

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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All collective undertakings require trust. From the games that children play to complex social institutions, humans cannot work together unless they suspend their suspicion of one another. One person holds the rope, another jumps. One person steadies the ladder, another climbs. Why? In part because we hope for reciprocity, but in part from what is clearly a natural propensity to work in cooperation to collective advantage.

– Tony Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*.
New York: The Penguin Press, 2010, p. 63.

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MENTORING

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EDITORIAL



Rational(e)

“Seem like that guy singin’ this song/Been doing it for a long time/Is there anything he knows/That he ain’t said?”

– N. Young, “Falling from Above” (2003)

Student: I can’t write this rationale.

Mentor: You mean rationale? Rationale with an extra “e.”

Student: Sorry.

Mentor: There’s nothing to apologize for; many students confuse the two, but they’re connected.

Student: The only thing I understand about this assignment is that you’re asking me to be rationale.

Mentor: Rationale in the sense of “explaining yourself.”

PAUSE

Student: Why do I have to do it?

Mentor: It’s part of college policy because students are being asked to design their own programs, and because these personalized curricula are their own, we need some help in making sense of them. We need your input.

Student: I just don’t get it. It’s all there on my list of 128 credits. Is my list so obscure? You helped me put it together.

Mentor: I’m asking if you can provide us with a little narrative – walk me through your education. Your readers will be interested; I know it.

Student: Why can’t I just sit in front of anyone who wants to understand what I’ve done? I’d do better that way. Or at least ask me some questions.

Mentor: OK, how about this: You attended college and then picked it up a dozen years later. Why did you decide to return to school?

Student: I have to write about that?

Mentor: It would help the reader get a sense of you as a student and of your entire educational process.

Student: It’s rather personal, isn’t it? Do you really expect to me to talk about my life?

Mentor: I’m not suggesting that you feel obliged to divulge something that will make you uncomfortable. Not at all.

Student: But actually it is uncomfortable and, honestly, I’m not sure myself about all of these “whys.”

Mentor: Can you talk about the connections between your past work experiences, the new Empire State College studies you’ve already completed, and those you intend to complete at the college?

Student: I looked at other programs, I saw what I did. I also noticed what I hadn’t yet taken. It’s pretty straightforward.

Mentor: That’s exactly the kind of thing you can discuss in your rationale.

PAUSE

Student: OK, I don’t want to be obstinate, but you are asking me to write something and you already know the answer. It’s an exercise, and it’s one of the reasons – to tell you the truth – that I left school in the first place. I want to do the assignments; I don’t want to be forced to explain myself. All of this “look inside yourself”-stuff is really artificial and has nothing to do with what I’m learning or why I’m in school.

Mentor: What do you mean by “artificial?” Do you mean that you have to fake an answer?

Student: I mean, to use your language, I feel “alienated” from this way of looking at school and at myself.

Mentor: You know what: This would be a pretty interesting thing to include in your

rationale. I think your readers would find this intriguing and, actually, good evidence of what you have learned and thought about. It also seems like this would give you a chance to provide a genuine expression of your approach – of your own thinking.

Student: I was resistant to returning to college. I felt that institutions involve students in a massive game – that all schools set up intricate hoops. If you can’t figure out their system, please excuse this other language, you’re screwed.

Mentor: Actually, it was in response to these “games” that a place like Empire State College was created in the first place. The goal was to provide an opportunity for something more authentic, closer to the lived experiences of students. Even the language was new. We wanted to see if we could start over.

Student: You ask for my so-called “voice” – I saw that language in all of the college’s ads and in the materials I got when I applied, yet, to tell you the truth, you want me to say things that make you comfortable in believing that there is something rationale, something whole, something that someone can or should explain. As I see it, it’s pretty artificial.

Mentor: You have contempt for this kind of thing?

Student: I am not sure I would use the word “contempt,” because, you know, I’ll do it, but I would say that I hope you don’t imagine that what I end up writing will be anything close to a genuine expression of what I’ve done or what I think.

PAUSE

Mentor: OK. Here’s another way I’d say it: All of this is about reflection; it’s about a theory, yes there is a theory here, that to reflect on what you have done is inherently good. So the rationale essay could be thought of as an exercise in reflection. Admittedly, an exercise it is.

Student: Do you really think someone can reflect on command?

Mentor: That’s a fair question. I think someone, anyone, can be asked to offer an explanation, to give reasons, for what they are doing or thinking. Yes, I do. Just like in

any discussion about anything, I can say to you, or you can say to me: please explain yourself; how did you reach that conclusion? And there is a special commitment to this goal at the heart of what is usually considered to be college-level learning. Do you disagree?

Student: I agree that it's important to be able to let someone know why you think what you think, but – and I hope you don't think I am being disrespectful here, I think you, I mean this college, want students to justify what they are doing so that the college can justify what it is doing. What do you think?

Mentor: I think that this college is set up to encourage students to take themselves seriously, to take their own experiences and own thinking seriously. And one way to do that is to say to students: help us understand what you have learned. The degree rationale is one way that can happen. It's not an assignment demanded of students without reasons.

PAUSE

Student: I can hammer something out.

Mentor: I understand your response.

Student: Does that mean that I don't have to do it?

Mentor: No, it means that the conversation we've been having shows me that you rely on your own kind of reflection to criticize something that you don't want to do.

Student: Looks like I've made it: I'm a "reflective practitioner!" See, I've even got the language down from that early study I did with you on learning in organizations.

Mentor: A reflective practitioner who has decided that he will resist admitting to the world that he thinks deeply about what he does and the decisions he makes – even the relatively inconsequential ones that would give a reader a clue about the connections he sees between transcript credits, experiential learning and his new college studies –

connections that I know he's actually thought quite a bit about.

Student: Who's the authority?

Mentor: I hope you know that, to a good extent, you are the authority, or at least that you recognize and feel that you share it. That's why your own words expressed in your own way are important. That's also why I hope this exercise is not so "alienated." It can be about you!

PAUSE

Student: I know what I can write, though I'm not sure you'll like it.

Mentor: That's not at all the point.

Student: I sure hope my self-awareness comes through.

Mentor: It has.

Alan Mandell

My Life as a Mentor: Wiring, Work and Writing¹

Rebecca Fraser, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies

As I started my apprenticeship in the electrical industry, I never realized how much you need to know just to get a light turned on. What I mean is I was used to just flipping a switch to turn on a light. I never really thought about the work that was involved to get it to turn on. You start by running your conduit to getting the wire into it and then making your splices and terminations. The most challenging aspect of the job to learn for me was conduit bending. Being able to take what everyone sees as a just pipe to bending it at precise locations to get a perfect, streamlined fit is pretty neat.

*From a draft of an essay by
"Antonio,"² Spring 2008*

Capturing the mentoring work I do is a bit like wiring a building – bending conduit to fit the frame neatly, pulling wire through the conduit, determining which currents are live. Putting this kind of complexity into a linear essay is a challenge, so I wonder how to make this essay reflective of the nonlinear activities of untangling, braiding and splicing the wires of my work as a mentor at The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies.

"Hector" approached me after an Educational Planning class to ask me a question he didn't want his classmates to hear. "I want to take a children's literature course."

This is not a typical request from one of our electrical apprentices. Hector grew up in Spanish Harlem; The Boys Club kept him off the street and eventually gave him a full scholarship to Trinity Pawling Boarding School for his last two years of high school. Years later, he remains active in The Boys Club, wanting to give back to the community. Hence his desire to take a

children's literature class, to help him pick books to read with the kids and to have a better understanding about how reading can change their lives. This semester we are learning, working and creating together "Working-Class Themes in Children's Literature."

The [5000 word] essay you will write will come straight from your work experiences, as seen through the lens of the course's assigned readings. You will be using quotations from (some of) the texts you'll read this semester, but you won't be doing it in a traditional academic form; rather you will be writing what is called a "collage essay." ... The theme of your paper will be connected to the work you do – any specific aspect of the work that is important to you for whatever reason (that is to say, this is a personal essay).

*From "Labor Literature and Writing"
Syllabus, Spring 2009, Rebecca Fraser*

What does it mean to provide labor studies degrees (associate and bachelor's) to trade unionists? A few of my goals as a writing and literature mentor are:

- to engage the voices of our students;
- to stretch their imagination, by reading well-written fiction and nonfiction about work;
- to move students to write their own stories and make those stories available to the public;
- to inspire them to recognize the intelligence they use on their jobsites;
- to encourage students examine their work lives;



Rebecca Fraser

- to provide them the opportunity to explore the dynamics of complicated jobsites and job responsibilities.

These are political goals; they are meant to show students the power they have, not only in their ability to wire a building but also in their ability to flip the switch in their brains and realize that if they don't tell their story, one of two things will happen: someone else will tell it and likely get it wrong, or it will get lost.

"Ayesha" works full time as an electrical apprentice and is often the only woman on her jobsite or in the classroom; she is in school three nights a week after work; she also is the sole caretaker for her grandmother who is in a wheelchair and having bouts of dementia; for some undisclosed reason, Ayesha has regular court appointments. She struggles to get her schoolwork done; she is not a strong writer; occasionally she expresses her frustrations with inappropriate outbursts in class. Ayesha is a challenging student to have; as a mentee of mine, she often stops by my

office before class to tell me of her latest woes – job, grandmother, court, school. I watch her vacillate between rage at her circumstances and aspiration to finish her apprenticeship and get a college degree.

Since 1978, IBEW Local 3 North and its signatory contractors have required their registered electrical apprentices to complete, in addition to their related classroom instruction in electrical theory, an academic course of study designed to develop their capacity for critical thinking and for reading and writing at the college level. If the apprentice has no degree, the required minimum is to obtain an associate degree in Labor Studies. If the apprentice enters the program with a degree, 20-credits in Labor Studies are required. The program is designed to meet the needs of Local 3 and is made available through the SUNY Empire State College's Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies.

*Michael Merrill,
HVACLS Student Orientation Brochure*

Questions I frequently encounter:

- What does writing and reading all this stuff have to do with being an electrician?
- You teach literature and writing courses to electricians? Why?
- What is a labor college? What are trade unionists?
- What exactly do you do at Van Arsdale anyway?

“Antonio” describes his pride in bending pipe accurately, pulling the wire smoothly and without a hitch. Flipping a light switch creates a picture in his mind of the workings behind the wall; even though his work is hidden he knows what is there, what was involved in getting that switch to turn on the light. So often our work is hidden to the “outside” world.

How do Empire State College mentors in other centers do their work?

When I traveled to various centers as a part of the 2015 Task Force, I peeked behind the walls to see if I could catch a glimpse of how, for example, the Central New York Center is “wired” – I turned on lights in an empty conference room and looked around, imagining students and mentors in that space; I looked through open office doors, at desks and plants and posters and bookshelves and views out windows (which, I discovered, sometimes are not a view to the outside world but a view into an inner atrium). As we met in large meeting rooms listening to PEs and mentors and deans and support staff discuss their particular concerns for the college and their daily work lives, I observed the community and the individuals and saw the empty spaces where students might have been sitting.

From a reflective e-mail from an adjunct who has taught with us for over 20 years. Here he is commenting on his most recent experience teaching College Writing:

Many students these days read almost nothing, particularly in the areas of academic-style discourse, “essays” and the like. For me, this is a major problem when it comes to developing the writing, since in the absence of models, writing we get from students is either mostly “talking” writing or replicating styles encountered in the Daily News or text messages sent to and from friends ... I contend that we drastically overestimate the reading abilities of many of our students, and we should not lose sight of this reality either in the writing classes or in other areas of the curriculum. This is a serious problem, and I suspect that many of our teachers must deal with the implications of the reading problem. It is an elephant in the living room, and if there are issues with plagiarism in some of the other classes, I think these problems can often be traced to the reading deal.

I've had the good fortune these past two years to build a stable force of writing

instructors – they are a group of writing professionals who care deeply about their students, and about writing, learning, reading, and teaching processes. At the end of each semester, we gather together to look at end-of-the-semester portfolios from our students and discuss the semester. This meeting usually lasts three hours and when we finish, we usually feel as if we've barely been able to dig into the meat of our concerns as instructors and mentors. The e-mail emerges from that context.

His observations resonated with other instructors, my colleagues and our dean. We began a discussion about the reading abilities of our students that rambled across a year and a half until we knew it was time to do something to address our concerns. With help from my colleagues, I began to develop a nondevelopmental, for credit, reading course that will be required of all our associate degree students. We are piloting Critical Reading Strategies this fall.

In recent months a cry has gone out for fiction writers to get up from behind their laptops and get back to work, real work – or at least to start writing about it again ... The literary novel needs more tinkers and tailors, the argument goes ... In a video introduction to the latest issue of *Granta*, dedicated to the theme of “Work,” John Freeman, the magazine's editor, lamented the literary “invisibility” of daily toil.

*“Take This Job and Write It”
by Jennifer Schuessler, The New York Times
online edition, 14 March 2010*

I am on a constant search for texts to use in my courses, fiction or nonfiction, novels, short stories, poetry, creative nonfiction essays and books. I look for good writing about work that our students will connect with, writing that is both accessible and challenging. To be honest with you, I spend so much time on this task precisely because there is not much literature about the working lives of anyone, much less trade unionists or construction workers. When I do find a text, I find that many focus on the danger and/or hopelessness of working blue-collar, the tragedies of accidental

deaths on the job, or the poverty faced by nonunion immigrant workers. There is good reason for this; like the documentary photos that Lewis Hines took in the early part of the 20th century, they make visible what is invisible. But they don't always reflect accurately the rich complexities of the labor itself. Focusing on danger, these writers either don't see or choose not to show the challenges, satisfactions and joys of, for one example, wiring a Manhattan high rise.

In his essay, Jason compared his work to documentaries on the Discovery channel about the mysteries of Stonehenge or the pyramids. At the time he was pulling out 100-year-old direct current dynamos from the basements of buildings all over Manhattan; why weren't they going into some kind museum, he wondered, even as he sold them as mongo to City Scrap Metal.

My first year of teaching, I was one of four teaching fellows in the English department at a small liberal arts university in southwest Virginia. I have held onto two things from that initial year: first, the importance of listening to individual students so that, second, their stories would emerge with authenticity and imagination.

When I was a doctoral student in English education at NYU, Ali was a doctoral student in the art department and a writing center "client" of mine. His dissertation was a process piece, which included photographs of his artwork as it developed over time. He explored his ideas in the context of philosophy, geometric theorems, and Sufi poetry. As we explored the written expression of his process, he drew diagrams and flow charts, which were translated into chapters and subsections. I visited his studio where he took pictures of my hands which eventually morphed into three-dimensional geometric sculptures; in doing so, I became a part his art as he was a part my own developing craft of mentoring.

We'll take the whole period to begin with. But if we examine it, not as history, that lie! but as a living thing,

something moving, undecided, swaying – Which way will it go? – something on the brink of the Unknown, as we are today, – shall we not see it? ...

That's history. It's concerned only with one thing: to say everything is dead. Then it fixes up the effigy: there that's finished. Not at all. History must stay open, it is all humanity.

*From In the American Grain
by William Carlos Williams*

In the midst of trying to capture (or liberate?) my own living history in this essay, I received the news that an article, a biography of my grandmother as a pioneer music therapist, has been accepted for publication in *The Journal of Music Therapy*. When a portion of my writing about my grandmother's life and work is published, the shape of my book shifts. As I craft her biography, I am creating a new life for her, from her life as a grandmother of five, an artist, a wife and single mother, a career woman and the founder of FRASER School and Community Services.

In his essay, "The Virtue of History," William Carlos Williams contemplates Aaron Burr's life and how it was diversely constructed after his death. Truths and facts don't always come together. Our lives, full of contradictions and truths and failures and questions and experiments, are not easily captured on a sheaf of pages.

I have encountered this difficulty not only in writing this essay but also as I work with my students as they write about their work. As inexperienced writers (for the most part) they struggle to capture the complexities of their work lives on paper. Simply put, their lives are "more," just as Williams points out that Burr was more than any one biography could possibly convey. Such is the limitation of the word that attempts to make linear that which is not linear.

One afternoon, my students and I took a tour of the construction projects going on in our neighborhood. First, we stopped into the art gallery downstairs, where the designer made a decision to keep pipes exposed – the parallel bends are art in

themselves, and I wanted my students to see their art, their craft, displayed in a SoHo gallery. Then we crossed the street and looked over the scaffolding around a building in the midst of being renovated from warehouse to hotel. We looked at exposed conduit – old and new – and I got a lesson in how to tell the difference between plumbing pipes and electrical conduit, how to tell the fire alarm chases from other power chases. As my students gave me my lesson, interrupting and speaking over one other in their excitement, they experienced their own knowledge within a new frame, and I hope that seeing beautiful pipe bends within the context of a college course gave them an intuitive insight into the connections between knowledge on the job, in the classroom, in the union and out into the world.

We choose what we do because we understand something about ourselves, about our work, about the world. For many of us, in the beginning that understanding is felt more than articulated. It takes time to understand the choices one makes – to move from one job or career to another, to choose to work blue-collar instead of white-collar, to embrace the other child instead of this one, to mentor in a classroom-based program, to decide how to bend conduit for a clean and easy pull. This tacit understanding crosses the borders of the work and lives of my students, my colleagues, myself and my grandmother.

I am at that age where I am constantly putting on and taking off my glasses. I need the glasses to see my students, but if I look down at the text we are discussing, the words are blurry. So I shove my glasses on top of my head to read and drop them down again to engage in conversation. In a similar way, I take off my glasses to tell you my story – writing this essay requires me to wear a different set of lenses to gain a critical perspective of the multifaceted, multi-layered work I do every day.

The first semester I taught at Van Arsdale, my students played a prank on me – they stole my glasses. By taking away my distance vision, they invited me (intentionally or

not) to take a step into their world, perhaps so that I could see more clearly just how uncomfortable they were in the classroom, with their bulky Carhart overalls over jeans and sweaters and steel-toed boots covered with construction dust. My glasses were eventually returned anonymously; I keep them in my desk drawer to remind me of the tensions between who I am and who my students are; how I perceive them and how they perceive me; when and how our worlds overlap; when and how they diverge.

One of the courses I teach is Labor Literature and Writing. In this course, students write 5,000-word, publishable, essays about work. We read about work, talk about work, and then they write more

than they ever imagined they could write about their work. We've gathered their essays into an anthology titled "The Power of Journeys." This is the second anthology my students have created; the first one was titled "Lights On." We use these anthologies as texts for all of our College Writing sections. When "Lights On" was used with a College Writing course with our painters, it inspired them to create their own anthology which they have titled "Undercoating." I probably don't need to say how time consuming putting together these anthologies is, but I do want to say that it is one of the most important things I do in this job – for the student writers, for the readers, for the Van Arsdale Center and hopefully for audiences outside of the center.

I hope I never stop learning from my students – whether it means learning from "Margarita" what it was like to grow up as a Mexican migrant child laborer following the harvests across the country or from "Joey" what it means to sling BX and avoid pencil rods. As I write and rewrite this story, it changes – that which has been invisible becomes visible and other things move out of the line of sight. Wires and histories are spliced, run and pulled.

Notes

- ¹ A previous version of this essay was submitted as a reappointment essay.
- ² Student names that appear inside quotation marks are pseudonyms.

"... we affirm that the goals of current educational practices ought to include: 1) The examination and contemplation of the awe, wonder, and mystery of the universe. As educators we have the responsibility to examine the world and universe we live in and to share our reactions authentically and rationally and have a concomitant responsibility to be aware of and share with our students the process of observation and examination used by different scholars and observers. When we do so, we always find at least one common result – namely, enormously different observations, reactions, and explanations across and within time and place. Not only is there an immensely different assortment of cosmic explanations, but there is diversity even within very narrow fields of explanation. We find not only differences of opinion but also agreement that every field is extraordinarily complicated."

– David E. Purpel, The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education: A Curriculum for Justice and Compassion in Education. Granby, Massachusetts: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1989, p. 113.

Student Assessment, Past and Present, with a Glimpse to its Future: Reflections of a Pioneer

James W. Hall, President and Mentor Emeritus, SUNY Empire State College

James W. Hall was the founding president of Empire State College and served the college from 1971 until 1998. He then became the chancellor of Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio. He is the author of In Opposition to Core Curriculum: Alternative Models for Undergraduate Education (1982) and Access through Innovation: New Colleges for New Students (1991), among many other writings. This text was given as the keynote at the 2010 National Institute on the Assessment of Adult Learning in Atlantic City, N.J., sponsored by Thomas Edison College and the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). Many thanks to Jim Hall for letting us use his talk in All About Mentoring and to Dan Negron, director of the center for academic program reviews at Thomas Edison, who organized this year's institute.

Welcome. Thank you for the invitation to share this time with you today. I'm pleased to see so many familiar faces here and many new faces as well. I feel right at home here in Caesar's Casino as I was once inaugurated, many years ago, in the Canfield Casino in Saratoga Springs, NY. Perhaps it is a statement that we are all risk takers – individuals attempting to change and improve higher learning.

I cannot speak to the specific techniques, the agonies you face, the “aha” moments you experience when a student is rekindled, motivated and rewarded by the whole assessment experience. But I have been in this business for many years, first because as a new instructor, I believed there must be a better way for students to learn, thrive and succeed; and subsequently, as part of a vibrant experimenting institution where I personally saw change in the lives of many, many students. I am greatly impressed with the panels and topics listed in the program for this conference.

I begin with a story – a real story – drawn from my undergraduate days in the late 1950s. Another student, completing her sophomore year at college and with a distinguished record of grades for the first two years of study, requested permission to spend her junior year abroad. With strong family roots in Germany, she was accepted for study at the University of Heidelberg – a very ancient and distinguished institution



James W. Hall

of study. Perhaps influenced by operetta images of imbibing and less than princely students, the American institution refused to guarantee the granting of any credit whatsoever for that proposed junior year. In the 1950s, agreements generally did not exist between American and foreign universities. There were almost no “semesters abroad,” let alone “semesters at sea.” American universities did not have English-only programs abroad to nurture and protect their tender students. (There was, of course, the so-called “Grand Tour,” a posh trip designed for affluent students who often cared less whether or not they actually received a college degree.)

Our student, after a year of serious study, entirely auf Deutsch, with lectures in philosophy by Karl Jaspers, concerts under the baton of Europe's greatest conductors, and seminars in which the university examined its own complicity in World War II, not to mention the holiday trips to learn about and experience the European cultural heritage, our student returned to her home campus for her senior year and requested credit. And actually credit was granted for the junior year, with the proviso that the courses taken at Heidelberg be recorded with grades of C. The good news was that she won a prestigious Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to Columbia University.

I tell this story because it describes a past where no college's credit could ever be compared to a similar credit offered by another institution. And although this story took place in the 1950s, and though study abroad programs began to appear during the 1960s, in fact the process of granting credit, transferring credit, or using any surrogates for credit, did not change very much until the early 1970s.

Even though as specialists in assessment you are intimately familiar with credit, allow me to digress with Hall's thumbnail history – a somewhat perverse look at the American college credit. In order to maintain a measurable, recognizable currency and accommodate student transfer, we define our degrees in credit terms, the “Carnegie unit,” or some equivalent translation: the associate 60 semester credits (90 quarter credits), the bachelor's degree 120 semester credits (180 quarter credits). This credit remains the base measurement for American degrees. And assumptions still exist regarding the amount of time during which those credits should be accumulated.

Once upon a time, American universities further defined the bachelor's degree in 3 credit courses, each consisting of “seat time” of 45 50-minute “hours” of instruction

over a semester of 15 weeks with a 16th week for examinations. A degree was 40 different courses taken over eight semesters, or four years. These courses were divided between general requirements, about half in the introductory courses and half in the advanced-level courses, and eight to 10 courses in a major field. In addition, many colleges required a capstone honors thesis and comprehensive examinations. While this is second nature to us now, it was not the only possible way to go.

Traditional European universities offered a radically different degree, a three-year program of reading and research, specialized within a discipline. The degree was not defined by time served or classroom credit hours. Students earned the degree by passing a comprehensive examination. Lectures were available to the student as a means, not an end. General education was assumed to be achieved in secondary education prior to university matriculation. Only those who passed a matriculation exam (such as the German abitur) were admitted to study. As in the United States, until the 1960s, the number of university students was a small part of the population, and the number who actually graduated much smaller yet. Keep in mind that the German university was at that time very elitist in design: a student's fate was already tracked and sealed as early as the third grade. Moreover, professors proudly noted that they had no responsibility as to whether or not a student succeeded; one from Heidelberg was quoted as saying proudly: "we believe in giving our students enough free rope to make their own nooses."

I find it mildly entertaining that recently Steven Joel Trachtenberg opined in *The New York Times*, calling for creation of a three-year baccalaureate. His new discovery, which Ernest Boyer proposed in the 1970s, merely describes such a degree as using the summers, condensed quarter terms, to squeeze the existing content into a shorter but more intense time period. Actually a few colleges have tried the model, but the degree remains defined as 128 semester credit hours.

To return to the United States, our system used a "classic" rule of thumb in defining a credit hour as well. We have all heard

the nostrum that each hour of classroom instruction carries with it the expectation that the student will spend two hours of preparation outside the classroom. Thus a three hour course of 15 weeks assumes 45 hours of classroom instruction and 90 hours of outside preparation.

In recent times, some faculty members of visiting accreditation teams and the U.S. Department of Education have attempted to use this formula as a way to question the validity of credit granted, especially by for-profit institutions and by institutions that use nonclassroom study, including competency and assessment approaches. There are institutions where students do spend substantial time in preparation. But the most recent National Survey of Student Engagement suggests that between 25 and 50 percent of all students spend less than 10 hours weekly in preparation outside of class.

Over time, Saturday classes and, subsequently, Friday afternoon classes became unfashionable, inconvenient or noncompetitive. In a competitive marketplace, students increasingly opted for the short week schedule, holding the long weekend for more engaging socializing.

The competitive market for top faculty also induced incremental change. The normal course load for faculty around 1950 was four, 3 credit courses per semester in the senior colleges and five, 3 credit courses per semester in junior or community colleges. Top ranked institutions offered generous release time from teaching to scholars whose research and publication added to the stock of knowledge, i.e., content. Over time, these highly competitive institutions reduced the normal course load to as low as two or three courses per year. In order to retain their strongest faculty members, other institutions moved to lesser course loads as well. Public colleges, facing rapid growth, recruited many thousands of new faculty. Many of these teachers were represented by unions that required course load to be spread evenly whether or not an individual created significant research or new course content.

Course load reduction made the university teaching structure increasingly inefficient and notably more expensive. It's true that lower faculty/student ratios were by no

means the only increasing cost factors for the university, as students demanded more and better services and facilities (including more luxurious lodging and multi-choice eating emporia), government demanded more information and accountability, which required large numbers of administrative staff, and alumni demanded more sports teams. But the core function of teaching had become vastly more expensive.

Full-time students continued to enroll in five courses per semester, or 15 credit hours. But staffing these courses was increasingly costly. Then some leading universities discovered that the curriculum was perhaps too diffuse with 40 courses, and proposed instead a schedule based on a four course load per semester, with 32 - 34 courses required for the degree. Initially these courses were more intense to justify increasing the credit granted from the traditional 3 credits to 4 credits per course. This maintained the credit hours required for the degree at 120-128. Gradually this credit system spread across higher education. And gradually the intensity and the content shifted back to about what it had been under the 3 credit regime.

I also note the reinforcing effect of the federal financial aid program definitions. By defining a full-time student as one who enrolls for 12 or more credit hours, a financial incentive was unwittingly created for both student and institution to recognize as full time a student's enrollment in three 4-credit, rather than in four, 3-credit courses. In spite of some efforts to define prior learning assessment (PLA) as an integral part of the learning process, or to link assessment to defined competencies or learning objectives, we remain rooted and restricted by the need to define everything in highly variable credit hours. The feds don't fund prior learning per se.

Recently, in an effort to challenge the misrepresentation of credits, the United States Department of Education has looked at the content within the credit hour. But, the level and intensity of a course's content has always varied widely from discipline to discipline, from department to department, from one professor to another. Although the strongest institutions will have a greater proportion of truly scholar-teachers, offering

instruction to a more highly prepared and accomplished student body, even those institutions experience significant differences from course to course. The disciplinary departments rely on established norms of content and level. They monitor courses for quality and consistency, using external evaluators, faculty trained in strong graduate schools with appropriate degrees, with coordination by experienced academic administrators. Even so, significant variation does occur (for example, the athletic department's "list" of "good" courses). In general, however, strong scholar-teachers tend to maintain courses that set high expectations, include demanding content and offer intellectual challenge.

But as one moves across the spectrum of higher education, the capacity to maintain the highest standards and expectations varies from high to adequate to poor. Faculty preparation and intellect is variable. Most teach using the work of other scholars, creating little or no new knowledge. Students present a wide divergence of talent, preparation and interest. Considering the wide range of colleges and universities, public and independent, not-for-profit and for-profit, it seems probable that the idealized version of the baccalaureate is probably achieved mostly in the breach.

Clearly the Carnegie unit is here to stay. But let's admit that, today, it has limited objective meaning. Frankly, I do not foresee any possibility that we will be freed from this bureaucratic necessity. It fills too many of the necessary boxes. Yet in my dreams, I yearn for a system that looks at the knowledge expected for a certain field, or even an individual course in that field, that states the goals and competencies to be demonstrated, then measures the student's achievement without regard to hours, credits or mode of learning. A few institutions have tried it, and it appears to work well. Reviewers have examined the results and found them more than acceptable. But the professional time and cost make this a difficult option for mass higher education. Still, I continue to be hopeful, and perhaps at least one or two of you in this room today are continuing to explore the possibility.

I am one of those who believe that educational tinkering originates within higher education, but transformational change is always caused by forces beyond the university. Virtually all lasting reforms and innovations in higher education emanate from outside the university. Assessment is no exception. The 1970s ushered in an extended period of what I once called "the democratization of higher education."

Successive waves of new students brought new content to the curriculum. The post-Vietnam analyses, the civil rights movements and the rise of ethnic studies, the rediscovery of feminism, and rapidly changing demographics of college attendees, in sex, age, preparation for study – all of these and more shook the foundations of curriculum and significantly broadened the content and range of acceptable study that would be recognized for collegiate-level study. These changes also spawned many new colleges. Thomas Edison College and dozens of other newly created institutions led the way in offering new opportunities to students. More recently, with the wider acceptance and successes of online learning, the for-profit sector has grown rapidly, especially in response to increased demands for career-oriented studies. New colleges for new students made assessment of what students bring to the table merely essential.

I won't belabor the very interesting history of assessment itself, from the University of London, USAFI, GED, PONSI, CLEP, etc. Much of this assessed credit was accepted, if reluctantly, by many institutions. It led Alan Pifer, president of the Carnegie Corporation of New York, in 1970 to ask "is it time for an external degree?" A number of states soon created new institutions that would experiment with approaches to credit recognition leading to a degree. The notion of a "credit bank" was floated, and assessment of individual student achievement, as well as college courses already completed, led to experimentation with credit by assessment. Most of higher education was not amused. The practice was not enthusiastically supported. Graduate schools, especially, doubted the validity of undergraduate degrees by assessment. Many questions were asked: Was credit awarded simply for the lessons of living? How could one appropriately define college-

level learning when that learning did not parallel the content of an existing course? When was the learning upper level, or lower division? Life experience portfolios? Whoa! And of course, wasn't the campus classroom experience worth much more? And how was the practice to be supported financially? Would PLA undermine the revenue usually collected as tuition? Could financial aid be used to fund assessment?

Some new institutions, such as Edison, Regents, Metropolitan State College, Charter Oak, Empire State College, the Union for Experimenting Colleges and many "university without walls" chapters, wrestled with these questions. We lived through the age of doubters. Seeking cooperation and answers, we fomented with Morris Keeton and the Carnegie Corporation, inventing CAEL (initially called the Council for Assessment of Experiential Learning). As a result, within a decade, the regional accreditation commissions and many states recognized the validity of these practices, even to the extent that an entire undergraduate degree might be gained through assessment. Still we were using examples and anecdotal reporting to justify and validate our work.

Thus it is of enormous significance that today you possess some extraordinary empirical data – the results of a number of studies based on actual work and experience. These studies reveal unequivocally that the processes of individual student assessment have a powerful effect on the student's motivation and goals, growth in comprehension, movement to more complex learning, and, perhaps most importantly, persistence to graduation. Indeed the research that many of you here today have produced has changed the national discussion. Increasingly, as a result, PLA is seen not only as a credit bank function, routinely applied, but an integral part of the learning process itself.

Today, most of the technical questions have been answered and seem to work well. But something ultimately much more important also has occurred. In at least some instances, the very nature of how higher learning occurs has been transformed. Assessment has become a driver that enables the student

to be freed, as needed, from the walls of the campus classroom, the occupation of a seat for a set period of time. Not that these seats and walls are bad – at their best they were and are valuable opportunities. But, strangely, they did limit the potential, the range, the depth, by defining learning in quantifiable, replicable packets. Prior learning assessment expands the possibilities for learning, as to place, time and source; content is freed in a way that is now transforming the nature of the university itself. Without assessment and all that it implies, the transformations currently wrought by telecommunications and online study could not have come so far, so fast. But assessment at the edge continues to bump up against the strictures of higher learning. In doing so, it points toward a pathway to a broader understanding of what it means to learn. Specifically, it is prior learning assessment, and all of its related outworking, that has made it all not only possible, but most significantly, acceptable, recognized, accredited and, for students, highly desirable.

But an up-close inspection of the various institutions and organizations that employ assessment reveals the wide diversity of programs and some dramatic differences in effectiveness and validity. To grossly oversimplify, I find three categories of assessment out there: I'll call them credit banking, contextual assessment and, to be blunt, fraudulent. The first is fundamentally essential; the second suggests a glimpse of a possible future; but the third is a real problem for all of us. Frankly, fraudulent assessment creates for all of us new controls and strictures that limit the full realization of assessment's potential. Allow me to address each in turn:

First the credit bank. A universal place to bank credit was very much a part of the early discussion around assessment. The idea assumed that an institutionally neutral body would evaluate and hold a student's earned credits and equivalencies. A straightforward, and administratively inexpensive model, it involved a routine listing of the courses completed by an individual over often great periods of time, and the results of comprehensive national tests and other credit awards such as may have been recommended by ACE, the military MOS,

CLEP, etc. Conceived to overcome the exclusivity inherent in rejection of one institution's credits by another, it would enable students to compile a single verifiable record that might be considered elsewhere for a degree award. Such a pure credit bank, so far as I recall, never materialized. Rather, individual colleges that followed this model usually added some level of final credits or projects to fully validate one's achievement.

This need for a college to authenticate prior learning within the context of the new, leads logically to the second, contextual category of assessment. This model "credit banks" substantial amounts of prior learning, but it requires that the student, with help from a professional, build a framework that links the student with a larger context for learning, validating the prior learning within

... it is prior learning assessment, and all of its related outworking, that has made it all not only possible, but most significantly, acceptable, recognized, accredited and, for students, highly desirable.

the context of the new. I say this because I believe it is important to understand that assessment has only begun to recognize how dramatic the change it has wrought is, and how this model could shape the future of PLA.

My third category is fraudulent assessment. I wish that this category did not bear mentioning, but it is a gorilla that sits on our doorsteps and affects all of us – in reputation, in regulation and enforcement, and, most of all, in inhibiting experimentation. The most egregious examples get the headlines, such as the Randocks who made millions creating 121 fictitious universities, issuing beautiful documents for counterfeit degrees from many well-known universities.¹ The

combination of distance and online teaching, miracles of printing and reproduction, and lots of chutzpah among thieves has made fraudulent degrees and false assessment an international problem. As assessors, you likely run into and identify such fraudulent operators frequently using the reference tools available to you. While such fraudulent assessment can be highly sophisticated, its illegality and absence from approved institutional data banks make them more easily vulnerable to detection and therefore catchable.

But it is more challenging to deal with another kind of fraudulent institution – perhaps one that has acquired a failing but known old college name – that misuses assessment of prior learning as a tool to snare students with overly generous credit awards, then enrolls them in courses that can be less than challenging. They collect the student's financial aid, at least until the student drops out. This kind of fraud is much more difficult to scope out because it requires that one understand precisely what is taught and measured within the credit hour. In general, accreditors do not investigate the specificity of a course credit, partly because in the older residential institutions, regular external peer review by disciplinary specialists ensured reasonable consistency in course content across institutions.

Fraudulent institutions and inferior assessment becomes the responsibility of those who must protect the student consumer and citizen. The state regulatory approval officers, the USDE Title IV enforcement body, in cooperation with the regional and national accreditation bodies recognized by USDE, spring into action. A well-publicized transgression calls for new rules and stronger enforcement. As with the BP oil well tragedy in the Gulf, the call for action is instant and mandatory and affects everyone. The result is usually more and tighter rules and enforcement by club, often with little understanding of the students or the educational issues attending them. As a necessary result of faulty PLA, the federal USDE requirements for Title IV financial aid firmly control our institutions.

There are other future challenges for assessment. Most immediately, the federal

administration, with growing support from key American charitable foundations, has called for a rapid increase in the number and percentage of students who complete a college degree. Though the traditional residential colleges and universities would seem to offer much, the current restricted budgets of both public and independent institutions has, at least for the time being, limited their capacity to respond vigorously. The community colleges are an obvious first line of offense in this campaign, but they appear to be swamped and underfunded. The rapidly growing for-profit universities offer a second resource with increasing sophistication and capacity. The impact of all institutions that now offer instruction and other student services at a distance, beyond the traditional campus, is powerful and growing. I include those that now operate across multiple state and even national borders. Only last week, Walmart struck a contract with a for-profit company to offer degrees to its 400,000 employees, including PLA for about 25 percent of the degree.²

Yet with all of this ferment, the federal USDE requirements for Title IV financial aid firmly control our institutions and certainly are central to the processes of prior learning assessment. Already, assessment is widely employed to recognize knowledge and college-level learning that students, especially adults, have already acquired and can demonstrate. The obvious question for us is: how can PLA, a foundation piece for the whole concept of lifelong learning, accelerate time-to-completion of a college degree, or if you prefer shorten the time to the degree, simultaneously lessening the costs to the student, while sustaining high student expectations, unquestionable quality and integrity, and professional acceptance and respect?

As noted earlier, the notion of a three year bachelor's degree has reappeared. Perhaps this is the time that someone will actually reconceptualize the degree, rather than simply intensify the academic schedule. The irony is that Europeans, who traditionally had a three-year B.A., have now moved in the American direction (or perhaps the Scot pattern), recognizing that large numbers of students who demand access vary widely in preparedness to undertake university study.

Nonetheless, for many American students, a true three-year degree could be an important option for those ready to undertake it. Inside Higher Education featured this proposal last week and, judging by the vigorous negative responses from bloggers, I would not hold my breath. But suppose that a three-year degree were to become a reality: what would be the impact on PLA? Would we be working against a different credit expectation? If so, how will that affect our work?

Some years ago Warren Bryan Martin, then at the Danforth Foundation, postulated a "a two-track system of higher education."³ He defined Track One as the traditional, residential college of liberal arts and sciences with selective admission. The students are above average, 18 to 22 years of age, relatively though not exclusively affluent, experiencing growing up as they study, and generally graduating in four or five years. The old credit system works fine for these students, for the hours collected will generally produce a qualified graduate. Quality in, quality out.

Track Two is the somewhat nontraditional, nearly open admissions commuter colleges, often with a number of career specific degree programs. Many students are older, frequently studying part time and holding a part-time, low paying job. They tend to drop in and out, and well better than half do not complete a degree at all. Nonetheless many of these institutions do a first class job in meeting community needs and exceeding the students' goals. I wish that Dr. Martin had conceded that somewhere between track one and two, there exists a very large number of mediocre to decently good institutions.

In recent years, most of the growth in higher education enrollments has occurred in the track two institutions, and increasingly, these exploding institutions are community colleges, nontraditional online distance colleges and large, inclusive institutions both for and not-for profit. These institutions are growing because there is an urgent need for the United States to encourage new capacities for students of all ages and talents to gain the knowledge necessary to function productively in the modern competitive economy – and they are responding to this

need. It is a surge, far surpassing the sudden demand when soldiers returned from World War II and Korea. Accordingly, we now see a national priority to increase accessible and affordable learning and degree opportunities. Some foundations have joined this national priority, calling for an increase in degree completers to 60 percent of the population in a very few years. Once again we see the forces from outside the ivy urging transformational change upon higher education.

Responsive to this priority, many of your colleges and universities are pursuing substantially different curricula and modes of delivery. Among them:

1. Online and distance or distributed learning, increasingly across state or regional political boundaries;
2. Demonstrating learning through examinations and assessments of competence and prior learning;
3. Expanding the areas of content and learning recognized for credit;
4. Packaging of courses from multiple sources and institutions;
5. Individual self-paced learning.

At its best, these approaches can provide access and flexibility, increase the range of resources and opportunities for study, and maintain sensitivity to individual student goals and learning styles. The danger for higher learning is that these methods also can commoditize and strip learning to its simplest form. One might say that unlike the early automobiles that emphasized high comfort and luxury adornments [viz., Stutz Bearcat, Cadillac], Henry Ford's innovations in production, simplification and standardization made the auto financially accessible to the mass of Americans.

As a commodity, a degree represents something quite different. It is a credential that demonstrates competence in certain knowledge, often rather specific and practical in application. The range of courses so designed is not large, so the process is streamlined, the faculty usually teaches from someone else's course and so can engage with more courses and larger numbers of students. The actual number of credits, or specific content of each credit,

is far less important than a record of what the graduate actually knows and can do. Transformation in this way has its strengths but also glaring weaknesses.

It is to some extent, a copy of the industrial model for manufacturing. Parts are interchangeable, and so definable, shareable and understandable to student and employee. The courses are carved into digestible segments that can be remembered and constantly tested. They meet the needs of large numbers of ambitious, hard working and economically challenged average students. These may not become the leaders of industry, but they will fill the far greater number of jobs that require more knowledge, practical training, reasonable competence and reliability.

This is the very large and growing student body that Track One institutions do not prefer to serve, are ill equipped to serve, and whose instructional model is far too expensive for either students or employers. And to a considerable extent, these are the students who are served by the for-profit and the distance learning sectors of postsecondary education. As assessors, we need to pay close attention to these two paths for transformation: a commoditized education, or a contextual degree that invokes more complex learning.

Another difficult issue is the process of state approval. Our American Constitution leaves the regulation of all education to the states. Although the states have generally done a decent job in monitoring the academic performance of institutions within the state, as well as protecting student consumers from unscrupulous operators, the effectiveness varies significantly from state to state. Each operates under its own legislative regulatory laws.

I have been working with an association of the presidents of online and distance colleges: the Presidents' FORUM at Excelsior College. In past projects FORUM has provided information to the public, showing what distance learning is and how effectively it works for students. Now we plan to convene state officers who actually review and approve colleges and universities. Today, with universities offering online instruction across state political boundaries – even nationally and internationally

– the laws and practices that governed state approval are outdated, conflicting, redundant and costly to implement. For national footprint institutions, current law requires that they gain approval to offer courses in 50 different states. The process sharply inhibits access for students. Not surprisingly, the requirements often act to protect instate institutions. Yet many states cannot currently support the student demands that are swamping public institutions and for which independents may lack the capacity.

If the future shape of higher learning is to include the extended campus, including the capacity to assess students at a distance, more sensible solutions are needed. FORUM is urging state officers to develop a common template for the approval process. Such a template would allow states to engage in experimental reciprocity agreements. States in the compact would accept the recommendation of the home state. Such a process has worked for regional accreditation; for example, the Southern Regional Education Board has reciprocal course acceptance agreements across 16 states. The time is ripe for reciprocity in state approval. Since any template created will need to address acceptance of credit, including prior learning assessment, you, as assessment specialists, should be engaged in this process.

What does all of this mean for assessment of the learning of individual students, either prior or current? I understand that plans are underway among leading parties such as ACE, CAEL and CLEP to approach PLA on a national scale. National higher education assessment also is front and center on the American political table. Although Robert Shireman, a prime mover in the USDE secretariat, has now announced his retirement (replaced by James Kvaal), the movement for reform is much deeper. Listen to what Al Sharpton, Newt Gingrich and Arne Duncan are saying – that they can agree is most remarkable.

1. In order to meet national goals for increased college attendance and degree awards, assessment by a number of methods will be critically important.
2. Students should be recognized for what they already know, and assessed

learning should be fully integrated with skillfully selected additional study.

3. Significant misunderstanding remains in regulatory circles regarding the meaning and content of credits that do not relate comfortably with the Carnegie credit hour system.
4. Institutions that award credit by assessment bear a special responsibility to demonstrate the validity of their credit awards.

These are voices that must be heard. But in spite of efforts to define PLA as an integral part of the learning process, or to link assessment to defined competencies or learning objectives, we remain, as noted earlier, rooted and restricted by the need to define everything in credit hours.

Assessment cannot simply be processing of minimum expectations. The call is to higher expectations, and at all levels of education. Individual assessment must be driven by high expectations, conducted by teachers and assessors with high competence, intelligence, broad understanding and knowledge. The goal ought not be a passing grade of 60 or 70; should it not be 80 or better? Just because education is democratized, must it also be mediocratized? Indeed, we do bear a special responsibility to promote and maintain very high standards and expectations for our students. Democratization that promotes wide enrollment and inclusive curricula should not be understood to mean mediocrity in student performance. Too often, I think, we

Democratization that promotes wide enrollment and inclusive curricula should not be understood to mean mediocrity in student performance.

have set the credit award bar too low for such exams as the GED and CLEP. Increased accessibility and a wide set of opportunities

to demonstrate knowledge should not mean acceptance of below average performance. College level must mean college level.

And we cannot wholly separate assessment from the faculty, especially those who create and maintain the qualities of mind we associate with college level learning. As assessors, we need constantly to measure our standards anew against those being set by scholars who daily engage in creating and explicating knowledge.

You are the best advocates to speak out, to write and do research in support of measures that prevent credit inflation, spot and expose fraudulent institutions, and counter those who use their self perceived Olympian height to criticize the validity of your own work. These are challenges that you who hold the responsibility for offering, assessing and certifying credit, must bear.

I conclude by suggesting that if we are to equal or surpass the achievements of the best of university instruction and learning, then a routine assessment of knowledge gained in History 104 or Physics 250 seems insufficient. Knowledge is essential, but only as the basic building block for a truly educated individual. At its best, PLA helps the student imagine a larger context for knowledge, form a basis for comparing, building bridges, creating at least for that student, new knowledge and new concepts. As with all enduring approaches, PLA must build-in the capacity for the student to grow and change as new possibilities emerge. We must be facile and responsive, recognizing anew the ways in which learning itself stretches us. Through PLA we discover through our students new ways to gain learning, new learning to link to prior learning. In the spirit of John Henry Newman's "idea of the university," we may

enlarge and transform the whole enterprise of the university itself.

My congratulations for all that you have done, and my wish for continued reward and satisfaction as you participate in the transformations before us.

Thank you.

Notes

- ¹ *The New York Times*, June 24, 2008.
- ² *The New York Times*, June 4, 2010.
- ³ Warren Bryan Martin, "The New Two Track System of Higher Education," in James W. Hall with Barbara L. Kevles, eds., *In Opposition to Core Curriculum: Alternative Models for Undergraduate Education*. Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1982, pp. 173 - 180.

"Sociable expertise doesn't create community in any self-conscious or ideological sense; it consists simply of good practices. The well-crafted organization will focus on whole human beings in time, it will encourage mentoring, and it will demand standards framed in language that any person in the organization might understand."

– Richard Sennett, The Craftsman. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008, p. 249.

Music In Our Times

Justin Giordano, Metropolitan Center

The Event of May 6, 2010

On May 6, 2010, I fulfilled part of my responsibility as the 2009 - 2010 Arthur Imperatore Community Fellowship recipient by working with the Metropolitan Center administration and the Empire State College Alumni Student Association to present what we called "Music in Our Times" at the Prospect Park Picnic House in Brooklyn, N.Y.

The evening featured three main sections: Following my welcome and introduction to the evening, videographer and editor Mary Perillo showed excerpts from the nearly completed video/film titled "Conversations: Music and the Industry," as well as a sample pod-cast from the video. The work is organized around a series of informal conversations about the music industry that I conducted during this Imperatore year with a wide array of musicians who included:

Adam Wolfsdorf (lead singer), Ian Vandermeulen (guitar), James Clifford (bass guitar) and Zachary Thomas (drums and percussion) of "The Energy," one of the most successful up-and-coming Brooklyn-based rock bands. For about three years, they have been playing around the city and do some 100 shows per year mostly around this area, but also across the country. This group has made "the charts," and their videos have been shown on MTV. The NYC venues they continue to appear in include the Gramercy Theater and Irving Plaza.

Elijah Brown, Kensvil Duchatellier and Nolan Jackson of the group, Deep have performed at the Caribbean Fest in Miami, Soul Café in New York City, The Martin Luther King Concert Series in Brooklyn, where they shared the stage with the Mighty O-Jays and Dennis Edwards and the Temptations Revue, in Philadelphia with Boys II Men, and at countless universities including Rutgers, St. John's and Howard. Elijah, Nolan and Kenny are established, self-sufficient writers and music producers



(Top, left to right) Justin Giordano, Donna Baugham Perry; (center) The Energy; (bottom, left to right) The Wild Party Shieks and DEEP.

who are making an impact on the local, national and international music scene.

Tommy Faragher is a producer, musician, vocalist and songwriter originally from Los Angeles. He has been involved with the music industry in all of those capacities since the late '60s. He is currently a recording studio owner and developer and promoter of new and emerging mostly local talent.

Eran Tabib is a producer, songwriter, musician and the former lead guitarist of the '90s rock group Spin Doctors. His musical credits include producing "gold sales" recording artist/vocalist Angie Stone, and work with myriad recording artists. He also has toured internationally as a musician and performer.

Bill Toles is a sound designer and music producer (for Broadway, studio and live

events), multi-instrumentalist/musician, songwriter and filmmaker. He has worked with major record labels and with many prominent names in the music and film industry. He also is one of the founders and main architects of the Black Rock Coalition.

Lisa Parkins, songwriter, musician and performer, has been involved with music for over two decades. She currently is a part-time mentor at the Metropolitan Center who works with students in performance studies of all kinds. Music/theatre pieces for children created by Lisa include "Ali: The Champ" (Martin Luther King Cultural Center), "Root for Lucy" and "9/11: The Musical" (Brooklyn Arts Exchange). Lisa also has adapted "Roxana" (book, music and lyrics) based on a novel by Daniel Defoe.

Jonathan Royce is a multi-instrumentalist who plays guitar, mandolin, a number of wind instruments and regularly performs around the New York metropolitan area with various musical groups covering a variety of genres. One of the groups that he performs with is The Wild Party Sheiks that primarily perform “hokum” genre music, which dates back to the 1920s and is known to be an outgrowth of “Americana” style of music. Jonathan also currently works in student services at the Metropolitan Center.

In addition, the members of the May 6th live event panel discussion are also featured in the film/video.

In holding these conversations, one of my aims was to seek input from an array of practitioners in the field including artists, producers, managers, teachers, songwriters, etc. In so doing, I was able to learn about their experiences and gain insights from a number of quite unique perspectives. It’s my hope that an edited version of the video will soon be available to the Empire State College community as well as at iTunes University.

The second part of our May event consisted of live semi-acoustical musical performances from:

Justin Giordano, who played three songs from his third CD of original compositions, “Who I Truly Am.”

The Wild Party Sheiks, who played three songs selections of 1920s American “hokum” music.

Donna Baugham Perry, who performed one of the original pieces from “Big Man,” a play in which she is currently playing the lead role.

We also heard from two bands introduced above: “Deep,” who sang three of their original songs from their latest CD, and “The Energy” who entertained us with four songs from their recent CDs.

Finally, the third part of the evening featured a panel of music industry guests, including performers, producers, songwriters, managers and other experts in the field. They included Kevin Williams (musician, engineer, songwriter and producer); Addison Seraphin (Internet radio station owner and operator, songwriter, hip hop artist);

Jonathan Royce (musician, songwriter, member of the musical group The Wild Party Sheiks); Donna Perry (singer); Elijah Brown (singer, songwriter, producer and member of musical group Deep); Adam Wolfsdorf (singer, songwriter and member of the musical group The Energy); Tommy Faragher (producer, songwriter, recording studio owner, arranger, keyboardist and vocalist) and Sheldon Weeks (performer, vocalist).

Stepping Back: My Involvement with the Music Industry

In my introductory remarks, I touched on my own background and how this Imperatore project, which incorporated and led to this event, came about. What was exciting to me was that it allowed me to bring together many strands of the work that I have done as a Business, Management and Economics mentor at the college for the last 18 years, and as an attorney.

It also was directly tied to studies I have done with students over many years on the music and entertainment industry, such as “The Music Industry” and “Entertainment Law.” Over the past four years I also have been offering an annual Metropolitan Center-based residency and seminar titled The Music and Entertainment Industry, which has featured guest speakers from the industry presenting and discussing their experiences and insights into the industry. It’s been wonderful to remain connected to this work, my interest in which dates back to my teenage years when I first tried my hand at songwriting. The interest has never left me.

Indeed, over the course of my career, I’ve acquired a fair amount of music industry experience and gained some degree of expertise in entertainment and music law, was nominated for and became an associate member of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences (NARAS), a voting member of the Country Music Association (CMA), a member of the New York State Bar Association’s Arts, Sports and Entertainment Section and other such organizations.

In addition, since the 1980s, I’ve also been intermittently recording and producing my own music, and a few years ago remastered

some of my recording from the 1980s and ’90s and compiled them on two CDs (one of them a double CD) titled “Here’s to You, Here’s to Me” and “Life Goes On.” I’m currently in the process of completing a third CD album, “Who I Truly Am,” which should soon be available.

Concluding Thoughts

One of the essential components of this project consisted of learning about and from the community. In the broadest sense, this included the physical community around the Metropolitan Center. It also included Empire State College as an institution of higher learning, which evolves, works with, serves and is an integral part of this community.

It was fantastic to see, firsthand, how much this larger community is full of multi-talented individuals, who are all involved in one way or another in the music field as professionals, or those just in love with and dedicated to music. It was exciting to be able to draw from all these sources, which, without doubt, proved to be very fertile ground.

Another important stated objective in this Imperatore project dealt with the “applied” component. In effect, the award provided me with an opportunity to once again try my hand at songwriting based on what I had learned from this and from my overall involvement in the field. I guess in order to teach, one also must do on occasion. I had already been in the process of recording and producing a CD album and I incorporated this activity within the project, so that even more than the songwriting aspect, I also was able to refamiliarize myself with the recording studio environment and the latest production approaches and methodologies. In turn, I believe this has made me better equipped to pass this knowledge on to my students, as well as to provide a broader foundation for my mentoring repertoire.

I also hope that working on this project (and particularly on the May 6 live-event) will provide a foundation for future events that can continue to connect us to our students, to alumni and to the richness of the larger communities within which we work and evolve.

Using ANGEL Creatively: Ways to Support Individual Studies

Ann M. Becker, Long Island Center

As I plunged into my new position as a full-time mentor in Historical Studies at the Long Island Center a year ago, I began to think about ways to streamline and organize my increased workload. Having worked at the college for several years in a part-time capacity, I had taught a number of Center for Distance Learning (CDL) courses, and spent a year working for the Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) program, where all courses are taught using the online environment. During my time with the M.A.T., I became involved in teaching and developing blended courses, and found teaching online through CDL significantly broadened my understanding of the educational value and unlimited potential of the ANGEL platform for teaching and learning. My experiences at CDL and with the M.A.T. program allowed me to envision a number of possibilities the online environment offers for individualized studies at Empire State College. My motivation was both educational and organizational, and came as a result of the increasing focus on technology at the college.

As many of the changes in the way mentors work, teach and advise have had a significant impact on workload, many faculty members find meeting professional obligations efficiently an increasing challenge. I began to reflect on all the work I had done in creating and revising ANGEL courses and wondered if I could put that experience to good use with my individualized studies on the undergraduate level. This essay will explore ways component mentors can create blended individualized studies using the ANGEL platform to support students and mentors in the college's traditional one-to-one teaching relationship.

Current research indicates that using a blended model that incorporates both individual face-to-face sessions with an online component provides a highly

effective learning experience for students. According to a recent article in *Educational Technology and Society*, "many colleges and universities have adopted various forms of blended instruction to more effectively deliver instructional content to students and promote their learning" (Lim and Morris, 2009). I have found this to be true in the courses I have adapted over the past year.

One definition of blended learning is: "the appropriate mix and use of face-to-face instructional methods and various learning technologies to support planned learning and foster subsequent learning outcomes" (Lim and Morris, 2009). Others have defined blended learning as follows:

Blended learning is the most logical and natural evolution of our learning agenda. It suggests an elegant solution to the challenges of tailoring learning and development of the needs of individuals. It represents an opportunity to integrate the innovative and technological advances offered by online learning with the interaction and participation offered in the best of traditional learning (Thorne, 2003).

Various studies have shown that transitioning from a traditional face-to-face model or individualized study to a blended course demands preparation and commitment; however, it's the great potential of this learning model that is often emphasized. Indeed, for many colleges and universities, the blended learning model is now preferred for online course design (Preceel et al., 2009). Empire State College has been at the forefront of this trend at the graduate level, and mentors on the undergraduate level can make effective use of blended learning as well.

There are many advantages to using an online environment to support face-to-face individualized studies at Empire State College. Some of these include increasing the ability of faculty to effectively and

efficiently communicate with students; creating and maintaining an easily accessible repository for posting assignments, study requirements and expectations, and support information; facilitating course grading and student feedback electronically; and perhaps most importantly, creating an online community for our students taking individualized studies who often experience a sense of isolation. All of these goals, and more, are accomplished using the blended learning environment I have developed using the ANGEL platform. I presented a poster session at the annual All Areas of Study (AAOS) meeting in the fall of 2009 detailing the different ways ANGEL enhances student learning and allows greater flexibility and control for mentors in teaching their courses. As the college continues to encourage creative uses of technology in teaching and learning, I felt that offering some examples of using ANGEL might encourage mentors to explore ways in which this useful platform could enhance their individualized courses.

The goal of my participation in the AAOS poster session was to encourage mentors to utilize the existing ANGEL platform to facilitate student/mentor communication and to foster more effective and efficient working relationships. By having handouts, instructions, contact information, learning contract objectives, and due dates for assignments readily available online, students will be able to complete the requirements of the studies in which they are enrolled in a more timely and efficient manner. Clear and effective guidelines of course expectations, along with the convenience of online access, should encourage active participation and timely completion. In addition, in keeping with Empire State College's green initiative, having online capability reduces the need for hard copies of assignments and assessments.

I have used the blended learning model for several terms now, and have had very

positive feedback from students. I have created discussion boards for students taking individualized studies that allow them to connect, compare notes on books and other study materials, and engage in discussions about readings and topics. Studies have shown that students who used online discussion forums “significantly increased their distance learning knowledge and skills” and positive student attitudes developed as a result (Shana, 2009).

By creating a greater sense of community for students in individual studies, these blended opportunities can be used to alleviate some of the isolation about which students sometimes complain. I recently created grade book capability for my ANGEL templates, which significantly enhances students’ ability to track their participation in my courses, and allows me to better monitor their progress. In addition, giving students the opportunity to participate in a blended course should improve their skills within the online environment and encourage them to take advantage of the many outstanding courses offered through the college’s Center for Distance Learning. This would expand the number and type of learning opportunities available for all of our students, as well as allow primary mentors to manage their own workload more efficiently.

Below, I’ve tried to review some of the advantages of using a blended environment by various categories: communication, community, clarity and environmental benefits.

Communication

- Time-consuming e-mail correspondence outside of the course shell can be eliminated. Many mentors find it challenging to track student questions and problems when requests are buried among dozens of other college-related correspondence. Feedback can be sent via e-mail or posted within an ANGEL grade book if desired;
- Mentors can e-mail students in a particular study as a group with pertinent information, reminders and guidance;
- Contact information is readily available online;

- Student submissions can be quickly and efficiently reviewed without having to print out copies or overlook a submission sent via Empire State College e-mail. The ANGEL shell prompts mentors on their home page when e-mail messages and assignments have been posted. Use of the grade book feature also helps students and mentors track course progress;
- The “ask a question” feature allows students to post questions about their studies 24/7, and ANGEL prompts mentors when a question has been posted;
- Mentors can clarify issues for all students with one reply. If one student has a question about an assignment, frequently others will too. Using ANGEL allows the mentor to simply direct his or her reply to all students currently taking that particular study quickly and efficiently. Mentors also may choose to post a bulletin or message into the course directly rather than deal with the question by e-mail.

Community

- Students may e-mail others within a particular study with instructor permission, enhancing the sense of community and allowing students to feel more connected to the college;
- The capacity for online discussion boards will create a greater sense of community for students in individual studies, decreasing the sense of isolation some Empire State College students experience;
- Students are able to explore readings, express opinions, develop ideas, and respond to one another.

Clarity

- Clear and effective guidelines and access to course materials and requirements encourage active participation and timely completion of work. Mentors can post specific assignment requirements online for student reference, due dates will be clearly noted by date or week within the term, and specific course requirements and guidelines for students can be prominently posted;

- Assignments can be submitted, reviewed and graded online, eliminating printing and saving time;
- Learning contracts can be posted within the ANGEL shell for student reference;
- Due dates can be accessed online.

Environmental benefits

- Handouts can easily be posted, updated, changed or deleted in the ANGEL shell, eliminating the need for printed handouts and reducing the need for hard copies of assignments and assessments;
- Assignments can be read, reviewed and responded to online, without the need for hard copies and excessive printing.

As earlier described, recent research on blended learning indicates that students thrive in a learning environment that combines the flexibility of online learning with the personal interaction of face-to-face meetings. Empire State College’s unique model of individualized mentoring is well suited to the addition of an online component.

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Resilience on Factory Planet

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

A Russian heat wave that lasts two months, killing thousands. Ten inches of rain overnight in Pakistan, producing deadly floods that displace millions. Five million barrels of oil gushing into the Gulf of Mexico, poisoning wildlife and halting seafood harvests. Flooding in China, drought in Central Africa, drought in East Africa.

What do these environmental catastrophes have in common?

Except for the Deepwater Horizon blowout, they're all instances of anomalous and deadly weather, presumptive evidence of climate change. In a larger, whole-systems view, even the catastrophe in the Gulf is a climate change story: We drill deeper and riskier wells because we haven't controlled our demand for oil, the burning of which is changing our climate and weather.

But there's another thread of connection, one that comes into focus when we see the whole system, economy and ecology, evolving over time. When we add this temporal dimension, each of the major stories in this summer's environmental news becomes an episode in a deeply disturbing tale: the story of how our industrial civilization is systematically reducing the ability of the planet to support human life.

The unprecedented heat in Russia led to the failure of most of the summer grain crop, one-quarter of that country's annual wheat harvest. The thousand-year monsoon in Pakistan produced flooding that not only killed 10,000 and displaced 20 million people, but also drowned farmland: another national granary taken offline for at least a year, probably two or three, maybe longer. In the Niger basin in Africa, ongoing drought means 21 million people live with "food insecurity" – they have little to no idea where tomorrow's food is coming from. The idled shrimpers and fishermen of the Gulf are not harvesting the tons of seafood that they harvested last year, and

that missing harvest represents protein that humans, somewhere, had been expecting to eat.

The Gulf fishery seems to be recovering. We'll find out next year if the Russian heat wave will be repeated. Future monsoons in Pakistan may regress to normal. And rains may eventually return to Somalia and Nigeria, to Australia, to the American Southwest. But as long as oil is pumped from the ground and transported long distances, there will be accidents, some of them large enough to cause long-term damage to ecosystems; and as long as processes of climate change are underway, unprecedented weather will produce environmental catastrophes. When we connect the dots – assembling them as an historian might, as linked episodes in a single narrative – the trajectory emerges: climate change and the industrial activities that produce it are undeniably diminishing the planet's capacity to produce food for humans.

Americans aren't at immediate risk. We're a wealthy people, and have the wherewithal to get our food from other sources, other ecosystems. (An MSN Web story, "How the Gulf Coast Oil Spill Will Affect Your Dinner Plate," blithely announced that "now's a good time to develop a taste for red snapper from the Hawaiian Islands, where fisheries are better managed.") But wherever our gustatory footprint lands, it will displace other consumption, depriving other populations of a life necessity.

We don't have to see that connection unless we want to. That's part of the beauty of the



Eric Zencey

market: it operates impersonally, like a force of nature, reconciling supply and demand at a market-clearing price. Like healthy ecosystems, well-functioning markets are adaptive and resilient, responding to changing circumstance readily and quickly, without central organization or control. To conservative thinkers, that makes them the foundation of democratic freedom. No coercion, no planning, no bureaucrats imposing decisions: like an idealized vision of democracy, healthy markets produce social good from their cumulation of individual motives.

Fine in theory, but what happens in practice when the free market is a market for food, and the supply suddenly shrinks? Some people – a lot of people – starve or go hungry. That's hardly a social good.

One implication is that food production and distribution ought not to be left to market forces. But there are other, more troubling implications. In a starving world, a nation rich enough to be well-fed becomes a pariah, a target of scorn and resentment and violence. The urge of such a wealthy nation will be to withdraw, fortify and self-protect. That response has political costs. "There are no atheists in foxholes" goes the cliché from World War II. True or not, it's clear

there aren't many civil liberties there, either. Pursuit of national security in a hungry world will challenge our commitment to maintain a free and open society, one in which we enjoy personal freedom and civil liberties.

Markets don't operate on clean white pages in textbooks, but in the actual world where time and chance and unprecedented weather can affect outcomes. If they are to function as a bulwark of democratic freedom they need to be rooted in systems as resilient and flexible as they are – in healthy ecosystems, ecosystems that have the capacity to absorb sudden change in their operating environment without being permanently disabled. When an economy is not rooted in resilient ecosystems, market forces are far from being impersonal, noncoercive and automatic. When food is scarce, markets have to be enforced – personally, at the point of a gun: starving people tend to loot stocks and stores, treating property law as a nicety belonging to fatter times.

Microeconomics studies individual choices in markets, the behaviors that are the foundation of the economy. Macroeconomics looks at whole systems, analyzing the economy's overall dynamics, making policy predictions. But economic science has not yet developed a specialization in meta-macroeconomics, the study of how economies evolve over time in relation to ecosystems as they evolve and are changed by human action. That's because according to standard economic theory, that field has no reason to exist. From its origins in the 19th century, economic theory has explicitly taken nature as a given, defining it as an element of production immune to change; it thus presumes that nature can infinitely absorb our acts and works. The news from Russia and Pakistan and China and Somalia and West Africa this summer is this: standard economics is wrong.

Couldn't the problem be solved by increasing agricultural output? The short answer: very, very unlikely. Humans currently appropriate an astounding 40 percent of what biologists call the Net Primary Product of nature – the biomass available within ecosystems as food energy, produced by green plants that turn sunlight into edible energy. (As recently

as two centuries ago, the human "take" was insignificant, less than one percent.) Worldwide, the ecosystems that support our civilization limp along on 60 percent of their design income. Were we to reduce that number further, more ecosystems would collapse. Some are in collapse already: the planet is losing arable land to desertification and soil degradation.

Even if we could reverse that trend, we could do so only at the cost of increasing the rate at which we lose something else, something that traditional economics has never thought to value – the nonmarket ecosystem services on which our civilization, including our capacity to feed ourselves, depends.

Healthy, resilient ecosystems can be thought of as natural capital, an economically valuable system that provides a steady stream of services. Among these services are climate moderation; water recycling; water purification and distribution; flood control; and creation and maintenance of soil fertility. Agriculture depends on all of these, and they are in increasingly short supply. Notice the negative feedback loop: food scarcity leads to expanded agriculture, which reduces ecosystem services, which leads to agricultural losses, which leads to food scarcity. That cycle led to the disappearance of many a previous civilization, and unless we find a way to break out of it, our civilization will be no exception.

For two centuries we've tackled the problem of feeding ourselves by addressing the supply side of the equation, trying to eliminate food scarcity by increasing agricultural output to meet the demands of whatever population arrives to consume it. But like every other living thing on the planet, humans have expanded their population to fill the available food niche. For a generation or two, the Green Revolution offered hope: it seemed we could feed a hungry world by using the antique solar energy of fossil fuels to augment the current solar income harvested by agriculture. But the Green Revolution has been a bust. As food supply expanded, population increased to consume it – and a good proportion of the seven billion souls on the planet today are oil incarnate, walking fait accompli who will be

bereft of sustenance when the oil runs out, as it must.

It's time to start talking about moderating demand, through policies that cease to encourage and actively discourage population increase, until population stabilizes at a number that can be fed through sustainable agriculture – agriculture that does not rely on fossil fuels, agriculture that does not destroy its own preconditions for existence.

And it's time to make other changes as well. We live today within a global ecology-economy system that's operated like a machine, a factory humming along at maximum output. As in any factory running at peak capacity, the smallest perturbation ripples through the whole machine and results in a loss of output. In a humanly built factory, when glitches arise the line can be shut down, broken parts replaced, inventories expanded or reduced. On Factory Planet, there's no down time and no slack in the system. "Glitches" like oil spills, droughts and floods mean loss of output, and that means human misery, suffering and death.

We've built a Factory Planet but have yet to implement the accounting systems we need to operate it. If a corporation were to cash out its capital equipment and treat the result as income, it wouldn't last very long. On Factory Planet, we do just that, spending down our natural capital and leaving the world a poorer, less resilient, less productive place.

And that's the most difficult news from this summer. The consequences of our foolish practice won't fall in some distant future. Environmental history, whose rhythms move in thousands and tens of thousands of years, is now revealed in current events. You can read the sobering story of our ecological collapse in your daily paper.

Note

This essay is adapted from Eric Zencey's forthcoming book, *The Other Road to Serfdom: Essays in Sustainable Democracy*, to be published by the University Press of New England in the fall 2011.

Poetry and Community

Mindy Kronenberg, Long Island Center

An earlier version of the following essay was incorporated into a faculty development presentation given at the Long Island Center on 22 January 2008.

“Write what you know,” advised German poet Rainer Maria Rilke to his young, curious protégé in *Letters to a Young Poet*, “Write about what your everyday life offers you; describe your sorrows and desires, the thoughts that pass through your mind and your belief in some kind of beauty – describe all these with heartfelt, silent, humble sincerity and, when you express yourself, use the things around you”

I was struck by the gracious and simple directive of that statement, and how he implored the young, inquiring poet to reach into his cache of personal treasures – memory, experience, life’s observations – to create a coveted work of literary art. Rilke could have said “Look to the academy” or asked that the young poet seek the sage advice of scholars, but he urged him to delve deeply into places where the muse could be conjured by faith and a desire to make sense, in the most eloquent language possible, of one’s place in the world.

When I began to teach writing – particularly poetry – over 20 years ago, it was to an audience of eager and anxious adults who were gathered in an adult education class. Some would come to class with cathartic pieces wrought from personal hardship or rite-of-passage; others were lit by a political fuse or brought poems that were eloquent but in need of collaborative assessment and affirmation. I was privileged to be able to read, hear, critique, and discuss these works with a group of diverse and determined individuals, all of whom came together because they loved poetry – revered it, were daunted by its noble aspirations, and dared to think that they might connect with a

reader on a meaningful or even profound basis.

Rarely were any of these students formally educated, though the classroom often benefited by a randomly eclectic collective – racially, ethnically, professionally – and the mix was enlivened, not threatened, by their differences. Skepticism was as welcome as complacent satisfaction – we sometimes need to be provoked into knowing why and how a work of art functions, especially if it seems peculiar or complicated on our first encounter. For those unfamiliar with his work, e.e. cummings’s “Chansons Innocentes: I” puzzled with its jumbled phrases and fragmented imagery. But by reading his words aloud and allowing ourselves into the “mud-luscious” and “puddle-wonderful” sensations of spring, we could propel ourselves back into a childhood where we, like the children in the poem, tumbled down the street in exuberance to play and listen excitedly for the call of that mythic figure, “the goat-footed balloon man.”

Our classroom became a laboratory for ideas, and brought us in touch with a variety of perspectives, styles and messages that enhanced our understanding of each other and the world-at-large. It also demystified the aspects of classic and modern poetry and debunked any preconceived notions about a prescribed criteria for our own poems to have a valid place on the page.

“Can Poetry Matter,” first published by poet and critic Dana Gioia as an essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1991 and then as a collection of essays by Grey Wolf Press (1992), points to the benefits of taking poetry out of the academic realm and into the community-at-large. Gioia urges moving the forum for poetry from a “professional literary coterie” to “a broader constituency of readers.” If critics, lecturers and presenters of poetry could speak “... in a public idiom to a mixed audience of both professional literati and general



Mindy Kronenberg

readers,” then poetry becomes accessible to any reader without compromising quality or sophistication.

As I took my own poetry mission to the schools and libraries of Long Island through the 1980s and into the 1990s, a movement was slowly underway to bring the public’s awareness to the beauty and relevance of poetry in everyday life. The American Library Association produced a 13-part series in 1987 called *Voices and Visions*, introducing the lives and work of such modern poets as Emily Dickinson, Williams Carlos Williams, T. S. Eliot and Robert Lowell. Using vintage photos and footage, newsreels, recordings and archival material, the series brought these poets to life – up from the dusty pages as human beings who have had a significant impact on America’s cultural identity.

Years later, journalist and cultural Renaissance man Bill Moyers hosted a public television series, *The Power of the Word*, which included readings and interviews with such notable contemporary poets as Galway Kinnell and Sharon Olds. In Moyer’s characteristic fashion, he plied

his guests with questions that were simple and sincere, and he ultimately created a Socratic dialogue that was as enlightening as it was entertaining.

Poetry traveled with commuters via placards in New York City subways and buses courtesy of the Poetry in Motion Project of 1992, with poems by an eclectic mix that included work by W. H. Auden, Sylvia Plath, Sappho and ninth century Chinese poet Chu Chen Po. This sparked similar programs in Chicago and then other cities across the U.S., and culminated in an anthology (W. W. Norton, 1996) of 100 of the poems that provided solace for the raised eyes of weary travelers. Part of the objective of this ambitious project, according to its website, was to make poetry available to “a broad and general audience, reaffirming its importance in our everyday lives.”

In 1997, poetry moved from mass transit to the Internet with the aide of poet Robert Pinsky, who, with support from The Poetry Society of America, founded the Favorite Poem Project shortly after his appointment as the 39th U.S. Poet Laureate. More than 18,000 Americans from every walk of life responded with poems they felt to be significant and worthy of sharing to a burgeoning audience. The project was so successful that it produced several collections, including videos of readings and discussions, poetry anthologies, as well as an interactive website (favoritepoem.org). Nearly 1,000 Favorite Poem readings occurred in cities and towns across the country, bringing together a diverse community of inspired individuals, from academics to farmers. Since its inception, the project “has been dedicated to celebrating, documenting and encouraging poetry’s role in American’s lives.”

Can the average person learn to celebrate poetry as a relevant art form as well as a vehicle for their own eager imaginings? It’s a noble and possible achievement, affirmed by the attention to and attendance at one of the greatest poetry gatherings in our time: The Geraldine Dodge Poetry Festival.

Started in 1986, the festival, a bi-annual, four-day cultural event comprised of readings, workshops, panel discussions, musical performances and random artistic encounters with literary notables from

all over the world, draws thousands of visitors to its bucolic grounds in Waterloo Village, N.J. Hundreds of listeners sit under enormous tents while listening to the wild strains of performance poets as well as the tamed voices of laureates and fellowship winners. There are open readings where participants of all stripes can share their own work; forums on translation, publishing, poetry and jazz, and seeking the sacred and the sane in our approach to creative expression. I’ve attended this event over the past 20 years, and each visit has provided me with artistic rejuvenation and redemption as a poetry proselytizer.

With the proliferation of desk top publishing, small literary magazines have sprung up in the offices and basements of our industrial corridors and neighborhoods. Poetry is now reaching a wider audience, and this has helped bridge literary practice with community outreach. It is a meaningful exercise for both teacher and student when enrichment is accompanied by understanding.

Prominent poets continue to make it their mission to bring poetry into the schools, public spaces and into the consciousness of the average citizen. Former U.S. Poet Laureate Billy Collins (who then served as laureate for New York state) frequently appears on National Public Radio, reading his work and discussing how he labors, as a person seeking connection as well as a craftsman refining language, to create poetry that will transcend his own experience. I often use his work in my own workshops as a springboard for discussion and assignment, as it is very connected to the tangible and humane. He is concrete and conceptual at once, always empathetic to his subjects and conscious of the life force behind the objects and people he writes about. In “Keats’s Handwriting,” he admires the writer’s penmanship within the context of his humanity:

“ ... with its loops and flourishes,
leafy stems, broad crosses and
sudden dots,
you can feel the quick jitter of writing,
the animal scratching of the nib,
even the blood beating in the temples.
You can see the light that must have
fallen on the page

from an orange candle or a stark
winter sun.”

I ask my students to consider not only the iconic literary figure, but the man bent over paper, his “ ... warm ruddy hand” making history with words. In a poem about his own writing, Collins is witty and taunts the dreamer in all of us. “Budapest,” whose exotic title takes us down a familiar road, begins:

“My pen moves along the page/
like the snout of a strange animal/
shaped like a human arm/
and dressed in the sleeve of a
loose green sweater.”

He watches his pen “sniffing the paper ceaselessly ... // nose pressed against the page, writing a few more dutiful lines// While I gaze out the window and imagine Budapest/ or some other city where I have never been.” The reader and writer intersect as he writes and dreams, and we can hear the scratch of his pen and look out the window behind him, to an unidentified shaft of light, to a place that ignites our sense of wonder while we dutifully record our private thoughts within the safe haven of our homes.

Former U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser has been a visible force in supporting poetry as an important and culturally significant pastime. His concern for the care and cultivation of aspiring poets has led to *The Poetry Home Repair Manual*, where he dispenses advice on reading and writing, and defining one’s place in the poetry canon. In the first chapter, “A Poet’s Job Description,” he chastises a critic who has said that we “ought to keep poetry a secret from the masses.” Kooser feels that poetry affirms the poet and the world in which the poem escapes, and that poets can be “of service” in their creative efforts. He quotes Nobel Prize winner Seamus Heaney’s comment on Yeats as a good example to follow: “The aim of the poet and the poetry is finally to be of service, to ply the effort of the individual work into the larger work of the community as a whole.”

Can poets alter the way people see the world? The only way to know is to write about that world with determination and sincerity. “Your poems will be a record of

the discoveries you make,” says Kooser later in the book. I tell my students that writing is a journey and we may arrive at summits or valleys we could not have anticipated; we need to persist in order to find out. Kooser also believes in the power of empathy, toward his subject matter and toward the reader – something I feel is mandatory when approaching writing of any kind, but particularly poetry. “Let your instincts about how human beings relate to one another be a guide to how you write.”

Donald Hall, the next laureate appointee, said in an interview in *Poets and Writers Magazine* (September/October 2006) that, despite his love for solitude, he would continue Kooser’s approach of bringing poetry to as wide an audience as possible, and mentioned using broadcast media – radio and television – to perpetuate interest in the art. For aspiring poets, he stated “It’s a life. It’s a whole life,” and recommended reading “... the old people. Read the 17th century; don’t just read the 20th century ...” to become acquainted with an invaluable archive of ideas and proven craft.

Laureate Charles Simic has stated that “A poem is an invitation to a voyage. As in life, we travel to see fresh sights.” Surely, this is a voyage with no steerage or first class.

Recent U.S. Poet Laureate Kay Ryan sees poetry as possessing an intimate art that connects the reader to the writer. On the Library of Congress website, she is quoted as saying “Poems are transmissions from the depths of whoever wrote them to the depths of the reader. To a greater extent than with any other kind of reading, the reader of a poem is making that poem, is inhabiting those words in the most personal sort of way. That doesn’t mean that you read a poem and make it whatever you want it to be, but that it’s operating so deeply in you, that it is the most special kind of reading.”

Poet W.S. Merwin, who took the helm from Ryan in October, approaches poetry as a vehicle for both personal and communal issues, and to connect readers to the natural world to emphasize our profound impact on the environment. Patricia Gray, head of the Library of Congress Poetry and Literature Center, has commented of Merwin that “Although his poems often deal with simple

everyday things, there is a nourishing quality about them that makes readers want more.”

Robert Pinsky’s *Democracy, Culture and the Voice of Poetry*, based on the Tanner Lectures he gave at Princeton in 2001, discusses the popularizing of poetry within the context of an evolving American historical consciousness, and its movement away from the tradition of the elitist European salons. He cites changes toward a “popular idiom” reflecting “the American idea of individualism as it encounters the American experience of the mass – because the art of poetry by its nature operates on a level as profoundly individual as a human voice.”

There is a special distillation of ideas in the merging of poetry and community, an alchemy of language and the ineffable. Over the years, in adult education programs, college classrooms, libraries, school auditoriums, community centers, and even crowded cafes, I have seen how poetry functions as a conduit for the human dynamic. Every change of season, I e-mail a poem to my Empire State College center community that commemorates nature and the extraordinary connection we have to this world and each other.

The late writer M.C. Richards, author of *Centering in Poetry, Pottery, and the Person* and *The Crossing Point: Selected Talks and Writings*, brings us back to Rilke’s sentiment when she stated: “What is writing, if it is not the countenance of our daily experience: sensuous, contemplative, imaginary, what we see and hear, dream of, how it strikes us, how it comes into us, travels through us, and emerges in some language hopefully useful to others.”

In teaching poetry to the community, it is my aim to present poems as paradigms, distill ideas, provoke responses, and encourage exploration and discovery – in words that are “hopefully useful to others.”

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Once I Saw the Calypso Star

Robert Congemi, Northeast Center

I must tell you at the outset – it is very important to my little story and to its point – that my life has not gone well, did not go well, I suppose, I should say, now that there is really no way I can avoid understanding that it is on the way down the metaphoric hill. Things just did not turn out as I would have liked, as anybody would have liked. Simply, honestly, I never was quite good enough, blame it on luck, fate, genetics, my lack of enough will, whatever. I wish I could tell you otherwise, but my career turned out to be quite undistinguished, my marriage indifferent, my children pleasant and suitable enough, though no more. The good Lord knows, if indeed there is one, I wanted to be someone, I wanted so much to do something special, extraordinary, worthy of pride in my life. Wouldn't it have been wonderful to have at last been a captain of industry, a painter or composer whose works would never be forgotten, an inventor, an athletic champion, a leader of my people? But when I look back over my life, to scrutinize it for its meaning, its nature, none of these triumphs is there, not remotely. In my weakness, I have even, in my darkest moments – to my incontrovertible shame – almost wished for a great war in my lifetime, to be able in my old age to look back on acts of extreme danger and courage, of heartbreaking partings, of disconcerting beauty and, again, of meaning. I stand here at this beach, on this boardwalk, where I come habitually, leaning upon a rail, and stare at the ocean of perpetual wave and roar, of course both an intimation of eternity and my own mortality, unable to resist its seduction to philosophic contemplation. It is early October, the beach is cold, and my only companions, except for a few human malingerers like myself, are the noisy sea birds.

All this having been said, though, something, one thing, that I feel truly was significant did happen to me. It was many years ago, and when I sort it out from other

occurrences in my life that might outstrip it or rank with it, I return always to the firm opinion of its being better than they are. I cannot help it. It is just my decision. Oh, once I did have a famous media person pass by me, blind to me as I toured the famous building in the great city where he worked. Another time, I actually shook hands with the governor of our state, on New Year's Day, when he by tradition received mere citizens. But, too, his gaze was not on me, nor was his "Hi, how are ya?" anything I could prize. He looked blankly, above me, smiling like plastic, and then was on to the next person in line, before the sounds of his hello had ceased in the air. But the one incident, once when I saw the Calypso star, as I said, was different, very different.

I remember it was at the airport only miles from the modest suburban house where I have lived for the past many years where the incident occurred. Aircraft from all parts of the world flew into the airport or ascended away from it day and night, crowds of busy, hurrying people entering, within, or leaving one or the other of its spectacular terminal buildings, arabesques of long runways behind the buildings, fields of parking lots in front of them. I had been able to park my car only at some distance from the terminal where I would find and greet my aging aunt, who had flown across the country to visit my parents after many years, and I was making my way across the road immediately in front of this terminal, awaiting a pause in the swirl of automobiles and buses and vans that were dropping off or taking on passengers. The afternoon was very hot, the skies utterly cloudless, and my clothing, as light as I possessed, was wet and stuck to me from perspiration. I felt so uncomfortable, but I was committed to receiving my aunt, of whom I was fond, without being in the slightest degree cross. Suddenly, to my absolute amazement, there, across the roadway, only yards away from

me, about to enter a car, his own car, was ... the Calypso star!

I must tell you, it is my belief that I am not of a personality that would make me a particularly adoring fan of anyone. I do not see myself as necessarily needing to be someone's sycophant, nor do I think of myself deficient in whatever psychology that is necessary to call myself a normal, healthy, stable man. This point, too, is important. But, I have to admit, I must admit, that I was thrilled, thrilled on the spot at what was happening to me. Perhaps it would be best to explain that at the time there was arguably no more famous personality in the lives, the attention, or the yearnings of nearly everyone of my generation. For some reason, or reasons, which I have never taken the time to try to understand fully, the Calypso star was never far from anyone's attention. Call it his time in history, popular history, I know I should say, the fad of an era, the splendid good fortune of this man somehow to capture with his singing the heart of an age, but the Calypso star was – what was the word we used then? – it? Certainly, there were others, politicians, movie stars, famous and wealthy personalities that occupied our public thoughts, whenever we had them, but none of these so happily, so fondly, with such admiration came to our collective mind as the Calypso star. At least, it seemed so, was so, to me.

At any rate, there he was, and I was about to move toward him, and not because I wanted to, though I would have wanted to if I were standing somewhere else, but because I had to, because it was my right to. He was directly in my path. Two or three cars passed between us, a bus took its interminable time to approach and roll beyond us, and then I took my steps. I moved towards him, my eyes upon him. He was tall, slender even, a chocolate color, graying at the temples, which surprised me, a handsome man dressed in silk slacks

and shirt, open at the neck, one of his trademarks. He may have been wearing a gold chain around his neck, or a gold ring on his finger. I am not sure of this point. But his shoes were fabulously expensive, I could tell that, and he seemed to me an intelligent man, with a strong forehead and intense, concentrating eyes, which I realized, now that I saw him in the flesh, was part of his affect, his charm, his unsurpassed appeal, when we average souls saw him on television or on the cover of one of his many music albums. Almost involuntarily, I began to bring to my mind and to hum silently to myself the haunting and stirring melodies of his island songs. And it was as I crossed the roadway between us, and moved towards him, before he entered his car – his own car, however sleek and grand – and sped away from my life forever, that the experience occurred that made itself so important to me, more than just the passing by of a mere media personality or the fake greeting of a politician presently in office.

When I was no more than five yards from him, the Calypso star turned and looked at me! Yes, our eyes met, and stayed met, for more than a moment, much more. I paused, as if to say to him, what is it that makes you do this thing, this extraordinary thing, to me, for me? What confirmation can I possibly give you? I walked across the roadway to him, closer. It now registered upon me that he had just closed the back door of his car, and was folding a piece of clothing, the lightweight jacket matching his slacks, for it was far too hot to wear it, to do anything other than to fold and put it away inside his car until a less intense time of heat from the sun. I saw that he

had helped someone into the back seat of the car, a child, I believe, probably one of his own, though previous to this experience I had no knowledge that he had children. In this extraordinary moment, I also had time enough to see that the car was full of people, other young people in the back seat and a woman in the front seat, together comprising, in my judgment, his family. The Calypso star is a family man, I thought. Just like me! He is at an airport, entering his car, hot and sweaty, maybe on the verge of being cross – just like me. There was common humanity between us. Common humanity! What I had lacked in my other confrontations with famous people. For that moment, we were connected, on equal footing, partners in the humanity of man.

“It is hot, mon, bloody hot. Doncha think?” he said to me as I prepared to pass right by him.

“Yes, yes, it is,” I answered, almost wildly, but determined to keep my balance, a respectable reserve. “It certainly is.”

And then I was past him, walking a few more paces, and stepping up onto the curb of the sidewalk. Behind me, I could imagine him slipping now into the front seat of his car, preparing to drive away – drive away, in his own car, just like the rest of us – into the heavy, airport traffic. I heard a car door close, an engine start up. I turned, and saw him, the Calypso star, speed away. For a while, I watched after him, hoping he would manage all right in the traffic. After all, there was something between us now, something good.

I am aware that my account must seem to you, my reader, somewhat bizarre, sad, even

... . even pathetic. Am I right? But, after some quite considerable thought, I must tell you that I do not agree. And I must urge you to try as best you can to honor how I feel. This incident involving the Calypso star does have much merit. For me, it is – hold onto your hat – even redemptive. Let me explain. All right, my life has not contained anything of excellence. I have not led men into battle, I have not invented or created, I have not been a star in my own right. These triumphs were for others. But from my point of view, from the viewpoint of any ordinary man, I once saw a star, talked with him. He treated me like a friend, a brother, a person with whom he had something in common and could understand how he felt at a particular moment. That’s something, isn’t it? Think about it. Not everybody, not really, can say what I can. Won’t you please agree? Doesn’t this serendipitous experience bring some real warmth to the memory of my life? Can’t I say that something did happen to me? A certain beauty. I believe so.

Or think of it this way. Have you ever, on a morning, the weather may be threatening, or you feel especially discouraged on your way to work, or someone you love doesn’t love you, and then, from right out of the blue, a man or a woman whom you admire, or – better – would like to know, perhaps a passerby you had seen on occasion, suddenly smiles endearingly at you, and your spirit nearly soars, no, does soar, don’t you feel then that life is worth living after all? Well, that’s how it is for me, when I recall how once I saw the Calypso star. That is how it is for me – even more wonderful, given the extraordinary importance and fame he enjoyed at that time.

Sabbatical Notes: Looking Out, Looking In

Lucy Winner, Metropolitan Center

I. Preamble: A Context

What follows is an attempt to place this writing in context by describing the project I have been working on since 2004 – the Winter/Summer Institute (WSI).¹ As the WSI website that we developed for the project describes it (www.maketheatre.org):

Winter/Summer Institute is a multicountry, multiuniversity project that challenges participants to create collaborative, issue-based, aesthetically provocative theatre. Our goal is to empower students and community members with the tools and resources to create similarly inspired work in their lives. To build an on-going momentum, the institute reconvenes every two years, with new students each time. During the interim, each of the participating institutions creates its own activities to advance the overall goals of WSI and to pass on the model of collaborative theater-making for social change.

Since its inception, WSI's primary work has been in sub-Saharan Africa, specifically in Lesotho. In the intervening years, we have focused on residencies, research and fundraising activities.

The Winter/Summer Institute project was born during the spring and summer of 2005 when Katt Lissard, WSI co-founder, was on a Fulbright Scholarship at the National University of Lesotho (NUL). We dreamed of a collaborative project between NUL and Empire State College students, so I traveled to Lesotho to conduct workshops in Theatre for Development at NUL and to lay the groundwork with the NUL dean of humanities for such a joint project. This was the seed of WSI.

Putting the WSI Model into Practice

Based on a phased structure of ensemble effort developed in our 2004 Democracy Project at Empire State College, the WSI model was first established in 2006.

That year students and faculty from four countries (Lesotho, South Africa, U.K. and the U.S.) gathered in Lesotho to use the tools of theatre, participatory research and dialogue to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Prior to our coming together in Lesotho, all participants read texts and articles relevant to the pandemic. Once in Lesotho, we continued the research with presentations from various local professionals and community members – for example, local doctors, community leaders and organizers, people living with AIDS, and colleagues in various fields from the NUL. Faculty then devised improvisational “tasks” for the student/actors that drew on this shared research, as well as on individual lived experience. As the work progressed, the faculty then facilitated scene-building.

The resulting theatre piece, *Dance Me to the End of Love* (Ntjeko Ho Is a Phelestong ea Lerato), was performed at NUL and in the capital, Maseru. It also was shown in the rural mountains of the Malalea Valley, where there was already an ongoing community development project, The Malealea Community Trust, facilitated by Dr. Gillian Atwood from the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, South Africa. At Malealea, we collaborated with villagers to improvise more scenes based on their concerns about HIV. Together we created a new drama, which was the centerpiece of a valley-wide festival.

In 2008, WSI returned to Lesotho with a new group of students and followed a similar process. Our 2008 production, “It’s Just You and Me ... and My Wife and Your Boyfriend (Ke ‘Na Le Uena Le Mosali oa Ka Le Mohlankana oa Hau Feela in Sesotho),” gave theatrical expression to recent research on the impact of stigma and denial and the role of concurrent relationships in the spread of HIV/AIDS in Lesotho. “It’s Just You and Me ... ” was deeply moving, often very funny, and consistently thought provoking. It struck a chord with audiences at every performance. During post-show



MARGARET MCGEORGE

Lucy Winner

bilingual (English/Sesotho) discussions, people spoke provocatively and passionately about what they’d seen; in addition, they shared personal experiences the play had encouraged them to examine.

During our 2008 gathering, we also made significant progress in developing partnerships with other groups working on HIV/AIDS-related issues in Lesotho. A new relationship between WSI and *Médicins sans Frontières* is particularly exciting. Our creative collaboration with *Khalemang Bohlasoa* (Eradicate Negligence), the village women’s theatre group, which formed after WSI 2006, is solid and growing. And, our ongoing association with the Malealea Trust is thriving. Last year’s Malealea Festival drew an audience of over 600.

Passing on the WSI Method

While the leaders of many social change projects hope participants will take what they learn and use it in their own work, we have built this into the process. Once established in the Malealea community, we deliberately handed the reins of generating, shaping and facilitating the drama to students. And, after both our residencies in Lesotho, we gave our students even more autonomy as peer-teacher/facilitators at a collegewide Empire State College residency. A third residency is planned for this fall.

At this point, the work continues to sustain itself and to be passed on in various forms

and locations. Our colleagues and students in Lesotho are now engaged in ongoing work with Médecins Sans Frontières. The Malealea women's theatre group continues to develop new material, after which they walk from village to village, performing and talking with their neighbors. Our former students have initiated projects in the Bronx in New York City, England, Lesotho and in Argentina. Four college students are pursuing graduate studies in areas related to their WSI experience. One of our colleagues from NUL has written her master's thesis on WSI.²

II. Sabbatical Plan and Rationale: Looking Out, Looking In

Because I had been, for four years, so intensely engaged in the work of this project both in Africa and New York (including planning, developing, fundraising, marketing, facilitating and teaching) there had been little time to process the experience even though such time is fundamental to the very work that we do – work based on a model of action/reflection. Therefore, as I was planning my sabbatical, I resolved to pursue two approaches to the work.

First, I would look outward at current theories, practices and similar projects, both locally and globally, and see what could be learned from them. This approach would endeavor to resituate WSI in the broader context of applied theatre and theatre for development, and, wherever possible, to enter into the critical debates in these emerging fields.

Second, I would look inward at the work that WSI has done, and at the methods/processes we have developed, both in the field in Lesotho and in my teaching in NYC, in order to deeply examine and interrogate our practice and try to more formally articulate our method.

I recognize that these divisions are, of course, artificial, as they both loop back and forth on one another. Yet, in an attempt to organize the strands of this report, I have continued to divide them into these two parts. During the months of the sabbatical, it was always clear to me that what I was really doing was giving myself time to follow trains of thought, and to remove the pressure of definite goals, deadlines



JUSSARA SANTOS-RAXLEN

ESC/WSI student helps gather a crowd for performance at the health clinic (Malealea, 2008).

and certainties. This report, therefore, is a somewhat artificial attempt to set down what was a rich process that left me with questions – in many instances – in mid-thought. I take this to be a very good thing, crucial for jumping back into the work.

Looking Out

With my colleague Jan Cohen-Cruz, director of Imagining America, I enrolled in a workshop with Michael Rohd, a practitioner and educator who works at the intersection of democracy and theatre, and who was the 2005 recipient of the Americans for the Arts Animating Democracy award. I have known his work for a long time, and his book, "Theatre for Community, Conflict and Dialogue: The Hope is Vital Training Manual" (1998) is one of the texts that I took with me for my colleagues and students in Africa. I had never had the opportunity to work with him directly.

The intensive workshop, run by Sojourn Theatre, was called Devising Civic Theatre: Performance, Social Practice, Participation and Dialogue. As a student/workshop participant, I had an opportunity to put myself to some of the tasks that I ask of my students and WSI participants. The workshop also expanded my repertoire

of playbuilding and ways to devise performance material, using theatre to build community. In particular, the sessions introduced me to Rohd's site-specific collaborative, investigative techniques.

In addition, I attended the 2009 National Conference of Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life in New Orleans. This conference addressed issues directly applicable to my thinking about WSI. Called Culture, Crisis, and Recovery, the program focused on how to build equitable, reciprocal and sustainable university/community partnerships during and after various kinds of crises – physical, cultural and economic. Held so soon after Katrina and its aftermath, the conference was in many ways a site-specific experience, embedded in the communities of New Orleans and examining from various points of view the interactions of community partners and academics and how they can respond to communities at times of crisis and upheaval. As a result of my work with Imagining America, I have become part of a newly formed network of people working in the area of the arts and community health. This group formally convened for the first time as a seminar at the recent Imagining



JUSSARA SANTOS-RAXLEN

Selloane Mokuku leads post-play audience discussion in both Sesotho and English (Malealea Festival, 2008).



LIMPHO MOKUKU

ESC/WSI student videographer at work taping performance at Malealea Festival (2008).

America conference (in September 2010, in Seattle).

Applied Theatre: Pedagogies and Practices

In 2007, I had served on the program development committee for a master's program in Applied Theatre at CUNY. The first in the United States, this program initiated its first class in September 2008. Having not had time to see the fruits of our labors, I was eager to work more closely with my colleagues Helen White and Chris Vine, directors of this program.

I had studied with White and Vine soon after they arrived from England in 1998. Needing a program evaluator this past fall, and knowing that I was free, they offered me a small job as class observer. White and Vine both suggested that my observations/evaluations be done through participation, so I plunged into the work of a few of their classes. While, of course, I was not and could not truly be a student (although it was very tempting!) I read theory and history, learned about and practiced co-intentional directing, acted in devised scenes, and participated in my first three-session long "process drama."

It was great fun, but in addition, it was both an opportunity for some new learning and an example of what White refers to as "spiral learning" – what one learns from coming back around, again and again, to where one has been before.

What particularly struck me in my observations/participations were the ways in which both Vine and White created structures for active learning. This involved a multidimensional immersion into the material of the particular study, so that students were learning by reading, researching, writing, as well as by doing (action) and reflecting and interrogating their own practices. One example of this, in a class on drama conventions, involved a progression from embodied experiential learning to reflection and critical analysis, and back. Students functioned as participant/observers. They were asked first to participate, and then to step back and decode the work. This deconstruction was done in group discussions – moving from individual to small group to full group. Finally, demonstration/facilitated experience was followed by guided group reflection, which was later followed by an exercise in reapplication.

Gathering Materials and Reading

The field of theatre for development and applied theatre is huge, spanning several disciplines, and with a growing body of theory, case studies and practical material of its own. Visiting the CUNY program, as well as following the threads of my own reflections, provided me with an opportunity to read new works, revisit old ones, and add these resources to our developing WSI bibliography (included on our website) and to the resources upon which I could call in my day-to-day work with students.

Looking In

My second approach – the "looking in" – entailed a searching and detailed look at our specific practices in the past two gatherings of WSI in Lesotho in 2006 and 2008.

Contamination Waltz

To begin, I started, with Lissard and Mike Taylor, our film editor, mining the vast resource of 45 hours of footage, shot by Brooke Bassin, our student videographer, during WSI 2008. Our intention was to make a 45-minute video that would document and analyze our working process. I envisioned it as, among other things, a kind of "how to" – a pedagogical tool, for those looking to WSI for a model of research-based, inter-cultural theatre for community health. However, at a certain point, we made a difficult decision to put this particular edit on hold. There were a number of reasons, some of which I will address here. Most importantly, systematically reviewing our work raised as many questions as it answered. So we condensed our work into a short film and focused on one very specific thread that would illustrate the way community health research is woven into the creative process of our work.

Before leaving for Lesotho, we met science writer and microbiologist Helen Epstein. She spoke to our students and we all read her book, "The Invisible Cure – why we are losing the fight against AIDS in Africa" (2007). In it she explains her theory of

“concurrency,” networks of simultaneous, ongoing, committed sexual relationships among a small number of people and the role of these networks in the spread of the HIV virus. In our very short film, we show clips of Epstein’s presentation, along with a similarly focused presentation by Dr. Molotsi Monyamane, a local doctor in Lesotho. We demonstrate the way these examples informed the development of our piece “It’s Just You and Me ... and My Wife and Your Boyfriend (Ke ‘Na Le Uena Le Mosali oa Ka Le Mohlankana oa Hau Feela).”

We named our eight-minute film, “The Contamination Waltz,” put it on our website, and sent it to all of our donors as a thank you.

Close Up: It’s in My Culture; It’s Not in My Culture

As I had realized it would be a mistake to try to “solidify” WSI’s working process, I wanted to look for a more flexible pedagogical tool than one film could present, so I began to focus on finding footage for the website that presented common problems and raised certain kinds of issues that seemed to me to be particularly critical to examine. Continuing my video viewing, and reviewing my notes and journals, I eventually isolated two particular moments – one in 2006 and one in 2008 – that I thought raised important questions for WSI or any project that brings groups of people in contact with each other across difference, whether in Africa or in the Bronx. I conceived the “Closeup” project to look at this specific issue: the outsider/insider confusions that arise in the kind of work WSI is doing.

In both 2006 and 2008, our work with rural villagers in Malealea had laid bare these kinds of confusions and brought some really interesting dynamics to the fore, all swirling around the tension between “traditional” healing/healers, religious practices and “modern” medicine. To explore this tension, I began working with our editor to pull relevant footage and to begin to put together a short video “study” of the issue.



Village participants in rehearsal using image theatre to explore important issues (Malealea 2008).

LIMPHO MOKUKU

The following excerpts from my journal begin to illuminate the nature of these insider/outsider tensions to which I refer.

Lucy Winner – Journal Entry – July 2006 – Medicine and Prayer

We have reached the phase in our work where we pass the reins to our students to facilitate the process among the villagers. They ask the village women to reflect on the piece and we work with them to develop material. [As our colleague from National University of Lesotho, Selloane Mokuko, later said: “We took time to really have a dialogue with the local villagers in Malealea – to say that ‘the play that we presented – is there anything that you felt resonated – something that pertained to your lives? If not, what is it that you think could have been brought in?’”]

The village women are divided into groups of eight or nine, with five WSI students and two faculty supports in each group. Using Boal’s image theatre, they silently sculpt each other into images that are, for them, emblematic of critical issues in their lives that they feel powerless to change – things that they feel we left out, or did not represent effectively in our play. Each woman silently creates a sculpture, using the bodies of those in the group, and putting herself into her own image as herself. Each image evokes a larger, more complicated story.

The women choose to work further on one of these images. A picture of illness –

someone clearly close to death – is surrounded by family/friends. We ask the women if they could then construct an ideal ending to this tragic story. Two women volunteer to remodel the image. One creates a clinic – a nurse who is handing pills to the sick one – whose hand is outstretched to accept this medicine. Another creates an evangelical scene of prayer and dancing. A conflict erupts – which of these offers the best hope for recovery? The students and I look to each other, take a breath, and step back.

All that we have learned as we do this work tells us that this is not our story, and that to attempt to insert a point of view would,

indeed, negate the dialogic premise of this work, as well as the exact opportunity that this moment might possibly present. We offer to withdraw for 20 minutes, giving them time to sort this through and come to a decision about how to move this scene ahead. We retreat. After a while the women begin to sing a song that they have written. Surrounding the sick one they sing the words (translated by one of our Basotho students): “Medicine and prayer go hand in hand. You need medicine to give you the strength to pray. You need prayer to give you the strength to take your medicine.”

The scene is not resolved. The sick person is not well, and we do not know if she can recover. But the village women have come to a consensus about something that, at least apparently, resonates for each of them.

Lucy Winner – Journal Entry – July 2008 – Sangoma Story

Day two with our small group. The villagers are instructed to take their completed images and weave several of them into a scene with a beginning, middle and end – using at least two of the props that we have provided. Choosing a feather broom and a packet of toy money, they create a terrifying scene: A family member is sick, and there is a conflict. One family member wants to take her to the clinic, the other to the sangoma (traditional healer). She is eventually taken to the sangoma, who is portrayed as a charlatan. The sangoma dances, waving the

broom, and collects handfuls of bills in exchange for each gesture, each song, each handful of leaves scattered on the victim's head. The patient sickens, and sickens, and eventually dies a painful death – and the two family members come to blows ...

We try to raise questions. We worry about making this scene – with its certainty and seemingly damning point of view – a part of our larger play. We know that there is at least one sangoma in our group of village participants. Conflicts and confusions emerge – among the villagers, between faculty and students, among our students. Early the next morning, before our next rehearsal with the villagers, Rethabile and I call a meeting of our students, and we try to process what happened. How do we step back and allow the process to continue, while at the same time trying to allow an opening for competing narratives? How do we make sure to protect all the village participants – trying to make sure that what is being presented is not a vindictive attack on one among them (us)? How do we know that this presentation of the evils of traditional healing is not a way to “please” us? What do we do with our impulse to ask them to rethink what they created, when we, in fact, told them that this was the moment for **their** story? I do not know, and the first thing I have to do is to admit that.

What Could I Know?

Looking at the video of our work and discussions with villagers, and rethinking these moments in the context of more recent readings and reflection, I am left with more questions. What was happening in that scene creation? Where did the power lie? Whose story was it? Was it theirs – some of theirs? Was it for us? Was it tragedy? I think about how hard it is to know and to understand.



Villagers working with WSI students to create a scene that exposes conflicts between traditional healing and Western medicine (Malealea, 2008).

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I wonder about how change comes about. I wonder about how one can have a social movement that focuses on behavior change and still be respectful of difference. How could we most effectively have talked about this moment? We must recognize the potential for multiple interpretations. How do we interpret what we see and what people make? Was the sangoma scene satire? Reversal? Storytelling? History? How do we disentangle it?

It's possible that (some) people in that culture believe in both the power of medicine and the power of prayer. How do we weigh the competing traditions? How do we weigh their claims to truth, particularly at a time of such infiltration and cross-pollination? And, how do we respect difference, particularly when we encounter something that we consider to be highly problematic? How do we navigate between giving respectful attention to practices and ideas that are different from our own, and acceptance of those ways?

And further: Is there a viable stance between claiming moral authority and choosing relativism? Clearly, the contradictions and conflicts are real, not only between those of us from such vastly different worlds, but also among ourselves and among themselves. There are contradictions between cultures as well as internal contradictions; points of view are contested from outside and from within.

In the end – or at least at this particular moment – I can only hope the process of theatre was useful in creating dialogue among the villagers, that it, in some way, created an opening that allowed them to talk with one another. And I hope that it illuminated, for us, some of the huge complexities of this work, that it reminded us – as theatre can sometimes do – how complicated are our stories and our beliefs, our own as well as others.

III. Conclusions and All the Remaining Questions

During my sabbatical I feel I have accomplished the following:

- I have reflected deeply, through writing and film, on a core piece of my ongoing professional development, my work in theatre for development and applied theatre. These investigations also will contribute to one of the core principles of WSI, which is to pass on the work.
- I have examined and assembled the most recent scholarly materials in the field for use in my further work with WSI and with students.
- I have fostered new connections nationally and internationally, and have strengthened and solidified existing ones.

All of the above will serve to reinvigorate the work of WSI, my work with Empire State College students, and my own individual professional development in the field.

As a teacher and mentor, I always intended to follow our model of action/reflection. In fact, I have revered the period of reflection and how it folds back into action. But the breakneck speed of the development of WSI, of our intensive, month-long residencies in Africa (each of which included only two days “off” for students, and none for faculty) and the breathless quality of exchanges that – even when reflecting, questioning, assessing – sprang from the thick of the work (or while stuffing packets for our donors) made this goal very difficult to attain.

My sabbatical ended and I did not want it to end. I have more questions than when

I began. In fact, I have come back, full-circle, to a place of wanting time to reflect. This may seem like a problem because, of course, it will be a long time before I again have the privilege of this kind of time and space. But I choose to instead see it as an imperative. I need to make a contract with myself. Taking the time to sit with and in what we are doing, to step back and look closely, is an uncontested and critical part of the “doing.” One would think I knew this. It is embedded in everything I teach and in all the ways I talk to students about whatever it is they are in the midst of doing. But as we all say constantly, our world, both at the college and beyond, moves fast, and although we know and tell our students that learning and growing takes willingness to sit with a thought, a problem, a question, for a long time – to sit in and with the messy mix of contradictions and confusions, we still find ourselves proudly “busy,” doing “actions” with concrete and measurable “results,” and thus, we forget.

And so, at the end of my sabbatical, this is where I sit:

Concretely, I have a 45-minute unfinished video (several drafts); clipped and sorted video-clips, some inserted into PowerPoints, some just on my desktop ready to be used for a variety of purposes; a completed, pressed short video outlining a piece of WSI process; the short video, “Contamination Waltz,” which has been sent to all our donors, and which I have already begun using in my work with students; a new college residency, “The ‘Contamination Waltz’, weekend residency in theatre, HIV and community health,” with an online component; new relationships with colleagues – locally, nationally and internationally – including a developing official network of those engaged in arts/community health; a revamped WSI website; and a revived bibliography and set of resources that help me (in my work in the field and in my mentoring) to situate and contextualize WSI historically and theoretically and within the practice of applied theatre.

Most importantly, I know a little more about why I do what I do – and a little less.



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Students from three countries, village participants and audience members in pre-performance procession (Malealea Festival, 2008).

Notes

- ¹ The work of WSI in its initial state is explored in “Making Theatre, Making a Difference,” by Lucy Winner and Katt Lissard, in *All About Mentoring* #32, spring 2007.
- ² As I hope is obvious from this writing, the work of WSI is inherently collaborative – to the point of our occasionally not knowing who did, said, or made what. I feel, then, the need to do more than say thanks and acknowledge the others with whom I’ve worked. Collaboration is at the heart of WSI. Some of the language describing WSI is not necessarily my own, but the result of many back and forths with Katt Lissard, as well as other WSI colleagues. In Lesotho, our collaborators include: Rethabile Malibo, Selloane Mokuku, Sele Radebe, Chris Dunton and Moso Ranoosi, as well as the villagers who so generously worked with us. In South Africa: Gillian Attwood and Alta Van As. And, of course, the patient, loyal, imaginative and creative Empire State College/WSI participants and alumnae: Deanna Bergdorf, Brooke Bassin, Tamu Favorite, Eric Feinblatt, Ed Hodson, Marjorie Moser, Jussara Santos-Raxlen, Melissa Shetler, Despina Stamos, Denise Torcicolo, Ken Triwush. Also, Helen White and Chris Vine whose ideas and practices (some of which I have tried to describe) have been critical to my own. And finally, several invaluable conversations with my colleague and

office/neighbor Alan Mandell helped me to find and ask the right questions – if not to answer them.

References

- What follows are a few of the references mentioned in this piece that have been important to our work, including some of those that I read/revisited during the sabbatical. They are a part of a developing bibliography found on the WSI website.
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The View from Rensselaerville: Going to the Keep-Mills Residency 2010

Robert Altobello (Hudson Valley Center), Bob Carey (Metropolitan Center), Nan Travers (Office of Collegewide Academic Review), Lorraine Lander (Genesee Valley Center) and Elaine Lux (Hudson Valley Center)

By Way of Introduction

During the spring 2010 term, the five of us were responsible for this year's Keep-Mills Symposium on Ways of Knowing. The Keep-Mills Symposium is an annual residency that is developed by a team of Empire State College colleagues. The team creates an online course that culminates in a three-day residency. The 2010 residency was held at the Rensselaerville Institute in Rensselaerville, N.Y. Students are financially responsible for the tuition; all other expenses, including lodging and food, are funded by the symposium's generous benefactor, Mr. Stephen Keep-Mills.

Keep-Mills, a 1989 graduate of the college and now a member of the Empire State College Foundation Board, is an actor, director and an independent film producer. When he proposed this annual symposium some years ago, he asked for only one basic academic requirement: that the Keep-Mills residency theme must, in some way, focus on "ways of knowing." How do we know what we think we know? What are the ways we go about knowing things? What are the sources and consequences of our knowing? He also asked that the theme be explored from an interdisciplinary perspective, and that the faculty team should represent different college centers made up of faculty from multiple disciplines.

We chose "Contemplative Science" as the focus of this year's residency. This emerging academic discipline takes up the challenge of knowing consciousness from an introspective first-person perspective, in contrast to the dominant contemporary paradigms that view consciousness as a property that emerges from material/physical processes and that ground their study of consciousness in third-person observation. Officially, this "learning opportunity" is

listed as a residency, but experientially, it is really more like a team-taught blended learning study group available at the introductory and advanced undergraduate levels and at the graduate level, too.

What we offer here are a series of reflections from the 2010 team members on our experience. We hope to make faculty around the college aware of the wonderful opportunity this project provides for a shared teaching and scholarly experience that enriches both faculty and students.

The View from Altobello

I have always wanted to take on a major teaching and research project that focused on contemplative and meditative "ways of knowing." However, at least in my discipline, meditation is still a marginalized topic and, were it not for the strong support of Joyce Elliott during my time at the college, I would never have had either the nerve or the courage to propose this project. So, in a very large way, Joyce was greatly responsible for our success.

During a conversation I had with Nan Travers last fall, she encouraged me to submit *Contemplative Science* as an idea for the 2010 Keep-Mills project. I then called Bob Carey and also spoke with Elaine Lux (we had all worked together on the previous year's Keep-Mills residency) and suggested my idea. Knowing of her work in the related area of wisdom traditions, we invited Lorraine Lander to join the project. Nan Travers also was interested in teaching with us. Our team was now in place. We worked out a description of the study, had the study put in the learning opportunity inventory, designed posters and mailings, and were on our way.

Though the theme could be a bit esoteric, based upon my experience, I expected that

there had to be students around the college with an interest in exploring the connections between meditative/contemplative ways of knowing and science. In the end, we had 17 students start the study and 15 attend the residency (the Keep-Mills budget provides for the funding of up to 20).

Each of us developed a three-week "section" of the overall study. This framework took us right up to the residency. We also developed (and experimented with) a "floating section/module." Since our study was grounded in the idea of contemplative learning and knowing, we thought adding some contemplative exercises might add a genuine experiential element. We called the floating module "Elaine's Contemplative Corner," and this became her ongoing module.

Students were required to visit the "contemplative corner" every two weeks, do the contemplative exercise, and post their thoughts on the experience. We really felt that emphasizing the importance of spending time contemplating assignments would enrich students' learning in numerous directions – encourage them to be active thinkers and not merely passive participants, give them firsthand experience with contemplation as an academic discipline, and generate a plethora of interesting perspectives on our theme.

We used the first week of the course for students to become familiar with Elaine's module and how she intended to use it. Students then moved on to my section. During this time, we spent three weeks reading our foundational text, Wallace's "Contemplative Science: Where Buddhism and Neuroscience Converge." There was much excitement during these early weeks. One advantage of being "first up" is seeing the birth of budding enthusiasm with the full body of students intently engaged. Discussion areas during this time were flooded with responses. There was a real

sense of thrill for many of these students, as they were reading material about something important to them (meditation and spirituality) and seeing how these topics have real academic depth. I had my moments of struggle trying to help students separate popular “New Age” literature from the scholarly material, and our debates were at times testy. But the learning experience was deep.

Working with Bob, Elaine, Nan and Lorraine was absolutely wonderful. Interacting as colleagues and seeing the various ways we worked with the topic were fascinating and dynamic experiences, and working with a relatively large group of highly motivated students was an intellectually exciting experience. It also was interesting to see how a really motivated group of students responded to and accepted being overworked. We really “packed it on them,” and they never complained. With five faculty members, each intent on creating an interesting and fulfilling learning experience within a three-week framework, we really did push them and made them work vigorously. The website during my module (and really during the entire course) was filled with interesting ideas.

The residency also was a nonstop flow of activity. Again, we probably pushed the students a bit too rigorously, but having five faculty each wanting a session and adding a film night and a group reading of a play, along with time for final student presentations, really left little space for down time – quite the irony given our efforts to think and learn about contemplation. However, other than a brief student protest on Saturday night where we appeased their fatigue by giving them a little extra time sitting outside by the fire, students really all responded to the continual stimulation in a very positive way. At our closing lunch, I had this intense feeling that the students really did not want this experience to end. It was that warm, magical feeling where you know you have done well, and I felt that warmth all the way home.

The View from Carey

One of the interesting issues associated with consciousness is the problem of mortality itself. What happens to the thinking self?

Religious traditions have a 360-degree approach to this issue. Religious narratives, early and late, account for the reality of death and why and how it entered the world. They also, in a variety of ways, “solve” the problem of the self by picturing its continuance.

All of which is by way of introduction to “Dr. Death’s seminar.” My module in this year’s Keep-Mills study dealt with religious approaches to the self and the “persistence” of consciousness. The first section invited students to sample broadly in religious stories that explained how death entered the world: all manner of creation stories and other narrative takes on the question provided an interesting catalogue of explanations. The second module turned to the practicalities of dying. What do you do with the body? If the proposition of the first section was that we were “born” into a story, the proposition of the second was that you needed a local cultural narrative in order to die properly.

Whatever happens to the body, the fate of the “person” has to be accounted for, hence the practicalities and requirements of narrative, liturgy and styles of recall. You just don’t die in general; you die in a place and time. The final section of my contribution to the course looked at the question: But what about the rest of me? Here is where traditions register one of their stronger, anchoring claims for allegiance and confessional restatement, because the problem of death is solved – in a variety of ways. You can go to heaven, paradise, Valhalla; you can become an ancestor (ancestors can be tricky); you can get recycled and return (not without its downside).

All of what I have described gives you a sense of the terrain we covered and a taste of some of the issues we discussed as the study gathered headway. What needs to be highlighted is what helping to design a Keep-Mills residency study and participating in the residency actually feels like. The first thing that needs to be said is that working with colleagues, pooling ideas, energies, trying out ideas is enormously satisfying. It reminds me of working on the school play: everyone is really busy, but the experience is liberating. That cannot be said enough.

And that also needs to be said about the residency itself. While we probably drove ourselves just a tad crazy, the seminars, the singularity of the focus and the exchanges allowed us, ensemble, to probe and explore and debate with a kind of singularity of focus that was fascinating to watch unfold.

Having done this twice, I think the organizing question of Keep-Mills gives us enormous design space in which to move around. It is something that I would encourage fellow faculty to look at closely.

The View from Travers

I wanted to join in on the teaching of the Keep-Mills Symposium on Ways of Knowing and leaped at the opportunity to join Robert, Bob, Elaine and Lorraine in this year’s symposium. I had assumed the administrative role of overseeing the project days before the residency the year before and attended to learn more about the program. I was drawn-in, well, more like sucked-in to that experience: I was hooked. To me, there is nothing more exciting than to experience the electricity of learning and collaboration. I sat there and watched the students and mentors engaging with each other and struggling with difficult topics, and, before I knew it, I was no longer an observer and had become part of the experience. I was thrilled that I could help shape this again and again in the future (one administrative benefit).

For this year, I decided to focus my three-week session on the “science” in

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contemplative science. We explored the scientific method and questioned ways in which inquiry can be scientific or not. The students redefined the scientific method by adding in and strengthening the reflective and observation stages.

From there, we explored how the neuroscientists and the contemplatives have joined together to understand better the ways in which the mind develops and works. Students learned the latest theories in neuroscience and debated how these theories were in alignment or not with the contemplative points of view. Students worked with their own abilities of observation and reflection through a series of exercises, and we discussed the ways in which these experiences impacted their memory and neuropathways. At the residency, the students explored these concepts further. The movie “What the Bleep Do We Know” brought scientists and contemplatives together and gave additional points of view to explore the tugs and pulls and the alignment of different perspectives. I think, if anything, the students gained an appreciation that they have to use their own wisdom and experiences to begin to decipher what is being said and who to believe.

The students’ reports were evidence of just that. One student took on the argument that all of the different viewpoints still left consciousness unanswered. His argument was that no matter how much a scientist or a contemplative explains what is consciousness, each still talks around the point and makes a leap to conclude that – “consciousness exists.” Another student took on the effects of drugs and placebos as a way to get at the underlying abilities of the mind to structure certain patterns of belief. A third student took her years as a performing artist to look at the effects of music on the mind and healing. The list goes on. Each student was able to take his or her interest and the overall topic and dive further into a particular angle and bring back to the group a new understanding.

As an administrator at this point in my career, I spend my days indoors in meetings and on the computer. I rarely get to have rich, deep, meaningful discussion at this level. I really recognize how much I miss teaching when I get to be involved in

projects such as this one. The uniqueness of the Keep-Mills Symposium, however, is the ability to interact with colleagues and students around so many different perspectives. I learned so much from the other mentors and from the students. All the faculty participate throughout the residency, a practice that also gives students the opportunity to see faculty in the role as learner. We often don’t share that aspect of ourselves with our students and a few of them commented during the last meal that the fact that all the faculty participated made this very different than other residencies in which they had participated. The Keep Mills Symposium on Ways of Knowing is truly a community experience, one in which all become teachers and all become learners.

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The View from Lander

My three week section of this year’s Keep-Mills study was the fourth one online, after Robert, Bob and Nan had spent time working with the students on their components. In fact, the students came to the residency after two weeks of my section with one week after the residency to finalize any remaining work and assignments.

The Keep-Mills 2010 group had several really interesting organizing conference calls, and I had many thoughts on how to connect contemplation, contemplative science, and the importance of the concept of consciousness to my own work. Although I was originally sought out for my writing on wisdom, I actually was more interested in pursuing the connections of consciousness to psychological work in this area, as well as to reading I have been doing on how our

consciousness can be considered a shared experience that transcends the individual. These ideas are particularly relevant in my current research on environmental sustainability, including how nature influences us, and how we all share a consciousness that includes all the living elements around us.

In thinking about the study as a whole, I also was aware that students would likely be a bit tired or even behind when they got to my module. As well, in going over previous feedback from attendees, we knew that one weakness mentioned was how this team-taught study had been a bit fragmented. Thus my goals were to provide students with a different perspective on these interesting topics and also help them connect this new work to what they had already read and explored earlier in the term.

I took a slightly different approach from that of the others and did not have online discussions, given we were having an in-person meeting in the middle of my module. Instead, I had them do some short assignments that integrated knowledge from previous modules and new reading I assigned. When we met at the residency, we discussed some written work I had assigned for them and “contemplated” connections of consciousness and the concepts of spirit and soul. Students finalized their module with me by doing some additional exploration and contemplation on these concepts.

One of the other contributions I made to the residency was the idea of doing something contemplative during a meal. We ended up planning “silent” breakfasts each morning where we did not speak, so that we might concentrate on the experiences of eating. Many of us ended up finding ourselves contemplating the odd experience of relating to people while silent and of our changed awareness of group meals in which one sits with others who are being silent. The presence of another group in the dining room – one that was not silent – provided an interesting contrast to our own experience.

I enjoyed the experience of working with the group a great deal, as well as the chance to attend the residency and really get to know the students who were enrolled, through their online work, their papers, and then

finally the intensive face-to-face contacts we had during our weekend together.

The students with whom I spoke after the study (the three from this area) really enjoyed the experience. There were many compliments about the topic, the information, and the methods we used online, as well as at the residency. I think one of the most important and special parts of Keep-Mills 2010 was the social contact we had during the in-person residency meeting. I think, for our students, this kind of opportunity to be with other students, as well as faculty, is rare and especially treasured. I know, for me, the chance to meet with the other students truly enriched the learning we all gained.

The View from Lux

This second time co-facilitating the Keep-Mills Symposium has reaffirmed how personally and professionally rewarding an endeavor it is. For me, the connections are possibly the most important aspect of what makes it an outstanding experience in which to participate, and, despite the extra work, the connections make me feel I would be glad to do the seminar every year if I could.

Firstly, watching the students unfold in connection with the subject matter, one another, a variety of mentors, and their inner selves gives me great joy. At Empire State College, generally speaking, the time I spend with students is intense, whether as a primary mentor or a subject mentor, but my interactions with students are usually limited to my office. On occasion, students in crisis call me and e-mail me at home, but I no longer mentor my students in local libraries or cafes, as I did in the early days of my career at the college. Docpak and an increased workload have made me more tied to my office space, as has my more pressured work life. (I am a quarter-time mentor at Empire State College, but I am professor of English elsewhere, fulltime.) The blended learning format, consisting of online segments and the culminating symposium residency, allows me to share deeply in students' conjoint and individual learning through their written and oral responses online and their in-person participation. The course allows students to emerge as distinct individuals for me

– indeed, to become very present. One particular day stands out for me: I was at home because we were snowed in under a cover at least 18 inches thick. The world was quiet, and I had no pressure. In a leisurely mood, I turned to the students' postings in the "contemplative corner." Some of what they wrote was so meaningful my heart vibrated with peace and richness of well-being. One of the students wrote so beautifully, indeed, that my heart became alive with the poetry of life.

Secondly, the focus on "ways of knowing" is itself valuable to me as a mentor, an intellectual being, and an individual. This year's context was contemplative science, and, as Robert mentioned, I was asked to create a contemplative corner that would bring another perspective to the course and would fulfill my own goal, which was to provide an opportunity for the students to use writing as a tool for meditation. I thought of several authors and perspectives to use as a springboard to student thought: meditation from a feminist perspective (Kathleen Fischer), a poetic perspective (Kathleen Norris or John Fox), and even a racial activist perspective (I read three books by Howard Thurman, whom I had not yet read before), as well as the more universal Henri Nouwen or Thomas Merton, whom I had first considered. In the decision-making process, after considering all my other choices and discussing my options with Robert, I decided to remain with the first book I'd thought of, Thomas Merton's "New Seeds of Contemplation." Not only does Merton have a basic and broad appeal, but also this particular Merton volume contains many discrete and relatively brief reflective pieces and thus was a practical text for students to use. Merton and ancillary contemplation through written, free-flow meditative pieces remained an ongoing learning piece even while the other course units were beginning and ending, shifting from one to another. Not so oddly enough, the extra reading and preparation I did, beyond my normal workload, enhanced, rather than detracted from, my personal and professional satisfaction.

Thirdly, my connections with the other mentors made the Keep-Mills Symposium a very liberating mentoring experience. This year, I got to work again with Robert

Altobello, Bob Carey and Nan Travers, and to meet and work with for the first time Lorraine Lander. I like the intellectual companionship: the opportunity to mentor together and enrich one another's thoughts. Together, we anticipated the online and physically present learning spaces. We collaborated to solve mentoring, organizational and content issues. We decided, for example, how to combine input for each student from each mentor, how to design and weigh the final project, and how to organize the sessions. This collaboration provides for me, as a faculty member, many valuable "ways of knowing" about mentoring, as well as the predictable enhancement of my ways of knowing about the topic of the symposium. In addition, during the residency itself, I gained from each mentor's expertise and facilitating style. Working together with colleagues also brings out more of what I know. For instance, when Bob Carey and I had the opportunity to co-facilitate a small-group advisement session, I not only was pleased at how well we worked together to help our students define the focus and even developmental lines of their projects, but I was surprised to note how much our stimulating conversations and mutual support enhanced the flow of creative ideas and knowledge in me. Playing off one another in small-group or in large-group sessions, as well as in planning sessions, provides me with an intellectual supercharge that is exhilarating.

Fourthly, the environment of the residency is lovely and restorative. The grounds at the Rensselaerville Institute are beautiful, the food is delicious, the accommodations are comfortable, the teaching rooms are suitable to adult-style formats and the facility is technologically well-outfitted. The overall atmosphere is inviting, professionally and personally: perfect for an Empire State College learning experience. That students are being treated respectfully, even luxuriously, makes me especially glad to be part of the team affording them this wonderful educational experience. In both of my Keep-Mills experiences, despite working hard, I have felt refreshed, relaxed and renewed by the experience as a whole.

Fifthly, in this particular Keep-Mills Symposium on Ways of Knowing, I enjoyed the connective role I played via

the contemplative corner. Robert Altobello proposed the contemplative corner, as there was simply not enough time to have another self-contained learning unit in the course, but the students needed a nonacademic (though still informative) outlet to apply meditative practice as part of their expanded ways of knowing. I was willing to try the idea, for I was already sold on the value of Keep-Mills. My odd role in the symposium at first occasioned some questions and doubts within me, as I felt a little peripheral to the ongoing academic process. I was insecure, too, when, at first, a few of the students complained about the politically incorrect pronoun use in Merton (any older text lacks the “he/she” pronoun emphasis of our contemporary, gender-conscious prose) or about the Christian language sometimes occurring in Merton. However, as time went on, even the resistant students came to appreciate and enjoy the contemplative depth and breadth of Merton, and I was encouraged as all the students became increasingly positive and/or thoughtful about what they read.

Another problem I had initially was that students did not write as much per “sitting” as I’d hoped they would (I was expecting 20 minutes of nonstop, free-flow writing at least once every two weeks), but I was comforted that many of the students did write somewhat extensively and that all of them wrote meaningfully. Almost all were very faithful about posting their meditative responses. I was able to mentally adjust my expectations regarding quantity, as I began to grasp the significance of what the students were doing: full work in the other Keep-Mills units concurrent with their work in the contemplative corner and completing other

Empire State College studies at the same time. Ultimately, my overall appreciation for having a contemplative corner increased when some students expressed that the contemplative corner was a constant for them, a comfort and a connective factor threading through their shifting experiences from unit to unit. After serving online as a background encouraging presence, I was delighted at my opportunity to facilitate a live session at the residency. I used a variety of writing pieces in combination with appropriate exercises to trigger students’ active exploration of writing as a tool for contemplative mediation and to provide them with an opportunity for reflection upon their experience. I was exhilarated by their response to our in-person session and by what they produced and shared with the group during this live interaction.

In sum, as I hope is apparent, the Keep-Mills Symposium experience has expanded my mentoring expertise and has made even more salient for me how wonderful our students and our colleagues are.

Some Caveats

In spite of our rather glowing views of this experience, there are some elements that are challenging and might make the project less enticing for some mentors. Dividing the credit load for 15 to 20 (and sometimes fewer) students among four or five faculty does result in an imbalance – in effect, a great deal of work for very little “credit.” This is truly a team-taught study, and as such it does require being involved even when you are not directly responsible for the teaching (e.g., paying attention to the discussions on all the modules). The cohesion of the team is really important,

and everyone needs to be aware of what other faculty are doing with their modules and how the students are thinking and responding. This genuine team element is a central part of what makes this experience so rewarding, but there is a tangible cost. It is extremely important that all team members share a common work ethic and are comfortable (and somewhat familiar) with how other members of the team think about working together.

The residency (at least ours) also involves full participation by all faculty participants at the residency itself, and that means long days. We all attended every event and every session. Saturday went from 8:30 in the morning until well after 10 that night, with only a few short breaks.

Another sticky issue is the one-time nature of any given topic for Keep-Mills. We all put in much time, work and research. However, since this is a one-time event with specific topics and themes rotating annually, much of the work doesn’t get recycled. Our version of the residency certainly has the potential to be done far more often so that the college and students can reap the rewards of the team’s work and of the insights gained from the students’ experience. However, as things stand now, instead of growing, our project in contemplative science moves instantly to the archive bin. Of course, new ideas and new ways of incorporating the content into one’s mentoring and research can (and will!) take place, but the loss of the potential for growth within this study is a waste of creative energy for the college, and should be addressed as another important way to keep these experiments in “ways of knowing” alive.

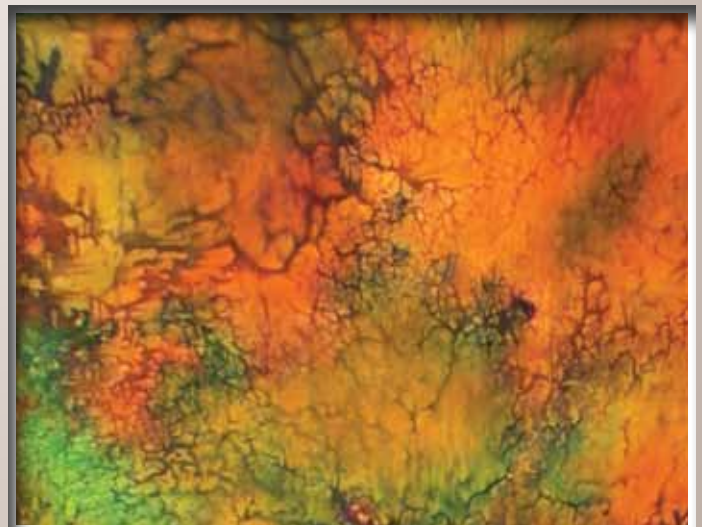
Leaky Creativity

Hand-painted silk fabrics by Nan Travers, Office of Collegewide Academic Review



I creep down the stairs to my studio, a cave in the belly of my home, where mayhap may happen well below any radar. I love this place. No pretenses allowed, only leaky creativity.

I take deep breaths of pungent leftovers: projects drying on the rack, evaporating alcohol, dyes spattered on the floor. Salt crystals crunch under me as I head to the wall of liquid colors, waiting to be released from their contained bondage. I have no plans. I pause and wait for a color to step forward, bold with deliverance.



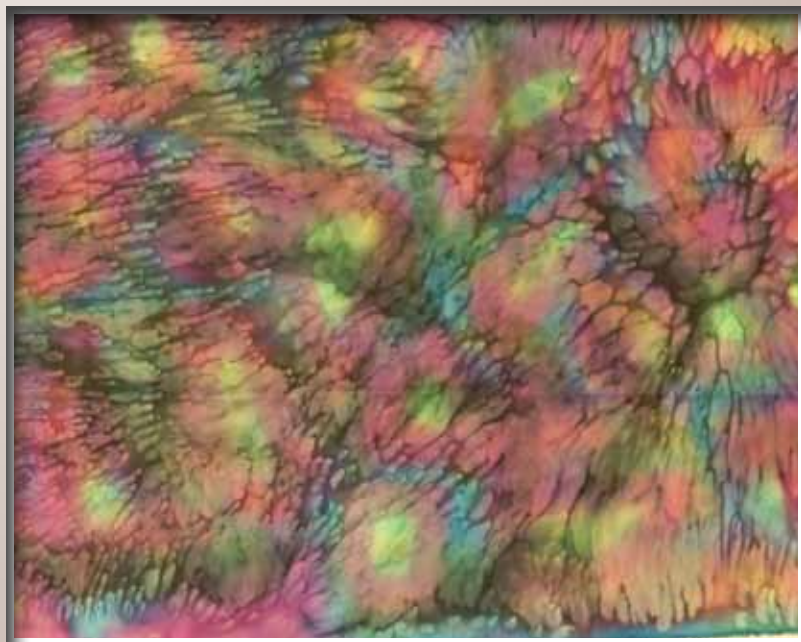
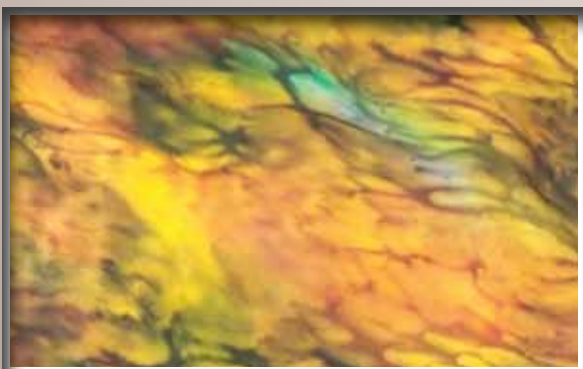
There has been no time, no world, no arguments or agreements, no newness or dewiness. All left me the millisecond I open the jar, rich in liquid quale. The outside, tempered, couches on the fringes, beginning to peer at the display.

BUT WAIT ... no critiques are allowed in this space; they are checked at the door and I have their ticket. I am not done. I reach for the alcohol spray, followed by salt. The dashing colors move to and fro until they settle their order.





I duck below, watching the colors
from underneath – a trick learned from
granddaughter, Abby, who taught me
to peek at the lights shining through.
The cats come to speculate and
together, under the autumn stage,
we blink the color canopy.



Fugitives, Freedom and the Mentoring Moment

Frank Vander Valk, Center for Distance Learning

A Moment for Mentoring

Over the past few years, I have been fortunate to have been part of numerous discussions about mentoring with colleagues from throughout the college. Mentors have generously shared their knowledge of the history of mentoring at Empire State College, their speculations about the future of the enterprise, and, of course, their particular versions of the common challenges that mentors throughout the college face as we try to muddle through as best we can. I sensed a theme tying together many of these conversations but I was not able to identify or articulate it until the 2009 All Areas of Study (AAOS) meetings. In the course of a robust conversation about mentoring, this question, the question I aim to take up in what follows, was posed: What can be done to preserve mentoring in the face of totalizing forces? When this question was asked, I recognized that it captured the theme that had run throughout so many previous conversations.

The phrase “totalizing forces” is perhaps slightly cumbersome but it refers to a familiar and fairly banal set of complaints or observations. In context it was used to describe the perception that there is a shrinking range of possibilities for mentoring – the idea that a collection of factors was undercutting the ability of Empire State College to engage in meaningful mentoring. Included in these totalizing forces were curricular demands from external accreditation bodies and agencies (including, and perhaps especially, professional organizations); an attempt to maintain “equity” across centers in Empire State College; increasing bureaucratization; restrictions imposed by student financial rules, along with additional restrictions in the form of satisfactory academic progress (SAP) concerns; general education requirements; the unfortunate coincidence of the college’s marketing strategy with

a dominant neoliberal agenda; and other factors, real or perceived, that impinged upon the educational liberty of student or mentor (or both). There was a sense in this particular conversation that there is simply too much stuff to get through before one can get to mentoring, and that this stuff tended to push degree plans and the educational planning process itself towards a stultifying homogeneity.

Recognizing that conversations about mentoring can get a little, shall we say, overwrought, I nevertheless could not shake the sense that there are two distinct and important ways to read the question raised above. At one level it is simply about trying to maintain a vibrant mentoring model in a socioeconomic environment that differs in key ways from the environment in which the mentoring model was conceived. In this formulation the question could be restated as: “Can we still mentor?” But there is a second way to read this question (though it is a formulation which takes for granted the far-from-obvious claim that we do indeed live in totalizing times); our students live in this totalizing environment as well, and insofar as they look to education as offering tools to help them navigate in this environment – and here I am being agnostic about whether a student wants to learn these navigational skills to “escape from” or to thrive in the current environment – we, as mentors, may want to develop a coherent sense of how to translate the possibilities inherent in education into a set of realities that can serve a range of students.

What follows are two brief attempts to think through this question of how to mentor in a totalizing environment. The first attempt is admittedly sketchy and theoretical, though my hope is that it can help others think in interesting ways about mentoring. It draws upon Sheldon Wolin’s discussion of totalizing superpower in 21st century life. In a thought experiment, I playfully appropriate elements of Wolin’s discussion



Frank Vander Valk

of democracy in an age of superpower, substituting the word “mentoring” where Wolin discusses “democracy,” just to see where such a substitution might lead. The second attempt to grapple with the question has a much more practical purpose in mind. In this section of the article, I describe some of the thinking that has gone into a teaching and mentoring project that has been supported by a reassignment from the Center for Mentoring and Learning. I see connections between the two reactions to the driving question, and I hope that some of these connections (and perhaps a few more besides!) appear to readers as well.

A Fugitive Moment

The updated edition of Sheldon Wolin’s classic “Politics and Vision” provides an unexpected framework to think about mentoring. Wolin examines the state of democracy in the early 21st century and finds it wanting. Specifically, Wolin finds the range of activities open to individuals qua citizens has greatly diminished over the past 40 or so years. Wolin points to the collapse of the distinction between

political and economic activity as a root cause of the inability of individuals to act as democratic citizens. The collapse, or conflation, of political activity, the economic logic of capital, and the coercive power of the state all combine to form what Wolin extravagantly calls, “inverted totalitarianism” which takes as its lifeblood “superpower.” Superpower is the driving and totalizing force that pervades 21st century life.

Wolin reframes a concern about the vitality of the democratic enterprise by questioning not the possibility of democracy, but the very desirability of democracy, if by that term we mean an ongoing system of government: “The true question is not whether democracy can govern in the traditional sense, but why it would want to. Governing means manning and accommodating to bureaucratic institutions that, ipso facto, are hierarchical in structure and elitist” (602-603). The theoretical virtues of democracy are so attractive that we have been encouraged to think of democracy as a system and, more importantly in the context of my comparison with mentoring, systematizable. Wolin’s take on the matter is somewhat different. He suggests that “democracy is an ephemeral phenomenon rather than a settled system. We might think of it as protean and amorphous, embracing a wide range of possible forms and mutations” (602). Let me repeat this passage, with one substitution: “[Mentoring] is an ephemeral phenomenon rather than a settled system. We might think of it as protean and amorphous, embracing a wide range of possible forms and mutations.” Rather than seeking an institutionalized (and totalizing) system of democratic governance, Wolin suggests we cultivate an ethic of awareness of the possibilities in what he calls “fugitive democracy.”

In a passage that offers a range of interpretative possibilities for mentors Wolin writes:

Perhaps, then, democracy [mentoring?] should be about forms rather than a form or constitution; and, instead of an institutionalized process, it should be conceived as a moment of experience ... Its moment is not just a measure of

fleeting time but an action that protests actualities and reveals possibilities (603).

This idea of fugitive democracy as an alternative to superpower spurred me to think of “fugitive mentoring” as an alternative to “totalized mentoring.” Perhaps one way to mentor in the face of totalizing forces is to adopt a fugitive approach, refusing to adopt dogmatic or overly determinative practices in order to remain receptive to the mentoring possibilities of each moment. (Each time I hear the suggestion that we ought to centralize mentoring in one place, with a common set of practices, I fear for the gloriously idiosyncratic approaches to mentoring that are still possible at Empire State College.) Perhaps mentoring itself is less about developing a degree plan and more about cultivating a sense of possibility. Fugitive mentoring would involve resisting institutionalization in favor of keeping open “moments” as Wolin describes them above, as actions that protest actualities – not the actualities of students’ own felt needs, but the actualities of limits on how those needs might be satisfied. The point would then be to protest (in Wolin’s sense) and perhaps eliminate limits on students’ abilities to reach their evolving goals.

For Wolin, the “fugitive” in fugitive democracy does not refer to some sort of swashbuckling anti-hero intent on living life on the edge of the law; he explicitly states that “this is not to define democracy [or, mentoring] as institutionalized negativity What is at stake is not a vapid issue of dissent” (604). Yes, Wolin recommends “dissonance” but he eschews “the flashy but empty ways of latter-day Nietzscheans” (606) in favor of “doing the best one can to take part in common tasks, the deliberations that define them, and the responsibilities that follow” (604). Fugitive rather refers to the ephemeral and occasional characteristic of democracy, its disestablished rather than anti-establishment nature. Similarly, it is important to recognize that fugitive mentoring is not, in this formulation, some heroic enterprise. Strictly speaking, an individual cannot be a fugitive mentor – excepting, of course, the rare cases in which one is on the run from law enforcement – but only a mentor who mentors, if I may

introduce an unwieldy term, fugitively. Fugitive mentoring would not focus on getting each and every student to interrogate the discursive structures in/of reality, or to formulate abstract analyses of the production of truth values, or the concept of superpower – these endeavors may be appropriate for some students, but not most – but rather it would be a form of helping students to see how some barriers that are taken for granted are actually unnecessary, and how others which seem insurmountable are indeed conquerable.

In the face of totalizing forces, the response of fugitive mentoring is actually fairly mundane. It involves little more than recognizing the paradox that an institution which values mentoring is constantly in danger of succumbing to the dangers of institutionalization and therefore the danger of undercutting in practice the values it endorses in theory. Fugitive mentoring recognizes that mentoring moments are more often than not spontaneous, fleeting and nearly impossible to replicate. All one

Fugitive mentoring recognizes that mentoring moments are more often than not spontaneous, fleeting and nearly impossible to replicate.

can do in embracing fugitive mentoring is cultivate an ethic of awareness, and openness to moments that present themselves according to no schedules, no proven prompts, and in response to few predictable stimuli. A totalizing environment induces individuals to focus on what is established in that environment, e.g., what assumptions about credits, general education, content, disciplinary barriers and prior learning, are in force. Fugitive mentoring seeks to create balance by attending to the freedom that students retain in establishing for themselves a sound educational path.

A Free Moment

If the question on the table is “What can be done to preserve mentoring in the face of totalizing forces?” then fugitive mentoring might be considered to be a way of thinking about an answer. Actually trying to do something, to experiment, as a way of answering the question is another issue entirely. With a reassignment from the Center for Mentoring and Learning, I have been trying to create an environment in which students and mentors alike might navigate more freely. As of the time of this writing, this experiment is taking form. It has been dubbed the “New Freedom Project.”

I asked myself whether, as a member of the faculty who is obligated to teach online, how I might reduce of the totalizing forces associated with technology. Is it possible, I wondered, to make a space for students to pursue independent studies while minimizing the distractions of terms start and end dates, predetermined content, learning management systems (an instance of superpower, indeed!), and credit allotments. I hope, perhaps quixotically, that this project can in some small way help online teaching and learning at Empire State College escape from the totalizing tendency of technology. The very concept of a learning management system (LMS) is emblematic of the totalizing trend that troubled some of the faculty at the AAOS meetings. It is, after all, difficult to square the systematization and management of learning with the mentoring model. Surely we can strive to do better. Surely we can imagine a way to embrace the technological innovations available to us, and to respond to the socioeconomic changes that surround us.

This is how the New Freedom Project (NFP) was conceived, as a space where every student is free to follow his or her learning impulses, free to learn first and ask about credits, student aid, course titles, and so on, later. It is designed in a way that takes seriously Wolin’s claim that “multiplicity is anti-totally” (603). In practical terms, the NFP is simply an online space designed to bring together content, faculty and students. One might think of this project as a many-roomed mansion. Once a student knocks on the front door, she is able to enter a grand

parlor, catching bits of lively conversations from various rooms throughout the structure. She might wander into the living room to find an ongoing conversation about Islamic political theory; she might stroll into the kitchen to find a group of people working on a project to balance the federal budget; she may happen upon the library, only to find yet another group of students engaged in a study of the economics, science and history of water. This student is free to participate in the discussion, to learn, and to teach, as her time, energy and interests allow. She is free to mingle with her peers and to suggest that a group of them retire to the garden to begin a new study. And, when she is ready to convert learning (including prior learning) into credits, she simply approaches one of the hosts of this soiree to make an official request for an evaluation.

The NFP is just a virtual version of this mansion. Students come to a single online space (the grand parlor) and are able to catch glimpses of all of the conversations that are going on in the space. They are free to participate in the conversations as they are interested, for as long as they like, and to the level of detail that they like. A student may find something unexpected, e.g., a group of people studying public policy, that relates to her studies and she may work with her mentor and faculty associated with the NFP to craft a learning contract that can be integrated into her degree plan. Another student, with 20 years experience in public administration, may be working in a separate area but notice that there is an ongoing conversation to which he might contribute his professional knowledge. The space draws upon the Empire State

... a space where every student is free to follow his or her learning impulses, free to learn first and ask about credits, student aid, course titles, and so on, later.

College traditions of individualized study and assessment and integration of prior learning and it also takes seriously the learning principles developed by “connected learning” theorists such as George Siemens, Stephen Downes and Terry Anderson

Of course, with this approach there is a balance that must be struck, and realities that cannot be ignored simply because a “head-in-the-clouds” faculty member dubbed these realities “totalizing.” Students who sign up for credits in advance, as many will, will still need to complete the work on schedule. (But, students who do the work first can “cash in” that work when it is advantageous to them.) Students will need to be disciplined, and the college will need to be clear about exactly how work and learning translate into credits and knowledge. There is a great deal of trust involved, for faculty, students and college administrators. Technical questions having to do with registration need to be addressed. This is not an undertaking without restrictions, demands or limitations. But, this is an undertaking which seeks, as much as possible, to shift demands that are not related directly to learning away from the students. To return to the language of Wolin, it seeks to embed students in a loose framework of anti-totally. It seeks to de-center learning such that faculty, enrolled students, students seeking prior learning credits, and casual observers alike can all inhabit the same space as co-seekers of knowledge.

One remaining question loomed large: How well will educational planning work in this environment, if it is even possible? How best to balance the advantages of one-to-one mentoring with what I hope will be the strengths of this collaborative space? After all, the New Freedom Project is not about freedom in the heroic sense, but more in the fugitive sense. Certainly it seems like an advantage to students to see and experience the fugitive possibilities of educational planning. Maybe just taking part in the structured chaos of the project will make clear possibilities that otherwise would have remained hidden – would this count as a form of educational planning? For now, I plan to muddle through by encouraging students to consult with their respective mentors to see if it makes sense for them

to identify how work in the project helped them plan their education. (I plan to provide an update to All About Mentoring after the project has run for a year.)

I'll Conclude in a Moment

It would be disingenuous to claim that these questions are in the forefront of my mind in each and every interaction I have with students. In most interactions with students, I am working on the pressing needs of the day, whether that is counting general education credits or having a conversation with a student about how her vacation plans might affect registration for the next term. However, these big questions emanating from conversations with mentors around the college do inform how I approach the everyday interactions. If I might steal a riff

from Arlo Guthrie, one need not change the world of (or through) mentoring; it is enough to change the moment and then, moment by moment, the world will change as well. I hope that the faculty and administration at Empire State College resist the urge to measure mentoring to death, resist the urge to standardize, normalize and bureaucratize mentoring and in doing so drain it of its vitality and possibility.

Maintaining a strong institutional commitment to mentoring is important not only as a means of honoring the history of Empire State College, but also as a tactic for meeting the challenges of the future. Indeed, mentoring is ideally suited to the likely evolutionary path of higher education in the 21st century. It is already the case, as it has been for years,

that many students no longer need a college to transmit information, rather students benefit more from translating information into knowledge that is personally relevant and the mentoring model allows for this translation. Educational planning is not (as some have secretly confessed to believing at collegewide meetings) an anachronism, but neither is it well-suited to a totalized world. As mentors, we have to each make our peace with this reality. The mentor may be doomed to “muddle through,” but to admit this is not to admit defeat but rather to embrace opportunity.

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“What this Socrates says to a democratic culture impatient with deliberation and vulnerable to demagoguery of all sorts is: ‘Slow down. Think clearly. Do not defer to authority or peer pressure. Follow reason wherever it takes you, and don’t trust anything else. Indeed, don’t trust even reason: keep probing your arguments for faults, never rest content.’”

– Martha Nussbaum (in her review of “Examined Life,” a film by Astra Taylor, in The Point, Issue Two, Winter 2010, p. 115).

Narrative: Learning from Experience

Marie Tondreau, Hudson Valley Center

This piece is a slightly revised excerpt from my 2003 dissertation, which was titled “Weaving Storylines in Adult Education: The Narrative Construction of Self, Society, and Structures of Knowledge.” Nemerov’s delightful poem “Learning the Trees” provided me with an opportunity for an extended rumination about the difficulty of reconciling the world of academic theory with the world found outside the ivory tower, and for considering the way that narrative may serve as a bridge between these two worlds.

In this tale of “Learning the Trees,” Nemerov (1977) presents a poetic analogy to the process of education. First, you must master the body of existing knowledge on a topic: “Before you can learn the trees, you have to learn the language of the trees. That’s done indoors, out of a book.” And with a curious twist, here: a book “is one of the transformations of a tree,” cut down and chopped up and processed until it is unrecognizable, so it can hold black symbols that are meant to convey information. In this case, like a braided snake holding its own tail in its mouth, it is information about trees! This is an implicit example of the way that inquiry may sometimes

destroy what it studies, like medical students dissecting a cadaver in order to extract its secrets.

Theory comes first. The classifications – the result of a prior endeavor by someone else who moved from observation to categorization – are studied in depth and detail, so that examples of each structure and pattern and type may be accurately identified in “the forests and the shady streets.” Then, the intrepid student, “sufficiently provided” with facts, a bit enchanted by the elegant typologies and evocative labels, “go[es] forth” into the world of trees, and is dismayed to find that the map does not mirror the terrain.

“Learning the Trees”

Howard Nemerov

Before you can learn the trees, you have to learn
The language of the trees. That’s done indoors,
Out of a book, which now you think of it
Is one of the transformations of a tree.

The words themselves are a delight to learn,
You might be in a foreign land of terms
Like samara, capsule, drupe, legume and pome,
Where bark is papery, plated, warty or smooth.

But best of all are the words that shape the leaves –
Orbicular, cordate, cleft and reniform –
And their venation – palmate and parallel –
And tips – acute, truncate, auriculate.

Sufficiently provided, you may now
Go forth to the forests and the shady streets
To see how the chaos of experience

Answers to catalogue and category.

Confusedly. The leaves of a single tree
May differ among themselves more than they do
From other species, so you have to find,
All blandly says the book, “an average leaf.”

Example, the catalpa in the book
Sprays out its leaves in whorls of three
Around the stem; the one in front of you
But rarely does, or somewhat, or almost;
Maybe it’s not catalpa? Dreadful doubt.
It may be weeks before you see an elm
Fanlike in form, a spruce that pyramids,
A sweetgum spiring up in steeple shape.

Still, pedetemtim as Lucretious says,
Little by little, you do start to learn;
And learn as well, maybe, what language does
And how it does it, cutting across the world

Not always at the joints, competing with
Experience while cooperating with
Experience, and keeping an obstinate
Intransigence, uncanny, of its own.

Think finally about the secret will
Pretending obedience to Nature, but
Invidiously distinguishing everywhere,
Dividing up the world to conquer it.

And also think how funny knowledge is:
You may succeed in learning many trees
And calling off their names as you go by,
But their comprehensive silence stays the same.

A representative leaf is sought in vain. “Dreadful doubt” prevails. Details vary, diversity reigns supreme, and the task of matching mental representations (derived from the codified knowledge of the authoritative text) with observations of actual trees in their natural habitats (or context) is a Herculean one at best.

The student perseveres, and eventually correspondences between text and trees emerge. Does this reflect increased discrimination on the part of the student, or a process of shaping perceived reality into the patterns expected? Either way, what has been learned? Empirical inquiry was performed, the reality of trees was subjected to objective scrutiny, and descriptive classifications were carefully constructed. The logical positivists would be pleased. Trees have now been explained, and hypotheses may be formulated with a certainty of prediction and control. Birches will not weep like willows, oaks will majestically emerge from acorns, and cherry trees will blossom in the spring. Furthermore, Order reigns. Phenomenologists would be ambivalent. The qualities of trees have been captured, rich portraits have been depicted, understanding of form and function has been achieved. However, the true “essence” of a tree is elusive still, their inner experience untouched and inaccessible.

As Nemerov eloquently points out, the trees stand in their “comprehensive silence” and pay no attention to the erstwhile student – who is now, having mastered the theoretical scholarship of trees and reconciled it with empirical observations, an expert on trees. The student has learned “to see how the chaos of experience answers to catalogue and category.” Yet, this taming of “the chaos of experience” is illusory. Nemerov also implies that such study may reveal “what language does and how it does it, cutting across the world not always at the joints, competing with experience while cooperating with experience, and keeping an obstinate intransigence, uncanny, of its own.” If only the trees could speak – then we could discover the essence of trees! Or, at least, we could hear whatever stories they might tell, and truly “learn” the trees inside and out. Or could we?

This tale of “learning the trees” illustrates the difficulty of reconciling theoretical

“book learning” with life experience. Boud and Miller (1997) present some key propositions for what they call “animating” learning, or learning from experience: “Experience is the foundation of and the stimulus for learning ... [L]earners actively construct their own experience ... learning is holistic ... learning is socially and culturally constructed ... [and] learning is influenced by the socio-emotional context in which it occurs” (pp. 9 - 10). They contend that:

Animators are often required to offer alternative perspectives to those held by learners. Such perspectives can act, metaphorically speaking, to exert leverage against reality, which the learner believes is a given, to show how things might be different. This can occur in many ways – by bringing concepts and language which name realities which are not visible within the dominant discourse, by bringing stories that show ways in which others have operated counter to the power constraints, by bringing personal testimony of how oppression can be overcome, and by showing through their presence and commitment that boundaries are more permeable than is normally assumed (p. 22).

They stress “the importance and value of developing processes of reflection and theory-building through the telling of personal stories to do this” (p. 22). Similarly, Pettman (1997) states that “the problem of connecting students’ own experiences, observations and images to what we’ll do means drawing out stories and responses and always trying to link these back to themes, issues, concepts in the unit, to build an accessible and use-able shared language” (p. 97). Brookfield (1995) warns us that “taken at face value, autobiographical stories are suspect and subject to the dangers of distortion and overgeneralization” (p. 20). However, he also states that “when critically analyzed and combined with other sources of reflection ... autobiographies can be a powerful source of insight into the resolution of problems” (p. 20).

Brookfield is talking here about teachers’ autobiographies. Although outside the scope of this essay, the utilization of narrative and autobiography in relation to teacher

education and professional development is extensive (see Brunner, 1994; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988; Florio-Ruane, 2001; Goodson, 1998; Goodson and Walker, 1995; Graham, 1995; Jackson, 1995; McEwan, 1995; Pendlebury, 1995; Ritchie and Wilson, 2000; Salvio, 1998; Trimmer, 1997; Wanner, 1994; Witherell and Noddings, 1991) and offers much food for thought.

Students’ autobiographies also are utilized as an educational methodology, a way of learning from experience. As a mentor, I often have students write autobiographical essays as part of the process of degree program planning. It serves both as a way to clarify their life and career goals, and as a way to identify and document prior experiential learning, which may result in credit by evaluation. I also encourage the inclusion of relevant personal experience(s) in writing assignments, as a way to stimulate critical reflection and relate theory to life. Dominice (2000) is another educator who makes extensive use of educational biographies with adult learners, claiming that “looking at their life history as a whole helps adult learners realize ... how they construct their own knowledge” and mitigates against the “difficulty many adults have in trusting experience as a worthwhile source of reflection and learning” (p. 175).

J. Bruner (1993) says that “a life is created or constructed by the act of autobiography. It is a way of construing experience – and of reconstruing and reconstruing it until our breath or our pen fails us” (p. 38). Hopkins (1994) notes that “the disciplines, the fields of study, function as tools that help us frame and thus give meaning to the complex realities that make up the world, and to identify and define projects that make sense to us as we construct our personal narratives” (p. 55). Furthermore, he states that “subject matter ... comes to life when it is associated with the actual narrative structures of real people living (and planning) their lives ... when it is related to their developing futures” (p. 147). As Schank (1995) observes:

Stories are especially interesting prior experiences, ones that we learn from Our knowledge of the world is more or less equivalent to the set of

experiences that we have had, but our communication is limited by the number of stories we know to tell. In other words, all we have are experiences, but all we can effectively tell others are stories. Oddly enough, we come to rely upon our own stories so much that it seems that all we can tell ourselves are stories as well (p. 12).

Using narratives to link theory with experience is not without its limitations and dangers. One autobiography about someone living with bipolar disorder does not represent the lived experience of all who share that diagnosis, nor does the memoir of a girl who grew up in Puerto Rico represent a full picture of life in that culture. However, stories have a depth and richness that theory will never attain, and may engage the emotions as well as the mind, anchoring the knowledge acquired through empathy and identification. Asking students to use personal narratives to illustrate the theoretical material they are learning runs the risk of having the stories take over and even get in the way of learning. One of my students, in a study about behavior in the workplace, wrote one of his papers on organizational structure and, rather than using his experience to consider how different structures elicit different kinds of behavior, spent much of the paper describing how his workplace (the police department in a major city) was an example of one type of organizational structure. This kind of “here’s an example of that” storytelling does little to demonstrate knowledge or critical reflection. However, the potential value is too great to dismiss this kind of narrative grounding from the learning process; we need to find ways to help students do it well.

For me, Nemerov’s poem is a cautionary tale, reminding me that books are not enough and that learning must always relate to experience. Narratives – those coming from students’ lives as well as those written by others – are one especially valuable way to forge that relationship. Thus we may learn from experience, and thus we may experience learning.

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Literacy in Cuba: Revolutionary Lessons

Mark Abendroth, School for Graduate Studies

Ten years ago I was a high school teacher just starting my work toward an Ed.D. in Critical Pedagogy at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis. I had no idea what I would do for a dissertation, but I was glad to be in the second cohort of the world's only doctoral program in critical pedagogy, which sadly is now defunct. One year into the program I was still undecided about a dissertation topic. It was then that I heard the announcement from faculty member John Holst that he was organizing an elective course involving an 11-day trip to Havana. That course was an introduction to education in Cuba, but little did I know that it also would be an introduction to my dissertation, which I recently revised as a book (Abendroth, 2009).

Learning in a Forbidden Land

I joined Dr. Holst and nine other graduate students on that trip to Havana during my winter break from teaching. I had been curious about Cuba since sometime during my adolescence, when I first became aware that my government prohibited travel of all its citizens to this small neighboring country. Suddenly, I had the opportunity to go legally, without the risk of being fined thousands of dollars. I did the assigned readings before the trip and prepared myself for the kind of learning experience that only travel can bring. Eleven days is not enough time to learn all there is about Cuban education, but our group met with many professionals with different roles either in the state system or in nongovernmental organizations. Most schools were on vacation at the time, and we were able to visit only two while classes were in session. The visit that introduced me to my dissertation, though, was the one to the Museum of the National Literacy Campaign.

I had never heard of Cuba's National Literacy Campaign before that day. I entered the small museum with the group on that

cool, breezy morning in early January, wondering why I had never learned anything about this part of the Cuban Revolution. The museum held many artifacts from the 1961 campaign, but the most memorable moment came from talks given by a woman and a man in their 50s who had been instructors in the Campaign as teenagers. They spoke of the adventures, sacrifices and rewards of leaving their relatively comfortable urban homes voluntarily, with parental consent, to teach in historically deprived rural areas. One mentioned memories of an occasional meal known as "nothing soup," a simple broth of whatever edible grasses and herbs were available. In spite of the rural poverty, their most powerful memories came from the mutual educational experiences that they shared with their hosts. After working the land with the families by day, the instructors taught them how to read and write under lantern light in the humble rural homes at night. The two guests spoke with joy about the way that they became like family members with their students of all ages. I do not remember many details of what they said through Dr. Holst's interpretations, but their beaming smiles from the memories were unforgettable.

I wanted to learn more about the campaign, and within a couple days of the museum visit I told Dr. Holst that it might become the topic of my dissertation. I was delighted to learn that I was not the only student on the trip who was considering a return to Cuba. Barbara Smith, an elementary teacher and fellow member of the critical pedagogy cohort at St. Thomas, wanted to continue learning about popular education in Cuba. Before long, Barbara and I knew that we would return. I was back in Havana the next summer to conduct my literature review, and I returned the following summer



Focus group in Manicaragua. Clockwise from left: Felipe de J. Pérez Cruz, Mark Abendroth, Julio Macías Macías, participants of the campaign and relatives.

with Barbara as we collected data for our respective case studies. We stayed with different families during our visits at costs far below those of the tourist hotels. During the summer of 2002, I stayed for six weeks with a couple who operated a guesthouse in their home as a legal business. The following summer, I stayed for eight weeks in an available room in the apartment of a hospitable couple who are friends and neighbors of the only Cuban member of my dissertation committee, Felipe de J. Pérez Cruz.

Dr. Pérez Cruz had written two books about the campaign, and he found that my idea of exploring aspects of civic education in the campaign was original enough. Much had been written about the nationalist and anti-imperialist political content in the didactic materials, but my emphasis, under the lens of critical pedagogy, was on the campaign as a mass movement of global citizenship. I was interested in how Cubans identify themselves with Latin America as a whole or with the broader so-called Third World. As I gathered data from interviews with campaign participants and from primary texts, I found the theme of internationalism to be an important part of the nation's conscience during 1961, the "Year of Education." It was important in 2003 as well, as many of those I interviewed talked about their interest in seeing Venezuela's current national literacy campaign succeed.

Although I was fairly fluent in Spanish, I could not have conducted my interviews effectively without the help of my interpreter, Julio Macías Macías. A former staff member of the Cuban Embassy in Canada, Dr. Macías Macías took time away from his teaching of computer science to be present in all of my interviews and focus groups, which yielded a total of approximately 100 testimonies. He and I had many lengthy discussions, usually in English, while traveling to interview sites. We talked about our families, our countries, music, democracy, capitalism, socialism, and countless other topics. We challenged each other, too, in understanding jokes in our respective second languages. When my brain was too exhausted to continue conversations in Spanish with other Cubans around me, I felt fortunate to have the good company of Dr. Macías Macías with his fluent English.

Dr. Pérez Cruz knew several people in Havana who had participated in the campaign, and he drove Dr. Macías Macías and me to their homes, where my interviews took place. When he could not drive, one of the interviewees helped out with his car. There was a snowball effect in which the interviewees shared with us contact information for others who had participated in the campaign. Dr. Pérez Cruz laughed when I asked him, well before the first interview, whether I should offer each interviewee a small amount of cash to express my gratitude. I knew that this was a common practice for researchers in the U.S., but Dr. Pérez Cruz kindly let me know that it was not a part of research culture in Cuba. The interviewees welcomed me with enthusiasm, and I never felt any antipathy from anyone. I remember many smiles, and for some even tears of joy, when the hosts talked about their memories of the campaign. It would have been wonderful to have had the resources necessary to video-record the interviews.

There also were three road trips to conduct focus groups and interviews outside of Havana, to the east as far as Sancti Spíritus in the province of the same name and to the west as far as Consolación del Sur in the Province of Pinar del Río. The other trip went southeast to Playa Girón, also known as the Bay of Pigs. Some of the interviewees there told me about surviving the historic

aerial attacks that occurred just as the campaign got underway. Marta Placeres Hernández (personal communication, Aug. 1, 2003) was 11-years-old and learning to read and write for the first time when she and her family were taken hostage by the U.S.-led invaders. Her testimony included the following regarding Cuba's internationalism:

I believe that the campaign here never has ended. You should know that here there are many schools, that many Latin Americans study here in Cuba, and that the campaign of this revolution is about their sons' and daughters' studies and not only for Cubans. We offer solidarity for the needs of our brothers and sisters in other nations, and even the United States has students here in the School of Medical Sciences. (As quoted in Abendroth, 2009, p. 96)

The Year of Education – 1961

The historical roots of Cuban ideas for eradicating illiteracy begin with the anti-imperialist and anti-slavery movements that emerged first in the early 19th century (Pérez Cruz, 2001). It was not until the 1959 triumph of the revolution, though, that an intentional policy to end illiteracy became a reality. The Cubans who became literate during the campaign in 1961 were diverse in age – the oldest being a 106-year-old Afro-Cuban woman who had been born into slavery (Keebler, 2001). The average age of the instructors who left their mostly urban homes to teach in Cuba's historically underdeveloped rural zones was 15; the youngest was 8. Many middle-class teachers had left Cuba after the revolution's triumph to live in Miami, and the teachers that remained became guides to the young instructors. These instructors, if under age 18, had to obtain signed parental permission in order to leave their homes and teach. They became known as Conrado Bénéitez brigadistas, named after an 18-year-old instructor who had been murdered by counter-revolutionary bands in January 1961, during the pilot phase of the campaign.

The brigadistas underwent a week of training before moving to live with, work with, and teach rural families. The training site was Varadero Beach, which had been a

favorite vacation resort for affluent Cubans and foreigners before the revolution. Two booklets were important to the brigadistas' training and work. *Alfabetícemos* [Let's teach literacy] (Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, 1961a) was the manual for teaching strategies and for the content of revolutionary subject matter to be included in the instruction. ¡Venceremos! [We will triumph!] (Comisión Nacional de Alfabetización, 1961b) was the primer for the instruction. These had been published before Fidel Castro's declaration, in April of 1961, that the nature of the revolution was socialist. Their main content theme was anti-imperialist nationalism, and there were many references to internationalism as well.

Not all rural families were ready to receive a brigadista if that person was black, mulatto or female. Juan Luís Martínez Báez (personal communication, July 27, 2003) was a municipal coordinator of the campaign in and around the small city of Madruga near the southern border of the Province of Havana. Before the triumph of the revolution, he had owned two successful businesses – an electronics firm affiliated with Esso Standard Oil and a funeral home. Martínez Báez willingly handed these businesses over to the state. Regarding his campaign role, he spoke of some white rural families that resisted hosting a black and/or female brigadista before finally agreeing to it. These families, he said, went on to learn to read and write while accepting the brigadista almost as another family member. In this way, the campaign was instrumental in uniting Cubans while beginning to break down barriers of racism and sexism. The other great barrier that the campaign eroded was the classism that had privileged urban areas over rural.

Not all instructors in the campaign were Conrado Bénéitez brigadistas. Those who taught neighbors while continuing to live in their homes were called *alfabetizadores populares* [people's literacy instructors]. Among these were minors who did not receive parental permission to live and teach in a faraway region. By summer, campaign administrators saw the need to accelerate the campaign's work if it were to be completed by December. Literate workers were recruited to teach their illiterate co-workers, all without losing pay. Some workers agreed

to move and to teach in the rural zones in greatest need. All worker-instructors were called brigadistas patria o muerte [homeland or death brigades].

Beginning in early November, municipalities declared themselves to be free of illiteracy. Counter-revolutionary bands murdered another young instructor in early November, which only made campaign participants more determined to finish successfully. People with various roles – instructors, students, transportation workers, administrators – attended the celebration for a successful finish on Dec. 22 in Havana. The Ministry of Education did not want to leave newly literate Cubans with only a first-grade level of proficiency, so there was a “Battle for the Sixth Grade” that followed as a continuation program. UNESCO (Lorenzetto and Neys, 1965) conducted a study of the campaign and confirmed Cuba’s claim that the national rate of illiteracy had dropped from 23.6 percent (from the 1953 census) to 3.9 percent.

The legacy of the campaign is something that needs many volumes by many authors. Cuba sent soldiers in the 1970s to fight in Angola against forces that wanted to bring South African-style apartheid there and then sent educators there to combat illiteracy (Gleijeses, 2002). When the Sandinista government of Nicaragua conducted a national literacy campaign in the early 1980s, Cuban educators became advisors. A current Cuban literacy program called Yo, Sí Puedo [Yes I Can] had been adopted by more than 15 developing countries by 2006, when the program won international acclaim by UNESCO with a King Sejong Literacy Award (UNESCO, 2006). Cuba also has sent a surplus of medical professionals to many developing countries in need. Education and health care are human rights in Cuba, and many Cubans have acted on the idea that these should be human rights everywhere. This is in sharp contrast to the neoliberal model espoused by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, whose loans to developing countries often involve mandates for an austerity that reduces public resources for education and health care (Stromquist, 2002; Klein, 2007).

The Learning Continues

My current work, since August 2009, is that of a mentor in the Master of Arts in Teaching program at SUNY Empire State College. I never rush to tell students about my research in Cuba, but I do not hesitate when the right teachable moment allows me to bring up the topic. As a social studies educator, I am interested in upholding democracy. The United States has a democracy that is evolving, and it is still troubling that campaign contributions from affluent organizations and individuals continue to play a powerful role in elections and their spoils. Cuba has elements of democracy that are seldom addressed in mainstream media. The people elect their representatives directly at the municipal level with only a short written biography on each candidate and without the influence of money. A candidate’s reputation for serving the community is what wins elections. Universal health care and free education through graduate studies enhance the ability of Cuban citizens to participate actively in local politics. Cuba is neither heaven nor hell. It has neither a complete dictatorship nor a perfect participatory democracy. It is a nation that is injured by nearly 50 years of an economic embargo (blockade, as Cubans credibly call it) from the U.S., and its people continue to struggle for political and economic sovereignty. One cannot understand Cuba without a careful study of its historical relations with Spain and the U.S.

Although my official teaching is with graduate students, I recently had the pleasure of working with an undergraduate student who was referred to me by his mentor. This student was comparing and contrasting three literacy projects, including Cuba’s campaign. He interviewed me over the phone for nearly an hour after having read my book. A couple months later I read his paper, and I learned much more than I had ever known about two projects in other countries. This to me was an example of teacher (mentor) and student becoming partners in learning, as Paulo Freire (2000) so eloquently theorized in his concept of problem posing. Although this work with an individual took me away from my official work for a total of about two hours, it was time well spent. I felt renewed in my ability

to be amazed at all that can be learned from diverse cultures and nations throughout history.

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Unpacking Race in a “Postracial” Society

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A Review of:

White Privilege and Racism: Perceptions and Actions. Edited by Carole L. Lund and Scipio A. J. Colin III. New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education (Jossey Bass, No. 125, spring 2010)

Hooks (1990) cautions that if people don't tell their own stories, others do it for them. By doing so, those in power retain authorship and authority, continuing to perpetuate intellectual colonization and objectification. There is no need to hear your voice when we can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. I want to know your story. And I will tell it back to you in a new way. I will tell it back to you in a way that makes it my own. I will rewrite you and in doing so, I write myself anew. However, don't forget, I am still author, authority; colonizer, the speaking subject and you are now the center of my talk (p. 151 – 152). hooks has one word for anyone guilty of this. She simply says, “Stop!”

Many would agree with Sensoy and DiAngelo (2009) that racism is systemic, with structured inequalities that support a schema (replete with policies, norms, practices and traditions) where one group is automatically disadvantaged and exploited for the good of another group. They would admit that racism is an endemic condition, woven into the social fabric of our society, challenging notions such as color-blindness and equal opportunities for all. However, now with Obama president for a second year, I often hear comments reflecting the sentiment that if racism were still a real issue in America, a black presidency would have been impossible. I am always disturbed by the depth of historical amnesia this sentiment conveys and I will not attempt here to unpack the enormous complexities and contradictions embedded within that statement. But if you are interested

in entering and engaging a conversation about racism and white privilege, I would wholeheartedly recommend *White Privilege and Racism: Perceptions and Actions* edited by Carole L. Lund and Scipio A. J. Colin III. This volume is a valuable resource for faculty and other educators interested in wrestling with issues and practices rooted in racism and privilege. It offers probing and honest perspectives that honor people's complex and polyrhythmic realities.

In the first chapter, the brilliant Scipio Colin (also known as “Dr. C.” by her students of whom I am honored to have been one) challenges the myth of a postracial society. She gives examples of racism in higher education, pointing out how deeply entrenched and toxic this dynamic is, especially when white scholars profess to know more about people of color than people of color do about themselves.

Colin and Preciphs (1991) state that it is rare for people of color to even be mentioned as authors of knowledge; instead they are considered consumers of others' concepts. In this new essay, Colin writes about the ways in which it is important to acknowledge and confront sociocultural and intellectual racism, working to challenge racist assumptions. She suggests that the myth of a postracial society may be more comfortable for dominant America than acknowledging that renegotiating relationships and dynamics impacted by race is slow and difficult work, especially when we consider lifetimes of inequitable power distribution. Asking who benefits most by current policies and structures in our society demands that we as a society grapple with notions of collective responsibility. But as Colin points out, it also means unearthing undeniably painful scars wedged into the crevices of our society's collective memory. Colin, unflinching in her analysis, points out that in a postracial society Harvard professor, Henry Louis Gates' arrest would have been highly unlikely.

In Chapter 2, Lund focuses on the role of white privilege in racist ideologies being perpetuated by educators and trainers. As a white woman, working from the “inside” to unveil and dismantle white privilege, she shares her own personal journey of how she first had to learn the constructedness of whiteness, and the fact that whites set the rules and foundation for everyone else (Hart, 2001). She also discusses McIntosh's list (1997) of the ways whites are privileged everyday, and discusses her experiences of using this list as a teaching tool. McIntosh (2001) defines white privilege as an invisible knapsack of unearned assets that one can count on cashing in each day, but which are meant to be invisible. McIntosh helps us recognize that it's this invisibility of privilege that makes it so insidious. Lund ends the chapter by focusing on how white privilege works for white educators and white learners, arguing that white educators, administrators and learners must join people of color to address institutional discrimination and to learn how to negotiate more inclusive and equitable communities.

In Chapter 3, Baumgartner and Johnson-Bailey explore, through their own personal narratives (and then analysis of those narratives) how white privilege operates in adult education graduate programs regarding admissions retention and curricula. They also discuss ways in which tools (such as the GRE and M.A.T.) disadvantage people from marginalized groups, yet still continue to be weighted heavily in admissions' decisions. They describe their vastly different journeys in graduate school. Baumgartner, a white woman, was encouraged to apply for scholarships, assistantships and, seemed to be, on the whole, much more supported in her program. Johnson-Bailey, on the other hand, didn't seem to be nurtured intellectually in significant ways and felt (after noticing that all graduate assistants

were white) that academia was a club that would deny her membership.

The authors also examine curricula in graduate adult education programs and the ways in which they are an extension of a racist narrative with some groups privileged at the expense of others. They argue that issues of race and the contributions of people of color should be taught across the curriculum. For example, the contributions of African American adult educators should be part of every course on the history of adult education. The authors also point to the need for program planning courses to include scholarship that discusses race and white privilege in the program planning process (p. 37). Finally, the authors recommend that if standardized tests continue to be used, their biases and limitations must be acknowledged. They also call for faculty to work to support and retain students from under-represented groups as one way to encourage changes in curricula. They point out that, unfortunately, books dealing with race and racism are often used inconsistently in graduate adult education programs, and are almost never utilized in core courses.

In Chapter 4, Shor, an Australian educator, discusses ways in which socio-historical, occupational and organizational discourses structure vocational practices in racialized ways. The chapter explores possible ways to interrupt those narratives. Monaghan, in Chapter 5 analyzes how white privilege impacts the efforts of people of color in organizational settings. She also explores how white human resource development employees can support people of color within organizations. She concludes that to combat racism, it is essential to engage in a sustained struggle that goes against the grain of the dominant culture, each and every day of one's life.

Kong, in Chapter 6 discusses the impact of white privilege and racial profiling on immigrants. He says that racism has been woven so seamlessly into the fabric of everyday life that it ends up being an acceptable and common experience among people of color that serves to keep white privilege intact. Kong points out the importance of grappling with racism by using a social constructivist framework,

showing how it allows one to analyze the constructedness of this reality and thus can offer ways for collective resistance. He offers community dialogue as one way to subvert and counter the ideological baggage of white privilege. Kong says community civic education and transformative organizing can create public spaces for collective reflection and more equitable frameworks of citizenship education.

In Chapter 7, Cueva explores her own identity as a white woman working with and for Alaskan natives. She points out that, in essence, education should be about a shared narrative, one that prioritizes what people need to learn. One of the challenges becomes: how do we make room for other stories that either confirm or contradict the narrative we carry around inside of us? She concludes her chapter by asking readers to identify their own role in working to eradicate white privilege and racism so we can all emerge more whole and more human.

Finally, in Chapter 8, Colin and Lund end this important volume by offering the following list of what they think needs to occur before a postracial society can truly be a reality:

- acknowledging that racism is indeed systemic and institutional
- understanding that people have been socialized to be racist
- critically reflecting on past interactions with people of color to learn how to recognize and address racism
- addressing racism in teaching and learning
- learning about other cultures and experiences
- admitting one's racism without denial or guilt
- believing it is possible to become an ally working to eradicate racism

I believe that part of our responsibility as educators (and human beings) is to have the courage to do what is right, not only for ourselves, but for all members of society. This text can support us in scrutinizing our own underlying assumptions so we can

practice more equitable ways of teaching and living instead of replicating current power dynamics rooted in paternalistic colonization. By having collective conversations grounded in honesty and criticality, we can be each other's mirrors, learning to dismantle old structures (both external and internal) that continue to hold us hostage. We can learn to negotiate new, more just ways of being and living with each other in the world that involve collectively navigating undiscovered landscapes and unwritten narratives and, as hooks would urge, creates and honors sustainable spaces for everyone to tell their own stories on their own terms.

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Three Poems

Period 4

A snare drum,
Struck incessantly,
Rattles my brain.
Noise.
A Phillip Glass composition,
Shattering the silence
With brief, piercing,
(atonal)
Tones.
A deep breath,
A fleeting silence.
(What am I doing?)
With my hesitation
I lose the fledgling concentration.
Some unseen conductor's baton
Has already cued those waiting before me.
Chaos erupts,
Following a well-scripted
Classroom scenario.
Spilling as if some
Ancient Victrola or
Some newer –
Though ancient still-
Turntable,
I tumble into my own
Quiet confusion.
Why do I try?

Anastasia Pratt
Northeast Center

Quantum feelings

Physicists say the universe is mostly ...
s p a c e,
That hard, solid reality is actually quite the opposite.
They say things cherished and tightly grasped
have little real substance.

The idea tugs at the stability of mind,
but the heart know a little of this.

The heart knows the space in the cracks of a broken life,
The silence – haunting and shapeless – between lovers
lost in pain and diverging hope,
The vacuum remaining from unspoken truths,
The emptiness following the final goodbye.

Joe Zoske
Nursing Program, Center for Distance Learning

Cup of Wonder

Entangled goddess
Gently cradles
Your heart
In her hand.

Years and years
Go by
Yet still
She carries it with her.

Longing to hear
Words never spoken.
Words hanging
In the air
Between ill-fated lovers.
Frightened and unsure
Young and apprehensive.

Determined enough
To drink from the cup.
Yet too weak
To hold onto it.

Debra Monte
Center for Distance Learning
*(This poem was previously
included in the summer issue of
Quiet Mountain Essays, 2008)*

Barack Obama's Narrative of American History and the Cultivation of a New American National Identity

Ian Reifowitz, Long Island Center

At the All College Conference 2010, Mentor Ian Reifowitz of the Long Island Center offered this year's faculty lecture commemorating his receipt of the Susan H. Turben Award for Excellence in Scholarship from the Empire State College Foundation. What follows is Ian's summary of his talk and an interview with the author about his current reflections on the Obama presidency.

"That's how this country was founded, a group of patriots declaring independence against the mighty British empire ... That's how slaves and abolitionists resisted that wicked system and how a new president chartered a course to ensure we would not remain half-slave and half-free. That's how the greatest generation ... overcame Hitler and fascism and also lifted themselves up out of a Great Depression. That's how pioneers went west when people told them it was dangerous That's how immigrants traveled from distant shores when people said their fates would be uncertain That's how women won the right to vote, how workers won the right to organize, how young people like you traveled down South to march, and sit-in, and go to jail, and some were beaten, and some died for freedom's cause. That's what hope is."

Barack Obama, Feb. 12, 2008¹

In campaign speeches like the one above, as well as in interviews, books, articles, and other public remarks made over almost two decades, Barack Obama has offered a subtle, but nonetheless radical, recasting of the narrative of American history as well as an innovative interpretation of American national consciousness. My faculty lecture in March at the 2010 All College Conference offered a detailed analysis of these themes.

The talk was drawn from a longer paper I delivered at a Texas A&M conference in 2010 on Obama and rhetoric, and also is a part of my forthcoming book on the same topic.

This conception of Americanness reflects the core of Obama's intellectual worldview, which flows from a belief in the importance of empathy, of a person being able to identify with the conditions faced by someone different from oneself. He has contended that a strong sense of peoplehood among Americans can facilitate a willingness on the part of everyone, from every class and/or ethnicity, to sacrifice narrow group or individual interests for the common good, to share resources, and to prioritize the needs of one's fellow Americans, even those from backgrounds different from one's own. Furthermore, in Obama's view, enhancing this sense of a single American community is a prerequisite to winning political support for policies he believes will advance the country's interests. The extent to which he will succeed as a president in the broadest sense thus also depends on his success in forging a robust feeling of national community.

Obama's rhetoric gathers together diverse strands of the multicultural approach to American identity that grew out of the social, political and cultural tumult



Ian Reifowitz (right) receiving his award from President Davis.

of the 1960s and fuses them with more traditional notions of the American national community to produce a vital, inclusive vision of what America has been and ought to be. He draws on the integrative ideology of Martin Luther King Jr., but differs in two key ways: Obama reflects both the influence of mainstream multicultural thought as well as the critiques of identity politics and more radical forms of multiculturalism that began appearing in the early 1990s.

Obama has chronicled our country's past in a distinctive way, by placing historical fights for equality such as the abolitionist movement, the long campaign for female suffrage and gender equality, and the civil rights movement within a single account that includes such customary historical events as the American Revolution and World War II. Through this kind of inclusive yet unifying rhetoric, Obama has thus integrated movements often "ghettoized" as separate, particularistic discourses into the larger national story, necessitating that we change the way we define the American community. This narrative recharacterizes

Americans as a people who have fought and won battles against inequality and oppression both abroad and at home, and have continuously extended the equality promised to “all men” in the Declaration of Independence to more and more Americans. Such a national story provides Americans of every ethnicity a way to identify with the history of this country going back to the Revolution, to claim it as their own, and to embrace their membership in the American people. Obama believes that telling the story of America in this way will help to mold a unified people from an exceptionally diverse society.

Obama’s deliberate and insistent incorporation of these struggles for equality as central planks in America’s common chronicle is a meaningful point of departure from even the most inclusive rhetoric used by previous presidents. In this sense, he is uniquely qualified to use the office of the presidency, his rhetoric, and his role as a symbol in forging a sense of national community that accounts for all its members. I thus argue that he has the potential to become the most important presidential commentator on American history and national identity since Lincoln.

Interview with Ian Reifowitz October 2010

Alan Mandell: Since you gave your talk in the spring of 2010 have you reconsidered your thesis about Obama’s ability to carve out a new American national identity?

Ian Reifowitz: In the book, I’ve tried to talk about potential, rather than what he is already been able to do. The kinds of changes that I am talking about are really hard to measure from a social science perspective. I think we won’t know the answer to the question for, perhaps, 50 years. But even then, we won’t know how much is his influence and his work and how much has been a result of other factors. So no, I don’t think anything that has happened in the last six months has altered my perception of his effort. By the time I gave the talk, we already knew his presidency was not going to be a cakewalk.

AM: I was struck by your claim that Obama was encouraging all of us to imagine ourselves being a part of some “national

community,” to sacrifice narrow group or individual interests. And yet, when we look at the last two years, it seems to me that the narrow group interests have been the most visible.

IR: I think you are seeing the other side of the coin, the opposition to Obama’s perspective. One the one hand, this call to see ourselves as part of a national community is a very traditional progressive view. You can go back to FDR or even before the New Deal era to see this. So, for example, asking those with a great deal of money to pay more in taxes in order to support increasing opportunities for those who have less is a core aspect of what Obama is talking about. But the other side of this is the ethnic piece, Obama’s repeated and consistent emphasis on strengthening national unity across ethnic lines. He’s making an argument certainly about empathy, but the opposing viewpoint, which we certainly see in this political climate today, is the Ayn Rand, Social Darwinist argument that opposes empathy with a hyper-competitive worldview. Those who have, have what they have because they deserve it; those who don’t have, don’t have because they deserve it. This ideology is really what stands in opposition to this sense of national community. There also is an opposition, perhaps more unspoken or only evoked indirectly for the most part, to Obama’s vision of inter-ethnic unity and his more inclusive definition of Americanness. But, of course, electoral swings happen.

AM: I was looking at Obama’s so-called “Race Speech” of March of 2008. One of the phrases he uses is: “the basic decency and generosity of the American people.” When one looks, right now, at the electoral dimension, it’s much harder to see that “decency” and “generosity.” The vision seems very far away.

I think that rhetorical changes do not, and cannot, lead to rapid, wide-ranging shifts in the social environment.

IR: I think you are right. That’s the whole point of political rhetoric though. It’s much more effective to say ‘this is what we’re about’ than to say ‘this is what we should be all about.’ The former inspires and the latter is scolding. You say what we’re about in the hope that we become that. That’s what leaders do. Social scientists try to analyze where we’re at. Obama is not a social scientist, clearly, but he has taken ideas that some scholars and popular writers have articulated about a growing sense of civic nationalism, and is trying to spread that message. He is trying to get us to a place rather than describing where we are.

AM: That’s a really interesting distinction. As I read your article, I was reminded of language like his – inclusive yet unifying rhetoric – language that is about integrating movements that are often ghettoized. But, if you look at approval ratings, overall, Obama is at about 45 percent, whereas in the African-American community, where the unemployment is ghastly – 16-17 percent (and that’s the official number), he has an approval rating of over 90 percent. So, on the one hand, we have this overarching language and your argument about inclusivity, and yet clearly this ghettoization persists.

IR: Right. No question about it. Obama is trying to change things, but they haven’t been changed yet. The other piece you have to think about is that, for example during the Clinton years, you had periods where his overall approval ratings were in the low 40s, and my suspicion is that at the same time within the African-American community, they were close to 90 percent. While some of Obama’s support from the African American community is because he is black, most of it is because he is a left-of-center politician. The intensity might be heightened but the generality is there.

AM: So the challenge of the argument is: What is the relationship between the rhetoric presented that might move us towards becoming ‘ideal Americans’ and our day to day reality?

IR: I think that rhetorical changes do not, and cannot, lead to rapid, wide-ranging shifts in the social environment. You did see some noticeable changes in the period right after the 2008 election, where surveys then

(and even now) show signs of improved race relations between blacks and whites, and even show signs of greater optimism about racial issues within the black community. Those kinds of changes stay with people. I think electoral politics and the poll-ratings of presidents pretty much track the economy, almost exclusively. So it's hard to think about rhetoric and national identity and not be distracted by approval ratings.

AM: If the rhetoric is strong and people are drawn to that rhetoric and people don't see the rhetoric being translated into reality, might not the dissatisfaction or the disappointment become as strong as the memory of hope?

IR: It could be. In terms of disappointment or not, you would need four to eight years to have that settle in. When you think about the potential impact of Obama's rhetoric, the first box you have to check is: "Is this a successful presidency?" If it is an unsuccessful presidency, then all the rhetoric in the world will not have a significant impact. But if the economy turns around and the president gets re-elected, then you likely have a successful presidency. And once this happens, you have the potential for the impact of the rhetoric to soak into people's subconscious. That's really what I am talking about: the rhetoric on a subconscious rather than a day-to-day political level.

AM: Right now, you seem to be holding back from making any kind of appraisal about whether this world of a new American national identity has the possibility of coming about as the result of Obama. Is it that you just don't know?

IR: Essentially, yes. But let me qualify the "essentially" part. One: the fact of Obama's election is ipso-facto a referendum on his vision. Not that everybody who voted for Obama was voting for his vision of national identity, but it was certainly a central aspect in the primary campaign and in the general election. (Just take a look at his acceptance speech in Denver for the Democratic National Convention.) Obama has an opportunity to do this. Since he is doing something and this is central to his mission as a politician and as president, I want to analyze and understand it. But in 2010, there is no way to know whether or to what degree it is going to work. If he doesn't get re-elected then there is a pretty good chance that it is not going to happen, or at least that it is not going to happen because of him. However, I think these changes are going to happen anyway because the discussion about national identity and diversity beyond the white majority with a positive outcome is incredibly important, and whites and nonwhites are going to need to develop closer ties and stronger bonds with each other. Notice I am not saying they have to start doing it, because they're

already doing it; rather it is a matter of how thoroughly and how quickly. It's not a yes or no, and it is not as if Obama fails it won't happen at all. It will just happen less quickly and/or less thoroughly.

AM: You remain an optimist about this. You are suggesting that this is well beyond Obama and that there are some essential qualities of this American dream of a new community. For you, he is giving us an opportunity to realize something that is much deeper, much grander.

IR: In some ways what I am trying to do here is to be more descriptive rather than prescriptive, in the sense that I am trying to describe someone else's prescriptive ideas. But certainly these are ideas that I think are important and would have a positive impact on this country. It all may come down to whether someone looks at whether the glass is half full or half empty. Even if a new, more inclusive national identity hasn't been realized on the day that I die, I believe it is going to happen eventually. If you decide it won't ever happen, what's the use getting out of bed every morning?

Notes

- ¹ Remarks as delivered by Barack Obama, Madison, WI, Feb. 12, 2008. Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/02/12/AR2008021203144_pf.html.

Thoughts on Redesigning a Learning Experience: Power, Transference and Other High Level Pedagogies

David Starr-Glass, Center for International Programs

In many ways we are our assumptions. Assumptions give meaning and purpose to who we are and what we do. Becoming aware of the implicit assumptions that frame how we think and act is one of the most puzzling intellectual challenges we face in our lives. It also is something we instinctively resist, for fear of what we might discover.

– Brookfield (1995, p. 2)

*Life, like a dome of many-colour'd glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity*

– Shelley (*Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats*, lines 462 - 63).

We often fail to appreciate, or perhaps to acknowledge, the power that is vested in educational interactions. Our students may recognize issues of power more keenly; indeed, the educational encounter may be seen by many of them as one of confronting and negotiating implicit, asymmetric distributions of power. Often, we talk of “empowering” students, yet this can be simply a rhetorical reflex that fails to recognize their assumptions about what they may consider enduring and legitimate power differentials. In mentoring, we engage with students within a framework of assumptions regarding the anticipated relationship, yet often remain oblivious to, or reluctant to explore, the actual dynamics of such relationships. We become familiar and comfortable with our assumptions, challenging them only when compelled by circumstance.

This article attempts to capture reflections on a proposed change in a learning experience. As a mentor, I engage with students in Prague in the production of their capstone project, which takes the

form of an undergraduate dissertation on a business or economic topic. The mentoring is done at a distance with only limited face-to-face meetings. The capstone project is challenging for students, who have little experience planning or writing an extended, academically rigorous research work. Prior work products had generally been satisfactory. The level and quality of engagement with students also has been satisfactory. Students appear to complete the learning engagement just as excited as when they began it. Still, there seem to be other possibilities of involving students in their research: allowing them to articulate and accentuate excellence, permitting them to establish a greater claim to the creation and expression of their work. These possibilities suggest a reconsideration of the original assumptions regarding the distanced mentoring relationship.

Intimations of Change

The Center for International Programs (CIP) program in Prague has a rather unusual component that came into being to recognize local higher education practice. In many European educational systems, and certainly in the Czech Republic, undergraduates complete their degree program with an extensive dissertation that is the central feature of their final year. While capstone courses and projects are common in American universities, they rarely take the form of an undergraduate dissertation except in science majors. In Prague, however, CIP students in all majors complete a one-year sequence of learning activities: the first centers on the selection of a research question and literature review (senior project planning); the second focuses on the construction of the 50-page dissertation (senior project). Successful completion of the senior project is challenging for most students. It requires

independence of thought and critical reflection on a question that the student finds interesting or provocative. It also requires skill in approaching the associated research literature, teasing out relevant pieces, and constructing novel patterns.

On reflection, however, there seemed to be a distance in the work produced – the absence of an original voice, a richness of exploration of the relevant research literature, and generally a sense that students failed to completely demonstrate ownership of their final work product. While assessed at the undergraduate level there was, nonetheless, a lack of conceptual depth and undue reliance on theoretical frameworks that often appeared like resurrected phantoms: remote, impersonal, and spared from critical consideration.

Limitations in students’ prior research experience were certainly appreciated. The senior project also was thrown into sharp relief by the initiation of a dual degree granting option by our alliance partner. Essentially, working through the local Czech accreditation mechanism, it is possible for students to fulfill Empire State College graduation requirements and use these credits, together with an oral defense of the undergraduate dissertation, to earn a separate Czech baccalaureate degree. This dual track option is popular with many of our students; however, it raises multiple questions of form, function and assessment paradigms. Empire State College mentors and Czech external examiners have different ways of looking at the product and process of the undergraduate dissertation. This caused my friend and fellow mentor, Tanweer Ali, and me to reconsider our mentoring approaches, the purpose of the learning experience, and method of assessing the final work product (Starr-Glass and Ali, in press).

The point was not to engineer a simplistic or artificial convergence between the learning experiences in the Empire State College senior project and exemplars of the State Examination, but rather to reflect on the values, assumptions and desired learning outcomes that we, as Empire State College mentors, consider important and reflective of our institution's approach and philosophy. Some of our students and faculty of our educational partner have noted the difference in approaches taken by Empire State College mentors and external State Examiners, and might feel more comfortable if this difference was reduced. However, multiple student assessment paradigms exist, serve different purposes, and are ultimately expressions of deep underlying values of those making the assessment.

All of these factors seemed to present intimations of change in the way in which the senior project might be approached by mentors and students. This article is not a technical exploration of course design. It is, however, a reflection on one part of that process. In designing learning experiences, there are a number of components that have to be crafted together in convincing and constructive ways. Steeples, Jones and Goodyear (2002) consider that course design has three components: a pedagogical framework, an educational setting and an organizational context. Regarding the pedagogical framework, they suggest that it starts with an exposition of "high level pedagogy," which is "a level of abstraction which is intermediate between philosophy and action" (p. 334). The remainder of this article considers preliminary reflections of "high level pedagogy." These will eventually provide the basis for a reconstruction of the senior project planning and the senior project.

Power in Learning Contexts

Power is a feature, overt or latent, of all relationships. Power can be problematic to define and relies on contextual relationships and socially constructed and recognized bases. Muth (1984) considers that power "is the ability of an actor to affect the behavior of another actor" (p.27). Heron (1988) notes that within organizational contexts power is manifested and exercised through politics: "power is simply to do with who

makes decisions about whom" (p. 77). Foucault (1980) understands that power is an inescapable and prevailing aspect of all knowledge systems that defines the possession of knowledge and moderates how that knowledge is accessed and by whom. As Talbot, Atkinson and Atkinson (2003) put it: "Power is deployed by those who are in a position to define and categorize, to include and exclude" (p. 2).

Institutionally, power is not only present within and between social actors but is created and preserved by organizational structures and culture. In a classic work, Bachrach and Baratz (1970) note that power mobilizes and maintains "a set of predominant values, beliefs, rituals and institutional procedures ('rules of the game') operated systematically and consistently to the benefit of certain persons and groups at the expense of others" (p. 43). Power is thus inevitable in social settings, often ignored or unrecognized, often benign and useful, and always presenting a zero-sum game in which there are winners and losers in its distribution. Power structures generally persist unless they are challenged, reconfigured through change in culture, or made explicit and negotiated by those involved.

Power is a present and arguably essential aspect of all educational engagements, including mentoring relationships in which it often goes unrecognized or is considered an unwelcome spectator wished away. The vesting and structure of power are perhaps most clearly discernable in the assessment process where the mentor "comes to an opinion" about the student's performance. That opinion is rooted in, and sanctioned by, the mentor's expertise and by implied relational and institutional power assumptions. In Foucault's terms, those who are authorized to generate knowledge also are authorized to control its flow and to include and exclude through the assessment process. Knowledge production takes place within a power system and it is often difficult to separate the two, or discern the difference.

Maddelena Tarras (2008), in reviewing models of self-assessment, quotes Sadler (1989) who maintains that "the guild knowledge of teachers should consist less in

knowing how to evaluate students work and more in knowing ways to download evaluation knowledge to students" (p. 141). Later, in her paper, Taras (2008) concludes that: "Learning is the student's responsibility, but the support of learning is that of the tutor" (p. 88). As tutors, or mentors, power is reconfigured when their "guild knowledge" is shared and when students are made responsible to a greater degree for their work and subsequent, or ongoing, evaluation. Self-assessment, for example, allows for students to acquire enough of that "guild knowledge" to make realistic and objective evaluations of their own work, albeit supported and guided by their instructors.

The Bases of Power

In prior constructions of the senior project learning experience, there were undoubtedly assumptions regarding power and power differentials that were not challenged or explored deeply. Power, in organizational contexts at least, is often found in different manifestations associated with characteristics of the social actors: bases of power. In their classic work on social and organizational power French and Raven (1960), differentiate five of these bases: reward, coercive, legitimate, expert, and referent. In mentoring relationships it might be argued that all of these are, to some extent, at play. The latter three, however, seem more relevant, acceptable and palatable for the mentor, which is not to say that reward and coercive bases also are not involved. Legitimate power is conferred institutionally to the player. In the mentoring relationship it can be understood in terms of the power that the college vests in the mentor: authority. My students know that an educational institution has hired me based on qualifications, experience and ongoing performance. To the extent that they recognize a power system within higher education, they recognize that there is a degree of legitimate authorization to exert power that has been granted, or assigned, to me when I act as their mentor and work with them in that capacity.

Expert power is a construct that flows into the relationship from the student's assessment, to the degree that she is informed and knowledgeable, of the

mentor's display of relevant subject matter knowledge or the extent of the mentor's professional reputation and demonstrated ability to access knowledge systems. In accepting the power that the mentor brings through expertise, the student relies on her ability to discern subject matter erudition. This reliance also raises another construct: trust. In mentoring relationships, trust can variously be seen as a disposition or a necessity. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) understand trust as being "vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (p. 712). The mentor's trust in the person that she is working with, together with the mentee's perceived internal locus of control, are significant factors in formal mentoring engagements (Wang, Tomlinson and Noe, 2010).

Trust also is a component, or at least a moderating influence, of the third base considered here: referent power. Referent power hinges on influencing, imitating behavior and an affective empathy. The mentor acquires power through the student gaining a positive understanding of whom her mentor is and what the mentor seems to accomplish in the mentoring relationship. Referent power derives from a willingness to emulate, model and replicate what is perceived as constructive and desirable in the mentor. Here the power to change, and to be potentially vulnerable, flows from an investment of the student in the mentor, rather than an investiture from the authority structure or organizational dynamics of the mentor.

Power does not stem solely from the social actors or their organizational context: it also is embedded in other exogenous dynamics. With my students in Prague, for instance, there is a strong cultural element at play. The power and authority of the "professor" is strongly appreciated and accepted. In international settings, it is important to avoid the assumption that the "global village" has led to a homogenization of culture, norms and traditions. It brings to mind an incident many years ago in Jerusalem. The newly appointed dean of an American college was holding a faculty

meeting. In introducing himself, he asked that he be called "Joe." A relatively senior Israeli academic who was present was scandalized. In introducing himself, he noted that he had worked hard to earn his Ph.D. and would consider it less than discourteous if the faculty referred to him as anything other than "Dr. X." Cultural sensitization to power and privilege is not idiosyncratic: they are embedded in social and cultural frameworks.

Cultural sensitization to power and privilege is not idiosyncratic: they are embedded in social and cultural frameworks.

Power and privilege differentials in our mentoring landscape in Prague have become salient due to the dual degree option. To obtain a local Czech degree, Empire State College students have to submit their senior dissertations to a State Examination Board, which conducts a review and defense of the work. An appointed external examiner assesses the student's dissertation and it is in that appointment that legitimate and expert power is created and manifest. Final year students are increasingly sensitized to the power structure created by external examiners through our educational partner. They may assume, or expect, a similar pattern of power distribution when working with their Empire State College mentors.

Power may be unconsidered or latent within mentoring relationships, emerging only when there is conflict over preferences, or assessment. Power considerations, undoubtedly recognized more acutely by students rather than their mentors, also lead to risk-reducing strategies. For the student this might involve imitating the mentor, agreeing unreservedly with her, suppressing criticism or disagreement, stifling independent exploration, stunting innovative difference and divergence, and accepting that ultimately educational outcomes (including graduation) are more in the domain of the mentor than the student (Anderson, 2007).

In reconsidering my mentoring of the undergraduate dissertation in Prague, one of my considerations should undoubtedly be a more explicit acceptance of power issues, a deeper understanding of their origins and complexities, and strategies that transfer more power to those whom I mentor. While a complete instructional design is not presented here, power issues constitute a feature of high-level pedagogy that has not previously been considered, or understood, a salient aspect of Steeples, Jones and Goodyear's (2002) pedagogical framework. There is, however, another perspective of the mentoring relationship that has been little recognized or considered in the literature, but which is always present and to which I have been increasingly sensitive.

The Ghost in the Process: Transference and Countertransference

Mentoring relationships exist in many different contexts and attempt to accomplish different functions; indeed, there is no simple overarching definition of the mentoring process. Sometimes, the relationship is conducted within an organizational context to provide reflective learning experiences and to expose the junior partner in these relationships to issues of organizational power and politics (Kram, 1983). Mentoring as a process and strategy also can be employed to support and facilitate cognitive, emotional or social change. Ray Pawson's (2004) provides a particularly helpful analysis of the dynamics involved and strategies suggested in his extensive typography of mentoring. No matter how it is conceptualized or approached, mentoring is essentially an interpersonal engagement: often extended, often emotionally charged. Some contend that the psychological dynamics of transference and countertransference are restricted to deep psychoanalytical encounters; however, John McAuley (2003) considers that they also are found in mentoring situations and sets out to explore "the dynamics of the mentoring relationship through a psychoanalytical gaze" (p. 11).

Transference occurs when an individual treats a present relationship as though it were a previous important one. In a sense, the past relationship is selectively recreated

and repeated in the present situation, even though the reenactment is usually subconscious. In mentoring, transference flows from the student to the mentor with the student projecting feelings evoked by the mentor's behavior or aroused by fantasy. Transference can be either negative or positive. When positive, the student might develop trust and respect for her mentor's expertise and skill. When transference is negative, she can begin to establish a distance between herself and her mentor and start to assert her own personal identity in the relationship (McAuley, 2003, p. 14). It can be seen that the designation of positive or negative relates to the direction of the sentiment, rather than its value: both positive and negative transference can have productive impacts in the relationship.

Positive and negative transference, if recognized and considered, can provide a valuable resource within the mentoring relationship, allowing for great self-understanding on the part of the student. The transference flow, however, also can become dysfunctional in either a positive or negative sense. Dysfunctional positive transference might result in the student becoming over-awed with her mentor, seeing him/her as a dominant parental figure, or leading to infatuation. In a negative sense, dysfunctional transference might manifest in the student being unwarrantedly antagonistic, overly cynical, or (McAuley, 2003) "sucking the mentor dry – and then complain bitterly about his/her incompetence" (p. 14).

In mentoring relationships, a countertransference flows from mentor to her student. Racker (1982) understands that "countertransference is the living response to transference, and if the former is silenced, the latter cannot reach the fullness of life and knowledge" (p. 3). In a positive and functional sense, countertransference might manifest in mentor sentiments of benevolence, altruism, and care for the student's learning and growth. In a negative sense, countertransference could involve the expressing of degrees of antagonism, or skepticism, about the student or finding ways of withdrawing from her even though such a withdrawal would be negotiated responsibly. At a dysfunctional level, the mentor's positive countertransference

might lead to collusion with the student and preserving or manipulating her deep sense of awe. Negative dysfunctionality might manifest in an uncaring rejection of the student or in her victimization. Like transference, countertransference provides an illuminating perspective on the relationship and is available as a resource for self-understanding for the mentor. Because of personal and experiential differences, transference and countertransference flows do not necessarily reflect, or mirror, one another.

Transference and countertransference are often subconscious in mentoring relationships and indeed many mentors might be concerned that such perspectives impair the relationship or imbue it with unwelcome or perhaps mildly disturbing properties. Those who ascribe to a Rogerian philosophical and developmental tradition tend to see transference as (McAuley, 2003) "a phenomenon that is one-way and inappropriate to the realities of the situation – an assertion of power by the therapist or mentor" (p. 13). Others, on reflection, might recognize the elements of transference and countertransference as realities in their own mentoring encounters.

Certainly, in many of my own mentoring relationships in Prague when – and this is a critical issue – more time was allowed for face-to-face meeting with students, many deep and enduring friendships developed from mentoring encounters and the dynamics of transference and countertransference are valuable in understanding those experiences and enduring connections. From a transference perspective, it is insightful to consider how powerful mentoring relationships, both positive and negative, might have been subconscious attempts to recreate or relive a deep personal past in the present (Starr-Glass, 2006).

Similarly, students who have formed powerful relationships with me through mentoring may have framed that relationship in terms of an idealization in which (McAuley, 2003) "a mentee would recreate an imagined wonderful past by having a relationship with a mentor who is seen as being omnipotent and powerful ... [or] recreate an imagined wonderful past

by having a relationship with a mentor who recreates an image of the mentee's self as perfect and all-powerful" (p. 20). The extent to which this actually occurs in mentoring relationships is unclear. The degree to which those involved might be aware of transference or countertransference, or be willing to articulate and share them also is unclear. However, a "psychoanalytical gaze" does provide new and rich insight into the dynamics of mentoring. John McAuley (2003) suggests that this transference and countertransference are inevitable in all mentoring situations, especially extended ones: an ever-present, if elusive, "ghost in the process."

Enter the Organizational Dimension: Attributed Authority

Transference and countertransference are undoubtedly aspects of mentoring relationships; however, the duration of the relationship is a critical factor. Mentoring at a distance is problematic at best and perhaps fundamentally an oxymoron (Starr-Glass 2004; 2005). Mentoring at a distance is made problematic by a restriction on face-to-face interaction (relational intensity and richness of communication channels) and by the number of encounters (overall duration). Current CIP policy and trends impose structural restrictions on onsite mentoring visits. The quality and richness of face-to-face mentoring is reduced and, paradoxically perhaps, transference and countertransference issues are intensified because mentor and student have a diminished opportunity to construct critical and authentic appreciations of behavior, presence, and to consider the "ghost in the process."

Mentoring takes place within an organizational framework and mentors and students are not independent actors but brought together by the institution, within its culture and knowledge transmission sphere, and ultimately assessed by a philosophy and policy that is organizationally embedded. From a transference perspective, where recognized association and projected image are salient, the question is the extent to which those engaging in a mentoring relationship are perceived, and perceive themselves, as detached from, or integrated into,

the organization. Attributed authority, conferred on the mentor by the organization and reinforced by cultural norms and expectations, will inevitably constitute part of mentor identity projected by the student. Transference recognizes and understands attributed power differentials from a different perspective.

Attributed authority constitutes a resource within the relationship. It may impact transference in a positive way, vesting images of power, authority and authenticated competence. At a dysfunctional level, attributed authority stultifies student expression, motivation and reduces personal innovation and self-reliance. Attributions of institutional authority may result in a negative transference in which the student acts out (McAuley 2003, p. 16) “negative fantasies about the organization using the mentor as symbolic representation ... of the organization as a relatively bad object.” At a dysfunctional level, the student might see the mentor as symbolically representing an unreliable, unjust or untrustworthy organization. Attributed authority is affected by an understanding of organizational culture and values. In Prague this is made complex by a prevalent confusion among students about the different histories, missions, and distinctive cultures of Empire State College and its educational partner.

Mentor-organizational boundaries and attributes become blurred, leading to student confusion and requiring mentor strategies to define and clarify the culture and values associated with the relationship. Especially when considering encounters with international students, I have found that constructs such as “other,” “stranger” and “strangerhood” provide valuable insight into the mentoring interaction, especially in intercultural contexts (Starr-Glass, 2010a). While, in a real sense, mentoring engagements are meetings between strangers, especially when distanced through culture or through limited face-to-face communication, strangers present themselves with fragmentary histories: associations, connections and attributions. In distanced mentoring, where social contact is reduced and attenuated, attributed authority may well provide the student with a strong sense of who her mentor is and how she should relate to her: dealing more with stereotypic

reorientations than with the complexity and subtleties of interpersonal exchanges.

Additional Thoughts: SoTL, Bricolage and Colored Filters

Learning experience redesign starts with exploring the pedagogical considerations and challenges associated with changing the nature or quality of learning. The thoughts outlined form a framework for constructing an alternative educational setting, embedded within an organizational context. The process of construction is not sequential. It is dynamic, with the pedagogic framework constantly being revisited in light of the opportunities and constraints co-existing in proposed learning activities, instructional strategies, and the setting within which the learning experience will operate. Full embodiment of these thoughts will be expressed in the altered way in which I engage in the senior project.

Capstone experiences are sometimes seen as representing a dichotomy: either consolidations of prior learning, or bridges to future employment or study. The dichotomy is not inevitable; indeed, it is forced and fails to represent the original impetus of the capstone experience, which understood it as fulfilling both capping and bridging functions. Capstone experiences are commonly used to provide the symbols and ritual of closure; however, they also contain the power to initiate new trajectories into the brave new world that lies beyond (Starr-Glass, in press). Undoubtedly, in refashioning my senior project experience both perspectives – capping and bridging – will find expression. The challenge is to move from the rhetoric of empowerment to its enactment. The challenge is to move power and its derivative, ownership, in ways that benefit learning and facilitate innovation and risk taking.

In considering the redesign of this learning experience, I also am aware of another set of considerations that have been with me for some time: the scholarship in teaching and mentoring (SoTL). These thoughts stem from several sources. The first is that SoTL is perhaps the best descriptor of many of the activities and interest that I have been involved with over the years. This is a time to reflect on these ventures

and see them more clearly as expressions of what is now recognized as a scholarship of teaching and learning. The second source of considerations about what mentors do, and how they change their practice, is that this year I have the privilege of serving as one of Empire State College’s Scholars Across the College. It seems to me that SoTL is going to be a central theme during that year. Scholarship in teaching and learning has focused on the creation of better, more effective, learning encounters by stressing that those in higher education are both disciplinary experts and educators. Depending on the cultural climate of a college, this can be understood as self-evident or challenging.

In approaching SoTL, my interest is in bridging disciplinary bodies of knowledge and learning experiences. I am a self-confessed bricoleur, appreciating that I am never totally confined, or comfortable, within a single disciplinary approach. The bricoleur, powerfully described and developed by the late Claude Levi-Strauss, walks around and beyond these bodies of knowledge, seeing what can be used to construct something new and workable: a way of seeing the world, a way of approaching challenges and opportunities

Capstone experiences are commonly used to provide the symbols and ritual of closure; however, they also contain the power to initiate new trajectories into the brave new world that lies beyond ...

(Starr-Glass, 2010b). The bricoleur borrows, fixes and possesses an inventory of possibilities collected from different experiences.

Joe Kincheloe (2001) reminded us of the different approaches and solutions of the bricoleur, who “understands that the

frontiers of knowledge-work rest in the liminal zones where disciplines collide ... in the deep interdisciplinarity of the bricolage, researchers learn to engage in a form of boundary work” (p. 689). Different disciplines offer unique frameworks for analysis and paradigms for understanding, which is both useful and limiting. By nature, and inclination, the bricoleur is an interdisciplinary creature. Kincheloe (2005) also recognized that in attempting to make sense of what they do and who they are, “bricoleurs move beyond the blinds of particular disciplines and peer through a conceptual window to a new world of research and knowledge production” (p. 323).

In reconsidering power structures and differentials within my mentoring the “psychological gaze” – an alternative colored filter – has provided new insights into previously unconsidered dynamics that might prove useful in arriving at a richer, more mutually satisfying, learning outcome. A psychoanalytical perspective is not commonly encountered in either the organizational or mentoring literature. Nevertheless, different viewing of situations can often be stimulating and provoke new questions, different connections, and perhaps even novel solutions. Previously, psychoanalytical insights into anxiety and the role of the instructor (French, 1997) have been personally beneficial: a further example of finding use for colored filters and evidence of my bricoleur lineage. The extent to which psychoanalytical lenses and filters will be significant, or useful, in future mentoring encounters is still undecided; however, it does provide a place from between the disciplines for looking anew at things.

Part of the pleasure and enjoyment of creating and engaging in learning experiences is discussing the possibilities and the ideas that inform the exploration; perhaps, these out loud reflections may prove of interest to others. And now it really is time to consider the implications of all this high-level pedagogical thinking and to embody thought in the enactment of a revised learning experience.

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This year's June Academic Conference focused on the theme: "Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers: Overcoming Fragmentation to Support Student Learning." About 80 colleagues from across the college came to Saratoga Springs to grapple with the presence of "fragmentation" and its impact on our own work and on our students' experience and learning. Our guest speaker was Carmen Sirianni, Morris Hillquit professor of Labor and Social Thought and professor of Sociology and Public Policy at Brandeis University and author (among other texts) of Investing in Democracy: Engaging Citizens in Collaborative Governance (Brookings Press, 2009).

As one entryway into our discussion, we used a version of Sirianni's "Eight Core Principles of Collaborative Governance and Policy Design" to reflect on our Empire State College work.

Kathy Jelly, director of the college's Center for Mentoring and Learning, who chaired the planning committee for the June Academic Conference, helped us frame Sirianni's eight foundational principles in the following way:

- co-producing "public goods" (e.g., services and structures);*
- identifying and mobilizing local assets;*
- sharing and using local knowledge; co-producing expertise;*
- providing structures for public deliberation;*
- promoting sustainable systems for collaborative work;*
- building capacity, strategically, across the institution;*
- transforming institutional culture;*
- ensuring mutual accountability.*

Found Things: Report of the College Culture Committee (1992)

In 1989, the college organized a Streamlining Committee “to begin considering the way we work.” Its goal was “to consider procedures which could be modified without doing harm to what might be called our ‘core practices.’” That committee decided that it was necessary to convene a College Culture Committee to “reconsider the basic elements of the college culture.” The committee was made up of Shirley Ariker, mentor at the Metropolitan Center; John Spissinger, part-time mentor at the Plattsburgh Unit; Robert Milton, mentor at the Genesee Valley Center; Jim Case, dean at the Hudson Valley Center; and Jane Altes, vice president for academic affairs and chair of the committee. In August 1992, the committee issued its 13-page report from which the following has been taken.

Grappling with the complex relationship between college mission, what became known as “sacred cows,” and day-to-day practices, the committee “chose eight broad statements” with which to work. Each pointed to a “major cultural issue” that the committee explored, and which became the basis for collegewide conversation.

1. The paper is not the reality. While academic activities must be documented for the college, the student and various outsiders, the form of that documentation can and should be modified as opportunities arise for greater efficiency, speed and accuracy.
2. There are various audiences interested in student outcomes and the impact of our documents on these audiences should be recognized. While, in the absence of “course descriptions,” some narrative explanation of learning must exist, the extent and content of that explanation should be considered in terms of the audience (now and in later years) and of those who must create it.
3. Our students are adults capable of dealing with their responsibilities including those associated with enrollment at Empire State College. While we sometimes state that adult students simply cannot manage timely completion of academic work along with their other commitments, this view may undervalue student capabilities. When this belief is conveyed to students, it also may encourage them to undervalue their educational goals.
4. Individualization has to do with the interaction, not the product. While the college has largely moved away from the view that each program must be unique to a view that individualization occurs within the contract itself, this interpretation, which focuses on the interpersonal relationships between our students and our faculty, is valuable as well.
5. The core institutional goal is access, and this can be accomplished in a number of ways. This view was affirmed in the most recent review of institutional mission, and our varying instructional modes (some existing in the college as long as individualized contract learning) tie to issues of access. Nonetheless, some view these alternatives as disruptions or distortions of proper education.
6. This student-centered institution is a bit schizophrenic in its approach to student centeredness. While the college prides itself on its responsiveness to student needs, there is reluctance to offer certain options (e.g., grades as supplements to narrative evaluations) even if students feel they are important.
7. Our students are adults and thus they can comprehend well-designed materials about such things as credit by evaluation. There is a recognized need for pre- and extended orientation materials to assist students to understand the institution and to begin preparation for study. Such materials also should allow students to make more informed judgments about the appropriateness of Empire State College for their needs. There is, however, a countervailing view that students should start to work toward CBE and degree program planning, for example, only with a mentor. Further, there is a worry that additional material will generate, rather than forestall, questions which would need to be addressed before enrollment.
8. Much of what we do is more important to U.S. than to the student. We are a ritualistic institution and many of the rituals may meet our needs rather than those of the student. Students “should have” individualized programs regardless of the external expectations and licensure demands. Students “should not” wear academic regalia at graduation recognition ceremonies. Contracts and contract evaluations should be “signed” by the associate dean thus making computer transmittal of documentation strangely impossible.

Is Higher Education Really Going to the Dogs?

Xenia Coulter, Center for International Programs

A Review of:

The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities, by Frank Donoghue¹

Frank Donoghue in *The Last Professors* is one of a number of recent writers to proclaim the impending death of traditional higher education. Our colleges, they argue, are underachieving, declining, selling out, without a soul, unmade or at an end, or they, more positively, need to be fixed, reformed or saved.² These claims might seem a bit odd given the almost daily stories in the media about the incessant demand for higher education and its equally dramatic growth. But for these writers, the heart of higher education resides in the liberal arts, or more precisely, the humanities, and there seems little doubt that in today's world, the humanities appear to be falling out of favor. Fifty years ago, more than half of our students graduated with degrees in the humanities, today that figure is around 15 percent.³

Professor Donoghue concentrates upon the fate of humanities professors. In his view, for the past hundred years the corporate world has conducted a more or less sustained war upon the curriculum of the humanities and in particular, its professors. The goals of business are efficiency, productivity and utility, goals clearly not of value to those who teach the humanities, and, as a result, the professors are being driven out of the increasingly corporate-minded universities. For Donoghue, the battle has crossed the midpoint and the humanities are already a lost cause.⁴ In the first chapter, he provides a 100-year historical context for a so-called corporate war against the humanities, and in the next two chapters he documents the current state of the humanities and the many losses they have suffered in no small part because of their ineffective defenses.

In the last two chapters he then describes how entire academic institutions have been infected by corporate values and structures that also have co-opted meaningful student purposes and rendered meaningless the original educational mission of our universities.

Donoghue is a lively writer who can readily transport an uncritical reader along the sweep of his argument. He is clearly unhappy with the current state of affairs in higher education. Indeed, this book could be regarded as a rant against those forces that have, more or less within his lifetime, converted humanities professors as the heart and soul of higher education into footnotes. Unfortunately, Donoghue seems so carried away with his rhetoric that he does not stop to offer either a comprehensive analysis or a thoughtful discussion of the increasingly transformed modern university. He accords individual businessmen far too much power and other possible factors far too little importance. While it might be nice to blame Andrew Carnegie or Frederick Taylor for the onslaught of contingent faculty and the slow demise of tenure, the roots of these changes are clearly more complex and go back much further than the beginning of the 20th century.

It is indisputable that today a growing number of undergraduate instructors in our universities are part time or untenured, particularly in English departments, which are responsible for least two introductory compositions courses for every enrolled student across all majors. These courses are essential to the teaching mission of the university, but they also are extremely labor-intensive. Moreover, they are not of particular scholarly interest to most English department faculty with their strong literary and theoretical backgrounds. One hundred years ago colleges attracted only a small percentage of the American public, students who were the best high school graduates, already good scholars and writers, and

amusing, if not stimulating, to teach. Today at least half of our high school graduates go to college, a 10-fold proportional increase at least and a far more representative sample of our population than before. As has been apparent for years, it is far cheaper and less onerous to the tenured faculty to meet the first-year compositional needs of all these students with "casual" part-time instructors. At first, graduate students were recruited, but, increasingly, English departments have come to rely upon a professional cadre of part timers who do not want, could not find, or have failed to achieve full-time tenured academic positions. The need for contingent faculty is so great that Donoghue and others⁵ speculate that it is the graduate school dropout or failure, the so-called ABD, not the successful graduate, that is the most important output of our Ph.D. programs.

One annoying problem with Donoghue's argument is that he extrapolates his experience in the English department to all the humanities.⁶ He does not even mention that very different models exist in music or art, for example, where part-time faculty are often highly successful practicing professionals critical to the success of these departments, and he only mentions in passing that in philosophy, language, or even mathematics departments, the jobs of even tenured faculty depend upon collegewide general education or distribution requirements. His description of the torturous path from graduate school to tenure is extremely disheartening, but it is not at all clear that it is representative of all humanities departments. As he does point out, this 15-year, often unsuccessful, journey is certainly not typical in the social or natural sciences and certainly not at all evident in the professional schools.

No one would argue with Donoghue that the humanities have a much-reduced presence in higher education today than a hundred years ago. A major problem

with this book, however, is that the author's position throughout is that this reduced presence is a major disaster for our universities. In his view, students have been seduced by the corporate world into becoming pragmatists. Unlike students from an earlier era, he believes, today's students are no longer interested in ethics, beauty or the meaning of life (concerns that are traditionally associated with the humanities). He does not consider the possibility that the particular kind of scholarly curiosity that animates literature specialists and philosophers has always had limited appeal and that the change we see today is not in the students but in the power of humanities professors to impose their own curriculum. (One might speculate that the phenomenal growth of traditional universities during the 20th century encouraged humanist academicians, comfortable with the traditions of the 19th century, to overvalue their expertise.⁷) Donoghue is so certain

One might speculate that the phenomenal growth of traditional universities during the 20th century encouraged humanist academicians, comfortable with the traditions of the 19th century, to overvalue their expertise.

that only the humanities express the true meaning of higher education that he does not feel it necessary to specify or explain what that meaning might be or why education offered by faculty in other departments is so woefully inadequate.

My own reaction after reading this (and other such) odes to the humanities is exasperated impatience. The claims made on behalf of the humanities as the essence of "traditional" higher education are to my mind increasingly out of touch with reality. Where indeed is empirical evidence showing that English or philosophy majors⁸

are better prepared for life than graduates with other majors, or for that matter, those without four-year degrees? Donoghue's claims about the value of the humanities are not only not supported by data, but they also lack logical support. He relies almost exclusively upon citations and quotations from an idiosyncratic (shall we say cherry-picked?) selection of books and articles by those who support his point of view. Moreover, Professor Donoghue seems completely unappreciative, even unaware, of the extraordinarily diverse nature of the current student population, to say nothing of the very likely possibility that "intellectual self-improvement" and "preparation for citizenship" can be achieved in many different ways. As a white, mature, privileged, "traditional" male professor, he paints all students with the same brush, blind to the great range of their needs and purposes and oblivious to the dubious nature of his assumption that there is only one best way for them to be properly educated.

Given the weakness of his argument, Professor Donoghue seems a poor model of the education he promotes. He is unreasonably outraged by a speech made by Andrew Carnegie in which Carnegie refers to the absurdity of preparing students to deal with "the storms of life" with models developed by "Greek and Hebrew barbarians."¹⁰ John Dewey made much the same point, particularly when he argued that students must learn, not what to think, but how to think. Either Donoghue is unaware that the educational world is rife with such disagreements, or he deliberately refrains from providing a fair account of this particular dispute in order to fully blacken the name of Carnegie, whom he presents as a quintessential corporate bad guy.¹¹ Either way does not make for a thoughtful or reasoned position.¹² Greek scholarly writings may well be worth studying, but given the knowledge that has accumulated since the Greek era, to say nothing of how greatly the world has changed since then, Homeric insights are probably not the first place to begin (if accorded any place at all) in a program purporting to prepare students for citizenship in today's highly complex world.¹³

In my opinion, we don't need any more rants by elderly academics looking backward to a world that no longer exists. Instead, we

need a critical and thoughtful reexamination of the purposes of higher education today where college degrees are deemed essential for all citizens, not just the privileged. Most of us do deplore the growing division between so-called top 20 elite universities, which, according to Donoghue, commodify not only knowledge, but also prestige, and the several thousand other so-called second-rate institutions. But we make too much of this problem in comparison to the much more invidious divide between the liberal arts and professional curricula. To the extent that members of society are defined by employment position, it is only to be expected that universities will – and should – help prepare students for that role. Instead of exaggerating the divide between work and leisure (prepared for on the one hand by "training," and on the other by "real education"), we need, within the same educational venue, to find ways of integrating or transcending these divisions. Or, as Dewey suggested 100 years ago, we should recognize that paid work is just one of many vocations or avocations a student will follow and for which education is important. The current liberal/professional arts dichotomy, an inheritance from the Greek tradition so revered by Professor Donoghue and his humanities colleagues, has outlived its usefulness. It is time to shift our perspectives so that questions the humanities claim as their own but that are important in every field and at any educational level, can be addressed whenever they are raised and within whatever context best makes sense to the individual student.

Notes

- ¹ Donoghue, *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities*.
- ² Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges*; Hersh and Merrow (eds.), *Declining by Degrees*; Stein (ed.), *Buying in or Selling Out?*; Lewis, *Excellence without a Soul*; Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University*; Kronman, *Education's End*; Muscatine, *Fixing College Education*; Zemsky, *Making Reform Work*; Garland, *Saving Alma Mater*.
- ³ Unfortunately, these figures are never examined carefully. For example, it could be that the relative number of

students interested in majoring in the humanities has remained more or less the same and that the increased percentage of the population that now goes to college consists of students who would never have majored in the humanities had they been able to attend college earlier. Clearly too, the number of possible majors – particularly in the social and natural sciences – also has dramatically increased. Many of the questions that 50 years ago were dealt with only in philosophy (or literature) are now compellingly addressed in other disciplines as well, as, for example, in the neurosciences or psychology.

- ⁴ Or at least this is what he argues in the first chapter. By the end of the book (note 1), Donoghue's position seems to be that the cause can be regained, but only if those in the humanities find better ways of defending themselves.
- ⁵ For example, Bousquet and Nelson, *How Universities Work*.
- ⁶ The same problem is seen in Bousquet and Nelson (note 5).
- ⁷ Kronman (note 2) is a case in point. Astonishingly, he makes the claim that only humanists (in his case, philosophers) can help students explore the meaning of life. No other discipline, he dismissively argues, is interested in such questions, and no one outside the academy is sufficiently knowledgeable to provide the right kind of guidance. How can one explain such arrogance from what I assume to be an otherwise well-meaning and kindly gentleman from Yale?
- ⁸ Traditionally, the study of history used to carry the weight particularly of citizenship preparation. ("... or we are doomed to repeat it."). Now that history is regarded by most scholars as a social science, it seems to be losing its preeminence as higher education's bedrock.
- ⁹ These are the two important "traditional rationales" for the humanities that Donoghue mentions (albeit without discussion and only in the Preface [note 1, p. xviii]). They are

commonly emphasized in much of this literature, such as in a recent example by Nussbaum, *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*.

- ¹⁰ From a commencement address at the Pearson College of Business and Shorthand in 1891 (note 1, p. 4).
- ¹¹ That there may be a conflict between this view of Carnegie and his immense philanthropic support of libraries, concert halls, music and art, and even higher education itself is brushed aside as a "softening position ... in his elder years (note 1, p. 6)."
- ¹² Another instance of problematic scholarship of particular interest to long-term Empire State College faculty and staff is Donoghue's argument against Carol Twigg (note 1, p. 100 - 1, 108 - 9). Twigg worked at Empire State College for many years, largely in the Office of Academic Affairs, where she acquired a keen interest in technology that led her to EDUCAUSE (where she served as vice president) and to her current position as executive director of the Center for Academic Transformation at the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT). Donoghue claims that she sees IT as a "one way street" based upon Twigg's well known statement: "Currently in higher education, both on campus and online, we individualize faculty practice ... and standardize the student learning experience Instead we need to do just the opposite: individualize student learning and standardize faculty practice." He interprets this statement as a way of dumbing down (and ultimately eliminating) traditional faculty, even though Twigg has said (and he even quotes her in that regard) that a standardized course allows faculty the flexibility to mentor individual students: "[Faculty] would move from being content experts to being a combination of content expert, learning-process design expert, and process-implementations manager; as presenters of that material, as expert assessors of learning and competencies; as advisors; or as specialists in other evolving roles." Donoghue's most telling question from this discussion is

this: "How will faculty [my emphasis] benefit from the "mass customization" of learning, which seems designed for the unique needs and convenience of countless students?" (note 1, p. 100).

- ¹³ As Kegan has argued in *In Over Our Heads*, today's complex world demands new (and higher) levels of cognitive sophistication than ever before.

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Letter to the Editor

Arthur Chickering

Arthur Chickering was the founding academic vice president of Empire State College. From his time at Goddard College to the present, he has been a guiding spirit of progressive adult higher education and continues to write, speak and consult around the world about development and learning. Chickering has been honored by many professional organizations, including the Council for Independent Colleges, The National Association of Student Personnel Administrators and The American Educational Research Association. His important writings include Education and Identity (1969) and The Modern American College (1981) and, with Nancy Schlossberg, Getting the Most Out of College (second edition, 2001).

Dear Alan,

I really appreciate being on your mailing list for All About Mentoring. I always learn from it and resonate with many of the articles. I am moved to write this extended "Letter to the Editor" for two reasons. But before I continue I want to emphasize that I think Jim Hall was an excellent administrator and president for Empire State. The years following my now brief tenure there certainly succeeded in creating and sustaining a remarkable institution, often through difficult times. Plaudits he has received are certainly well deserved.

First, I want to endorse the call for new alternatives at the end of your thoughtful editorial [AAM #37, spring 2010]. For me, colleges and universities are our most important institutions, not only for helping individuals reach their full potentials but also for sustaining democracy. By those criteria, in my judgment, they have failed. They have failed to graduate citizens who can function at the levels of cognitive and moral, intellectual and ethical development our complex national and global problems require and that individuals need to create full and satisfying lives.

Consider the challenges faced by our federal, state and local politicians, policy makers, and diverse vested interests. We need to strengthen and sustain a multicultural, multiethnic, multireligious, internationally interdependent, pluralistic democracy. That's a big mouthful, but all those conditions apply. We need to identify and support policies, practices and resource allocations that anticipate the dislocations and disruptions that will accompany global warming and the steady depletion of oil reserves, the "peak oil" problem. We need to contain and help ameliorate recurrent intertribal, interethnic and interreligious conflicts. We need to address basic issues concerning public education, health care and an aging population. We need to create a globally recognized example of participatory government where all persons, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, national origin or religious and spiritual orientation, are actively involved. To be effective, all our citizens must be able to function at the levels of intellectual, emotional and social complexity required to meet our beleaguered globe's economic, environmental, human and political challenges.

During the last two years, we have experienced the worst economic recession since the 1930s depression I grew up in. Heavy budget cuts, 30 percent drops in endowments, and reduced giving and philanthropic support, are creating severe financial shortages across higher education. Students are being turned away from community colleges to which increasing numbers have moved to cope with significant tuition increases in public and private four-year institutions. Jobs are scarce for our graduates. These pressures create powerful challenges for institutional priorities, policies and practices.

But as I read papers and magazines, track political decision making, listen to talk shows, and experience the general culture, we are far from the levels of complex

functioning required. From my personal perspective, our political, economic and social systems, and the policies, practices and resource allocation decisions associated with them, are functioning at the most base levels articulated by various human development theorists. Richard Bonnabeau, in *The Promise Continues*, noted that I used three of these research-based perspectives as the conceptual foundation for Empire State College's educational outcomes – Loevinger, Kohlberg and Perry.

Jane Loevinger's ego development theory puts "impulsive," "self protective" and "conformist," at the bottom. The following stages are "conscientious" – behaving according to self-evaluated standards, self-criticism, guilt for consequences, and long term goals and ideals; "individualistic" – respect for individuality; "autonomous" – coping with conflicting inner needs; and "integrated" – reconciling inner conflicts, renouncing the unattainable. I submit we are not functioning at these higher stages.

In Kohlberg's cognitive-moral development theory, fear of punishment, gratifying personal needs, bargaining with others for mutual benefit, and conforming to peer group's wishes, are the lowest stages with adherence to personally chosen or universal moral and ethical principles at the top.

Bill Perry's scheme of intellectual and ethical development puts dualistic, either/or, good/evil at the bottom, moving through multiplicity and relativism to commitment in relativism.

Women's Ways of Knowing by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, puts silence and received knowledge at the bottom, with development moving through "procedural knowledge" and "separate knowing" to culminate in "constructed knowing" where personally important, experientially validated knowledge is integrated with knowledge learned from others.

From all these different perspectives, our society, and most colleges and universities, are functioning at the most base levels. We need new alternatives that help learners move to “constructed knowing.” If Empire State College could work toward that end it could make a major social contribution.

My second reason for writing flows from Richard Bonnabeau’s excellent and accurate – at least from my perspective – history of our first 25 years of the college. I missed it when it came out in 1996, but learned about it in Holly Cargill-Cramer’s Boyer piece in the spring 2010 Connections, and Rich was good enough to send me a copy. Perhaps some recollections and reflections will be of interest.

It was nice to see Cargill-Cramer’s sidebar calling attention to Muscatine’s recognition of Empire State College in his “Fixing Higher Education: A new curriculum for the 21st century.” I have long admired Charles’s educational orientation and his thoughtful work, but he was a bit off base when he associated Jim Hall’s “enlightened presidency” with “creating flexible, individualized degree programs and the key role faculty mentors play.” Indeed it was that sidebar that stimulated me to ask Rich for his history. I wanted to check my memories.

Ernie [Boyer, chancellor of the SUNY system] was a close friend of Tim Pitkin, then Goddard president, in the context of the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges (CASC), later the Council for Independent Colleges (CIC), and was well informed about Goddard’s progressive educational philosophy and its programs. I had known Ernie well since we met at Goddard in 1964. He and Tim had received National Institute of Mental Health funding for a four-year Project on Student Development in Small Colleges. Ernie was to direct it but when Sam Gould, then SUNY chancellor, offered him a vice chancellor position they handed the project off to me.

Unfortunately, Jim [Hall] had never experienced the educational power of learner-centered education that had such an impact on me at Goddard. Narrative evaluations were used for courses and “independent studies,” and were designed and carried out with an appropriate

faculty member. Students who successfully completed their first two years, the “junior division,” applied for admission to the “senior division.” To do so, they designed their own individual programs with help from their “advisor” and completed it with a “senior study” during their final semester. Nor had Jim experienced the first low residency adult degree program in the nation, created there in 1964, which led to the Union for Experimenting Colleges and Universities and the “university without walls” movement during the ’70s. My experiences with those powerful, individualized, programs were the foundation for Empire State College.

So it was not surprising that from the outset Jim was nervous about my core educational orientation and never fully supported it. That’s why he backed Loren Baritz’s recruitment of the learning resources faculty and their work. Despite the scholarship and creativity that characterized their “modules,” that initiative aggravated the conflict between Loren and me and between the administration and learning center faculty members working hard to respond to the educational backgrounds and needs of their diverse students. Jim’s basic orientation was further evidenced by his movement toward the British Open University approach soon after I left.

Alan, please realize that I am not trying to re-argue those past debates. But I do need to share my own perspective on that history. Now I want to shift gears.

When we met to discuss my appointment as academic vice president, Ernie [Boyer], in his usual parsimonious and penetrating way, said that he wanted an institution that would serve the educational needs of adults throughout New York state. I jumped at that challenge.

Soon after I was appointed, my wife and I spent a week visiting the British Open University. After a warm welcome, Vice Chancellor Perry introduced us to key faculty members and administrators and gave us a car and driver so we could visit some of their learning centers. That new kind of institution, using high-quality correspondence courses with televised programming for pacing and amplification, brought education, and often-personal

transformation – as the film “Educating Rita” (1983) so powerfully portrays – to “the masses” beyond the more privileged few. But the English population then was much more homogeneous than New York state, and their system lacked the diverse range of two and four-year institutions here in the U.S. I was convinced it was not the best approach for us. So we created an institution “as different as chalk and cheese” as Lord Perry put it when John Jacobson [vice president for academic affairs at Empire State College] presented his honorary degree.

During that summer and fall I raced back up to Vermont weekends to be with my wife Jo and our four children. I loved to spend an hour or two picking wild blackberries. In a quiet, natural environment, a mile from our nearest neighbors, at the end of what has become “Chickering Road,” it was a great way to reflect on Empire State College’s purposes and practices while satisfying the need for concrete productivity coming out of my Puritan ancestry. Whenever I have picked berries in the years since then I have been reminded of Jim’s inauguration.

I suspect few readers have picked wild blackberries. On a single tall cane, some will be green and hard, some pink, or darkish red, or black and juicy ready to drop into your hand. Those canes struck me as perfect metaphors for Empire State College’s mission. The morning of Jim’s inauguration, I cut a cane, took it with me, and put it on the stage where others and I were to speak. When my turn came I held it up. Our challenge was not just to select the ripe and juicy ones, pretending that we were responsible and ignoring the others. Certainly we needed to work with our already competent and knowledgeable students to legitimize a credential that would help them realize their personal aspirations and social contributions. But most important, we needed to help each person move as far as possible toward full maturity. Individual degree programs pursued through individual learning contracts offered the best chance to do so.

Three other ingredients were critical. We avoided the angels-on-the-head-of-a-pin exercise of arbitrarily assigning credits to particular units of study by having students

enroll either full or part time, expecting 40 hours per week from full-time enrollees and 20 hours from half time. We avoided the Procrustean approach of requiring all learning to fit into predetermined semester or quarterly time frames. Learning contracts could be designed for whatever length of time suited their purposes, as short as a month or as long as six months. We avoided collapsing all that learning into a single letter or number by using narrative evaluations that could describe the richness and integrity of each learning contract.

If we were to serve diverse adults throughout the state we could not be selective based on academic records and test scores. Instead we needed to maximize

But most important, we needed to help each person move as far as possible toward full maturity. Individual degree programs pursued through individual learning contracts offered the best chance to do so.

the fit between each person's purposes and motivation, and the resources available in their communities and other institutions. That's why our admission application asked them to describe what they wanted to learn, how they learned best, and the kinds of resources that served them well. Not all applicants were prepared to address these questions effectively, but it started them thinking in ways consistent with our approach.

Prior to actually enrolling, we asked them to attend weekend orientation workshops. We shared the basics of our educational approach with sample learning contracts and degree programs. Participants described why they wanted to come and what they wanted to learn and we discussed various possibilities. With all the commitments adults have, we wanted them to be serious

about our time expectations. By far our most effective device was to ask them to fill out blank calendars with how they had spent their time for the preceding two weeks. Then, if they were going to enroll full time we asked them to take out 40 hours, and if half time, 20 hours. That made the rubber hit the road. Many students intending to enroll full time switched to half time; others put off enrolling until they could get things better organized at home.

We also needed to recognize and respect each person's prior learning as the foundation and framework for program planning. We had no idea how to do that, so I sent a request for funding to Alden Dunham at the Carnegie Foundation. He was receiving several similar requests so he brought a number of us together for a weekend meeting at Educational Testing Service that led to the Council for Assessing Experiential Learning (CAEL), later to become the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning.

We hired our first faculty members that summer and got underway with the Albany Learning Center in SUNY Albany offices in October. I believed it was critical that we begin this new venture working directly with our students so we could learn from those experiences. I had watched administrators and faculty members at other colleges and universities spend a year or two designing a new program or institution. By the time students were admitted, the innovative practices were so conceptually solidified it was difficult to change. So we converted our basic principles into practice based on the direct experiences and wisdom of our learning center faculty members and deans.

Probably you remember all these details Alan, but perhaps others do not, or have not been informed. I recall them here, because from those heady early days both internal and external forces drove Empire State College increasingly toward more traditional policies and practices. I was not surprised. As Bonnabeau notes, "Chickering was fearful of 'the forces of regression' that existed in the system. He believed 'that they would continually push Empire State in a more and more conservative direction.' Chickering, therefore, was 'determined to take the institution as far out as possible'"

(24). I knew that once you defined a curriculum, no matter how innovative and creative, it would make individual purposes subordinate. I also fought "group studies." As Bonnabeau quotes, "Once faculty members got into the business of creating group studies and building those into their workloads, the efficiencies involved as well as being able to shape group studies to their own intellectual interests would drive the whole program. Again, we would find that the curriculum was driven by ... the faculty interests instead of the individual student's needs" (62).

The external forces also were tough to fight, as they always are. We were fortunate to have an open-minded accreditation team, chaired by Ted Mitau, then chancellor of the University of Minnesota System. He was creating University College for adults with a similar individualized, learner-centered approach. I recall clearly my response to their predictable first question. "What are your standards for graduation?" "Our mission is to serve the educational needs of adults throughout New York state. We cannot use general, norm-referenced standards. To judge our educational quality pick a hundred student folders at random and examine the level of work required and their products in relation to each person's background, prior learning and purposes." Once team members immersed themselves in the actual contracts, degree programs and student products we were home free.

But other forces were more challenging. For example, the U.S. Department of Education had its Higher Education General Information System (HEGIS) codes where programs had to be characterized by traditional disciplines, departments and majors. Clearly our learning contracts and degree programs did not fit those boxes. It took some ingenuity to fill out those forms. Even the New York State Department of Education saw no problem in giving 20 students identical learning contracts. How oxymoronic can you get? Learning center deans had to persuade graduate program deans to accept our students with their narrative transcripts. Of course, once they did, our grad's outstanding performances set aside that obstacle.

But such internal and external forces are inexorable. Bonnabeau's history of its first 25 years documents Empire State College's movement away from its initial strongly learner-centered orientation. Perhaps it has changed since 1996. I was encouraged to see Empire State College's Core Values at the end of the spring 2010 issue that provoked this letter. That rhetoric is certainly consistent with the way we started. You and your colleagues know better than I how much current realities actually serve those values.

I want to close as I began, emphasizing higher education's need for new alternatives. In my now 51 years of work in higher education, arguing for greater attention to "the affective domain," for helping students address intellectual and interpersonal competence, issues of purpose and meaning, integrity and identity. I have never felt as strong a sense of urgency about these outcomes as I do now.

My international experiences traveling and consulting in Canada, Great Britain and Ireland, Latin America, Europe, South Africa, Australia, Russia, and the Far East during the last 40 years, suggest that things are getting worse, not better. Many persons around the globe are experiencing life as more stressful and less meaningful, even than during the cold war of the 1950s and '60s. Certainly that is very much the case here in the U.S. The ability of multinational corporations to move jobs to sources of cheap labor creates employment problems in countries where jobs leave, and social disruption and dislocation in receiving countries. Our global communication systems let hackers in one location cause widespread havoc across national boundaries. A SARS outbreak in China and swine flu in Mexico become international threats. Starvation and disease grow despite dramatic increases in food production capacity. Politically driven disinformation and misinformation renders informed decision making and well thought through political activism almost

impossible. We have a two-tier society in which the gap between rich and poor has grown dramatically. In 1980, the average CEO made 42 times what an average hourly worker made. By 2005, the ratio was 262-1. Barack Obama, in "The Audacity of Hope," writes: "Between 1971 and 2001, while the median wage and salary income of the average worker showed little or no gain, the income of the top hundredth of a percent went up almost 500 percent" (192). We have recurrent violence and crime, some driven by drugs, some apparently random expressions of rage and frustration. We have recurrent corruption in politics, corporations and financial institutions. We face strong tensions between civil liberties and homeland security. In response to these critical conditions we have self-interested, self-serving, divides, that, as Tom Friedman says, drive compromises that result in "sub-optimal solutions," whether concerning health care and the economy at home, or global warming and international conflicts abroad.

I am sure your readers have their own list.

These are problems of moral development, character building, social responsibility and civic engagement. Certainly the higher order cognitive skills required to see through the mis- and disinformation, and to examine our complex issues with the critical judgments they require, are necessary. But they are not sufficient. That thinking, and the resulting judgments, must be anchored in clear recognition of their fundamental moral implications concerning human dignity and well-being. If not so anchored they become cold blooded, heartless, intellectual exercises, balancing trade offs for narrowly defined political, economic, or personal ends. We must attack that narrow minded, self-interested dynamic with the most powerful means we can muster.

Please don't misunderstand me. In urging Empire State College to create new alternatives I am **not** suggesting that you should "start all over again." I believe the alternative we tried to create was

appropriate for those times and those learners. But these times and today's learners are different. Moreover, there has been abundant research on individual differences, on learning, and on brain functioning since then. Those should be the foundations for a forward-looking Empire State College and for the next generation of colleges and universities.

Please accept my warmest best wishes Alan, and share them with some of my old, persistent, colleagues.

*

Note: Chickering's letter surely did not include references, but we thought that it would be useful to add this list.

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Core Values of Empire State College (2005)

The core values of SUNY 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*

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 (SUNY Empire State College, Metropolitan Center, 325 Hudson St., 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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