importance for

the public good than to form and train up youth in wisdom and in virtue." Franklin went on to say that "Wise and good men are, in my opinion, the strength of the state; much more so than riches or arms which under the management of ignorance and wickedness often draw destruction instead of providing safety for the people."

Well, today in my "What If" game, I am announcing that we are starting a new college. We have decided to call it Empire State [College]. We have given it a slogan, a motto: "A College with Connections." This college will go forward because it is flexible, but it is committed to excellence as well. But I also believe that this college will make it in the 1980's as it establishes connections with the new Americans, as it establishes connections with the new technology, as it makes connections with the new corporate classrooms and brings to them civility and guidance, and as it establishes connections with the urgent public agenda that will determine the future of us all. I feel very good about this institution. The flexibilities of the past give me enormous confidence that it will remain flexible and committed in the days ahead.

Core Values of Empire State College (2005)

The core values of Empire State College reflect the commitments of a dynamic, participatory and experimenting institution accessible and dedicated to the needs of a richly diverse adult student body. These values are woven into the decisions we make about what we choose to do, how we carry out our work in all parts of the institution, and how we judge the outcome of our individual and collective efforts. More than a claim about what we have already attained, the core values support our continuing inquiry about what learning means and how it occurs.

We value learning-mentoring goals that:

- respond to the academic, professional and personal needs of each student;

- identify and build upon students' existing knowledge and skills;

- sustain lifelong curiosity and critical inquiry;

- provide students with skills, insights and competencies that support successful college study.

We value learning-mentoring processes that:

- emphasize dialogue and collaborative approaches to study;

- support critical exploration of knowledge and experience;

- provide opportunities for active, reflective and creative academic engagement.

We value learning-mentoring modes that:

- respond to a wide array of student styles, levels, interests and circumstances;

- foster self-direction, independence and reflective inquiry;

- provide opportunities for ongoing questioning and revising;

- reflect innovation and research.

We value a learning-mentoring community that:

- defines each member as a learner, encouraging and appreciating his/her distinctive contributions;

- recognizes that learning occurs in multiple communities, environments and relationships as well as in formal academic settings;

- attracts, respects and is enriched by a wide range of people, ideas, perspectives and experiences.

We value a learning-mentoring organization and culture that:

- invites collaboration in the multiple contexts of our work;

- fosters innovation and experimentation;

- develops structures and policies that encourage active participation of all constituents in decision-making processes;

- advocates for the interests of adult learners in a variety of academic and civic forums.

Submissions to *All About Mentoring*

Asubstantial portion of the next issue of *All About Mentoring* will be devoted to the topic of "sustainability" and we extend an invitation for submissions on this very important topic. We hope to include interesting and diverse presentations given by Empire State College colleagues at the fall 2008 All Areas of Study meeting: Imagining Cultures of Sustainability: College, Community and Commerce.

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 send 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).

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