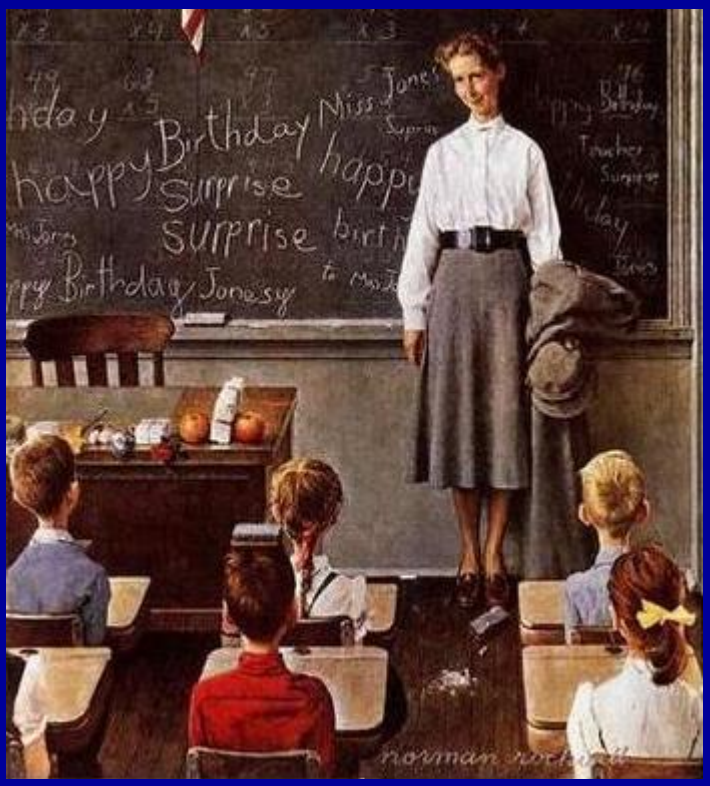
Public Voices



Volume V **Number 3**

Public Voices

Teaching Public Administration: Challenges of Our Times

Symposium

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"Distance education" at the college level is well over a century old. It has served the needs of a numerically large, but proportionately small population of learners who have eschewed the campus classroom. These correspondence school enrollees, educational TV watchers, and audiocassette listeners have had only modest impact on the structure, mission, and strategy of the institutions serving them. But that is now changing, and changing very dramatically. The advent of the Internet, interactive television technology, and web-based instructional software, coupled with administrative and political perceptions of educational reformation and fiscal efficiency, may be causing nothing less than a revolution in higher education. By applying a feminist model of assessment called "unthinking technology," that is to say, exploring the potential, but unthought of socio-political aspects of this technological revolution, this paper raises significant questions about the security of the traditional academic enterprise. "The Politics of Distance Education" urges a pro-active embrace of these technologies by the academy in order to enable a legitimate "competency for grievance" so that the protection of the validity of higher education, and legitimacy of the academic profession can be ethically defended and publicly respected, rather than being viewed as mulish resistance to the inevitable.

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Symposium

Teaching Public Administration: Challenges of Our Times— An Introduction

Willa Bruce

This volume of Public Voices presents radical issues in graduate education. From the articles presented here, the reader can gain a new appreciation for the complexity of the educational process. Each chapter raises some question concerning mainstream thinking about teaching and learning. Those who read this issue will discover a Pandora's Box of ideas and concerns that present new challenges to the educational endeavor. The work included here runs the gamut from the use of technology to the abuse of students. It provides a broad and distinctive set of topics that should contribute new elements to an educational policy agenda.

Mark Peterson cautions educators to not be too ready to criticize or reject the use of technology in education. Rather, he urges that they embrace it not because technology is the panacea for educational problems, but because it is not. He advises readers to be very concerned about protecting the validity and legitimacy of traditional higher education and to be so politically astute that the higher education enterprise is not endangered by unthinking use of technology.

Marvin Hoffman, Dragan Stefanovic, Ruth Ann Strickland, and Dan Gurley also write about technology in graduate education. Relying on their survey of NASPAA affiliated MPA programs, they discuss pedagogical and technical issues relevant to teaching with technology and provide a bibliography that directs the reader to further resources on the subject. They are reassured by their findings that most programs rely on technology for only a portion of their course offerings.

Jonathan Anderson, utilizing a case study of the distance education offerings of the MPA program at the University of Alaska Southeast, reaches a similar conclusion: limited offerings reduce the controversy surrounding distance education mediated by technology.

The next two articles are accounts by faculty of their experience in conducting a distance learning class utilizing computer technology for the first time. Eastep highlights the issues, challenges, and discoveries she made as a part of teaching a criminal justice class on-line and concludes that continuous improvement is a necessary part of the venture. Bruce focuses more on course development than on course delivery and provides advice on how to prepare for technology mediated education.

Hollar discusses technology in education from the perspective of a doctoral student who defended her dissertation prospectus via interactive television. While the faculty, whose articles appear in this issue, counsel caution in the wide-spread adoption of technology,
Hollar is enthusiastic about it. Perhaps the difference in perspective lies in the benefits perceived by the authors.

Nicolay puts the technology-in-education dilemma in perspective with his humorous, fictional story about going virtual. He invites us to laugh at ourselves as we seek to be up-to-date and traditional at the same time. This piece concludes the section on technology.

The second section in this volume of Public Voices contains three articles written by academics who have succeeded in spite of the substantial obstacles they had to overcome to complete doctoral degrees and enter into academia.

Adair and Dahlberg were welfare mothers who were determined to raise themselves out of poverty through higher education. Their article is a poignant account of discrimination and the desperate ways students sometimes use to earn enough money to get through graduate school. Their research should be read by everyone who ever believed in equal opportunity and everyone who wants to understand why moving out of poverty is so very difficult. These two women present stories that will surprise and challenge the reader.

The articles by Dobson and Greene are accounts of growing up in a working class family where they learned pride, productivity, and self-respect; but not how to survive in the professional world of academia. Dobson is black and Greene is white. Yet their experiences are surprisingly similar. Their struggles to succeed come not from race, but from their background in working class homes. Readers hear not only their voices, but those of their parents who taught respect and determination.

The articles by Adair and Dahlberg, Dobson and Greene tell the stories of every one who ever wanted to succeed in a world different than the one in which they were raised. These are the voices of many public administration students, heard for the first time. These stories call faculty to realize that the background of students influences how they learn and how they assimilate into university. Hopefully, they call us to question ourselves.

In the third section of this edition, Cayer, Lan, and Weschler provide information about how they teach doctoral students about the 'stars' in public administration. This article, with its emphasis on student and faculty collaboration concludes the symposium.

The Politics of Distance Education: Normative Considerations on the Nexus of Pedagogy & Technology

Mark Peterson

In May, 1999 WebCT, a British Columbia based Internet college course design company, announced its acquisition by ULT. The company issued press announcement noted that the internet course design products of the combined enterprise were in use at over 700 institutions, and the products served 2,000,000 seats (sic).

September 2, 1999 the *New York Times* "Circuits" section published the following headline, "Click Here for the Ivory Tower" (D1,D9). It tells the story of Unext.com, a Web-based, for-profit company about to initiate Cardea University, a distance learning graduate MBA program having contractual agreements with the University of Chicago, Carnegie Mellon, Stanford, and the London School of Economics and Political Science, with "The universities (providing) the curriculum and impressive credentials" (D1).

At my institution, Washburn University, a far cry from Stanford and Carnegie Mellon, distance education is a system of Internet-delivered college courses; interactive two-way video linkage and a set of broad "articulation" agreements between our university and several other post-high school teaching institutions. In addition to the courses being sited on the Web, the Internet itself offers access to library resources far in excess of the materials catalogued within the four walls of our modest library; access to vast numbers of governmental and private Web sites for news and research data; and, as I discovered for myself and my students this Summer, access to text and software vendors in E-commerce that will sound the death knell for the traditional campus bookstore. In fact, without due care, we may be hearing the death knell of the traditional American college and university for all but the top tier of institutions.

This new interactive pedagogy does not consist of lectures and the Socratic method filling empty but receptive vessels thirsting after knowledge. The distance educator is now "webmaster" and "content provider." The mentor now directs self-aware, motivated Maslovian learners questing for the cutting edge of personally relevant and useful information. This electronic distance education is also highly individualistic, temporally flexible, and decidedly customer oriented. Distance education is the 'Mall of America' for the customer in search of college credit or a college degree. Or at least that's what Jones University, the Western Governors University, Phoenix, Webster, Regents, and hundreds of other institutions, both private and public, would like the world at-large to believe.

Some readers, fitting the demographic of the Baby Boom generation, may remember the tele-courses taught in their undergraduate days. Recall the biology lecture halls with 500 students staring (snoring) at a grainy projection of Dr. Honeydew as he dryly lectured us about the mating habits of *diptera*? Once a week students straggled off to ninety minute lab/discussion sections where graduate students attempted to clarify the tele-lecture. The most driven and manic students thrived, most everyone else did badly or worse. Legislators and

administrators saw it as the cutting edge of technology, saving millions of dollars by not having to pay for new buildings or tenure-track faculty. The babyboom bulge and the wave of enthusiasm crested, the student rebellions of the 60s and 70s changed the outlook of campus faculties and administrators, and mass instruction via the 'telecourse' was supplanted by other fashions.

Will it be the same this time? A careful assessment of the limited evidence suggests not, and yet the subjective assessor wishes that it was just a fad. What's the difference between then and now? Why wish this new wave gone? And why be concerned that it won't go away? For explanation, if not answers, consider some of the deeper elements of what distance education is and means.

A Framework for Analysis

Current distance education is a figment of technology - a very particular technology, and one which is a direct outgrowth of the Cold War. That technology is the Internet. On one level, the understanding of this new wave in education requires an understanding of how the "natural selection" of technologies works. As Richard Sclove has pointed out, the clash of modern society over technologies is not the clash of technology advocates versus Luddites. It is in fact, the clash of advocates for competing technologies (1993, 223-245). It is a political contest where a plurality constituency is sought on behalf of one or another of the competing technologies. The competing advocacies define the struggle in particularistic terminology and concepts. The audience/bystanders/publics/decision-makers who watch and judge the struggle, and ultimately embrace the winner - willingly or otherwise - seldom ask for clarifications of the concepts, or demand alternative schemata of conflict. What results is acceptance of the new dominant construct, with little awareness of likely outcomes and consequences that have not previously been defined. This paper seeks to provoke the reader to consider some of the construct's less obvious elements. In order to present them, I use a provocative approach presented by Corlann Gee Bush in her article "Women and the Assessment of Technology" (1983, 151-170). She presents a feminist concept of challenging accepted constructs so that they may be assessed from an altered perspective. She calls this "unthinking tech-myths." She urges the simplification of technology by "naming its complexity:"

- A tool is not a simple isolated thing but is a member of a class of objects designed for specific purposes.
- Any given use of tools, techniques, or technologies can have both beneficial and detrimental effects at the same time.
- Both use and effect are expressions of a valence or propensity for tools to function in certain ways in certain settings.
- Polarizing the rhetoric about technology enables advocates of particular points of view to gain adherents and power while doing nothing to empower citizens to understand, discuss, and control technology on their own (156).

Little more needs to be added to her points to begin to grasp the less pellucid but socially, politically and pedagogically significant aspects of this new wave of distance education. She urges us to reconsider the tech-myth in light of four contexts that she summarizes as follows:

1. *The design or developmental context* which includes all the decisions, materials, personnel, processes, and systems necessary to create tools and techniques from raw materials.
2. *The user context* which includes all the motivations, intentions, advantages, and adjustments called into play by the use of particular techniques or tools.
3. *The environmental context* that describes nonspecific physical surroundings in which a technology or tool is developed and used.
4. The cultural context which includes all the norms, values, myths, aspirations, laws, and interactions of the society of which the tool or technique is a part.

Using this set of contexts as a framework for analysis, what follows is an assessment of the less perceived consequences of this technologically driven new wave in pedagogy. I conclude with some prescriptive strategies for the reader/advocate to adopt. I suggest that we may wish to adopt the sentiment of the subtitle to the movie, *Dr. Strangelove*, "...How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb" – stop worrying, embrace the technology, and strive to control undesirable effects. But, time is the essence of this strategy. If we dither, others will subvert the traditional system. Also, if we dither, we will lose our standing in the debate, or, to coin a term, our "competency for grievance."

The Developmental Context

Decisions

In the beginning there was the Cold War from which so many technologies flowed. One of the critical decisions leading to the current condition of distance education was the establishment of a secure, atomic attack survivable communications system; the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network—ARPANet, operationalized in October, 1969. It connected the country's weapons laboratories, a selection of universities, and military facilities. From secure communication for defense purposes, the networks of copper wire and later fiber-optic phone lines, mainframe computers, and communications hubs were adapted to facilitate broader involvement, primarily by academics. As their use of the networks for communications and data transmission grew, innovations took place with the establishment of databases and access tools permitting many more people to electronically find what they might need in remote libraries, data stores, and personal exchanges with colleagues. Then in the late 70s an American researcher working in Switzerland, Tim Berners-Lee, led the effort to create the software necessary to permit the creation of the images and text we see on the web. Other investigators at the University of Illinois created "Mosaic," the first widely used web browser - parent to the likes of "Netscape" and Microsoft's "Internet Explorer." The ability to provide attractive visual images plus text took the "net" out of the hands of the scientists and technicians and led to today's .COM explosion. The original decisions regarding communication for national defense, augmented by the individual and institutional decisions to expand capabilities, are key to the current state of distance education.

Materials

The physical elements of distance education technology would seem to represent an impressive cascade of interrelationships forming a real gestalt synergy. Mainframe computer nodes connected by dedicated phone wires accessible by 'dumb terminals' and micro-computers at remote locations combined with silicon memory storage, "packet switches," and programming capabilities have expanded so aggressively and successfully that new forms of information media are now a commonplace. Consider for example the e-journal and the e-book rapidly becoming part of the landscape of the academic environment.

Personnel

The cascade of job types and parties-at-interest in the technology of distance education incorporates an array of pre-existing and new descriptors. In addition to the usual types—students, administrators, faculty, and various servants of enrollment, scheduling, grading, and certification—we now must add systems operators, web technicians, content designers, hackers, hardware and software support personnel, and others (Marchese, 1998).

It is also important to take note of the marked differences in the types of students participating (and experiencing success) in the distance education milieu, as opposed to the realm of traditional classroom instruction. The Institute for Higher Education's meta-analysis, *What's the Difference?* reports conclusions from several studies (1999, 13-16). One suggested that real distance education students—off-campus and unable to make physical contact with the campus—had much higher scores than on-campus enrollees, but both groups exhibited

exceptionally high dropout rates in the distance education courses. Another summarized case study indicated that distance learners have better analytic and writing skills as well as being more self-directed. And finally, at page 16, the Institute's investigators found the primary characteristics of a successful distance education student to be: persistence in pursuing new projects; married; took not passing seriously; female; and self-confident, committed, highly literate, and well-organized.[1]

Processes and Systems

Begun as a tightly controlled, and secretive communications system with Cold War security limits to access and use, the ARPANet became, in its iterations of the early to mid-90s, nearly anarchic. With limited exceptions, the web is an anarchic free-market construct. The open market qualities of the web in turn have undermined the oligopolistic control of higher education by certified colleges and universities. They are now being challenged by new entities that have qualities and characteristics substantially at variance with the traditional norms and structures of the university.

The User Context

The assessment of the user context of a technology requires, according to Bush, that we look at and 'unthink' the motivations, intentions, advantages, and adjustments that inhere for the technology's users.

Motivations

In the beginning fast, secure, and attack-survivable communication of complex, detailed information nearly instantaneously over long distances was the policy makers' desired result. While security remains an issue, speed and flexibility have proven to be the dominant surviving motivations for the Internet. In its applicability to distance education the motivations become more complex. The motivations derive in part from which user perspective one adopts. The student learner often sees the distance education environment as more personalized in the sense that time flexibility and interaction with the instructor are uniquely adaptable to the student's needs. No need to try to make an 8:00 AM class three mornings a week. The instructor's guidance regarding course content is posted and available at the student's discretion. E-mail makes one-to-one communication with the instructor more flexible and private than any in-class discussion session would, while chat sessions and bulletin boards allow the more gregarious and outgoing to have a virtual classroom experience. (Some colleagues have noted that students who are normally reticent to engage in classroom discussion "come alive" in the electronic discussion environment.)

For the instructor, a principal motivator may be the opportunity to develop proficiency in the use of the newest in expressive technologies. Some colleagues possess an appreciation for distance education as a new approach to pedagogy. Some have also found it to be a liberating expansion of opportunities for communication with students and access to learning resources beyond the limiting factors of a college's proprietary holdings. For altruistic teachers the opportunity to reach the physically remote student, or the pregnant student, or the housebound student tending small children, or the physically limited student may inspire new technology enthusiasm.

[1] The Institute for Higher Education Policy is here summarizing a list of characteristic developed in a survey reported in the *Journal of Distance Education.* See: Richard Powell, Christopher Conway, and Lynda Ross, "Effects of Student Predisposing Characteristics on Student Success," *Journal of Distance Education*, V.5#1, 1990, 20-37.

For the university administrator distance education is the latest tool and, as such, it possesses real 'yin and yang' qualities. In one way, distance education represents the newest way for traditional institutions to demonstrate continuing utility and purpose. In another, it represents a next step in the process of putting bodies in chairs without the additional costs of bricks and mortar. The costs of the hardware, connectivity, and personnel necessary to implement and maintain a sophisticated distance education program may not be fully understood, but are perceived as less (Keegan, 1996).2 Another plus, for at least some administrators, is the perception that distance education may resolve the expensive conundrum of tenured faculty. The social effects of the Reagan years, and "reinvention" in institutions, have already seriously undermined the security of tenure, but imagine the prospect of defending tenure when a university administrator, like a student, might shop for online courses from an electronic catalog of freelancers, adjuncts, and offerings from big, technologically sophisticated "service providers" (all certified by the appropriate collegiate assessment organizations)? Hypothetically, imagine the implementation of nationalized classes with a licensing contract running from any generic college through Prentice-Hall and perhaps Cornell University where the superstar professor is a tenured faculty member. Or, imagine what happens to the run-of-the-mill college's recruitment capabilities and enrollments if it loses out to a powerhouse school's aggressive and essentially unregulated marketing of its electronic curriculum.

Legislators and other funders are motivated by most of the same factors as the university administrator. The (largely false) hope of stabilizing or reducing higher education funding demands will provide a powerful drive to support and endorse distance education. It has the added advantage of being able to demonstrate to "parents-as-constituents" how responsive elected representatives can be to the need for students to access the "cutting edge" in their higher learning endeavors.

Intentions

For student learners, the intention seems obvious, and yet it may not be. One enrolls in a distance education class to obtain college credits relating to a knowledge field or discipline. To the extent that the search for knowledge guides student behaviors in higher education today, one may reasonably assume that the motivation remains constant in the distance education environment, and may perhaps be somewhat more intense. This would seem to be especially so for those who have so far proven to be most successful. For those who seek credits for the mundane reason that it answers a specific technical skills need, or furthers employment prospects, the distance education option offers "hassle-free," "user-friendly," and "customer-oriented" options that minimize the distasteful and inconvenient aspects of college education like physically commuting to classes inconveniently scheduled vis-a-vis the workday time requirements.

Faculty may have the most difficult set of intentions to sort through. The primary concern appears to be one of assuring a manageable workload to develop and deliver a course to a manageable number of students. Opportunities for greater flexibility and new teaching styles do seem to be desired, but there are also growing concerns about job security, just compensation for the work effort required, and a certain technophobia among some who question the merit and virtue of a wholesale embrace of the new way.

Administrators, funders/legislators, and parents make up an eager and enthusiastic audience for the stylized drama of developing and implementing distance education. In most respects this represents a continuation of the

[2] This perception highlights one of the unassessed risk factors of the current distance education model. Little assessment of the true costs, in the style of legitimate benefit/cost analysis or program evaluation has been done in this country, however, European distance education specialists have found no significant savings in operating costs noting that the typical span of pedagogical attention runs to about 20 students per instructor or grader. Facilities costs are less well developed. See, Desmond Keegan, 1996, *Foundations of Distance Education*, 3rd Edition, London: Routledge.

indiscriminate embrace of technological 'advancement' that has characterized American society in the 20th century.

Advantages

For the users of this new technology the advantages are perceived to arise from: speed of access and communication; flexibility and responsiveness on a highly personalized basis; access to broader realms of information; and utilization of significant breakthroughs in interactive communication technology.

For the student, distance education is advertised as being adaptable to multiple learning styles. The argument runs that the visual learner will have a richer environment through well-prepared course offerings on the web. For the methodical, textually oriented learner, the ready availability of the course material, "24-7" in the modern idiom, means that instructor guidance and the written word are temporally universal for the duration of the class. The aural learner may find the new distance education model less appealing than the classroom, but even here web audio technology is making strides. What's missing from this ideal vision? Research done by the NEA, an organization which must admit to ulterior motives, suggests that learner motivation is a critical component of distance education success. In the absence of the personal face-to-face contact associated with some classroom experiences; facility with and access to a full complement of technology; and the structure of a routinized schedule, it appears that those who succeed in distance education are those with the most self-discipline and drive (Young, 1999, A31,32).[3] Does this portend a wholly Darwinian higher education and its re-establishment as the province of elites?

For the pedagogue, the distance education environment also requires more initiative and organization than the classroom lecture environment. No longer will the interesting, but essentially irrelevant, anecdote serve to fill the time on those days when Professor X is unprepared for her star turn. Gaffes, errors of fact, and other lacunae will be on display in the course content, unlike the occasional oral *faux pas* which can be elided and forgotten with professorial grace. And no more ad libbing, if you please professor - your content has to be on the website to provide guidance to the student before they are charged to act, not afterward. One might reasonably expect that all effective instructors are well-prepared in advance to face their charges, and yet one fears this may not always be the case in the traditional milieu of the classroom. In cyberspace it's unavoidable.

On the plus side, colleagues have observed that distance education really does offer the opportunity to reach students at a distance. As one scholar has noted, the use of distance education enabled the creation of a comparative politics curriculum crossing several different political science departments within a state college system (Manrique, 1997). Students at one campus now had access to country or area expertise available at other campuses in the system across the state. Professors were able to count on a core cadre of registrants of sufficient size to end the terror and contention at the start of each term as to whether sufficient registration had

[3] Jeffrey R. Young, "A Virtual Student Teaches Himself," *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* May 7, 1999, A31,32. The general discussion about the type of students best suited to distance education is one of the most extensive in the subject area. The leading international synthesist of distance education technologies, Desmond Keegan (op cit.), concludes that the generic qualities of the technique as practiced around the world include the requirements that students be highly self-motivated, disciplined, and not just able but really desirous of working in "splendid isolation" at consistent pace of production. Darcy Hardy's "Institutional Guidance for the Distance Learner" in *Teaching At A Distance: A Handbook for Instructors*, 1999, published jointly by the League for Innovation in the Community College and Archipelago, a division of Harcourt Brace & Company, suggests much the same thing reporting that the distance learner is typically between 25 and 50 years of age, female, married, employed full time, assertive, independent, self-disciplined, and motivated. The author would add three observations to the foregoing: 1)These are not the profiles of typical, "traditional" undergraduate college students. 2)These are characteristics of **successful** distance learners. 3)There is a very large cadre of unsuccessful distance learners about whom far less is known or reported.

been achieved for the class to "make." Whether this adventitious outcome justifies the maintenance of an esoteric curricular element in an inapposite environment is debatable, but the case serves to illustrate the sort of unintended consequence which might confound the frugality of legislators or funding bodies.

Adjustments

Within the user contexts which have been discussed, much of the requisite adjustment in world view and application has already been described or implied. There are aspects that call for reiteration or elucidation, as well as one or two which have not been discussed. One of these can be termed "construct ephemerality." One way to illustrate this is to consider the historic development of distance education itself. From the beginnings of correspondence instruction in the last half of the nineteenth century until the 1960s, the principal means of interaction was via the postal system. In the 1960s television and audio tapes began to supplement but not eliminate the reliance on print media and mail communication. These methods became a sufficiently strong modality that outright correspondence courses were anachronisms by the early 1980s, and organizations like Whittle Broadcasting and PBS began to provide high-quality video programming for classrooms. By the early 1990s email and information databases via the rudimentary Internet were changing collegiate education. Organizations like the University of Phoenix, Embry-Riddell, and Webster University were beginning to offer non-traditional and adult learners alternative curricula and settings. Now at the end of the decade the latest adaptations in distance learning are integrating interactive television, cable networks, computers, and web entrepreneurs in the next iteration (Foshee, 1999). Now examine the periods of transition - from 60 years, to 20 years, to less than 10 years - and one begins to see how even the most open and adaptable user may discover that the abilities and skills so recently developed to deal with technical modalities may be obsolete before the educational race is run.

Consider also how, as the emphasis on advanced education shifts from knowledge-based to skills-based, the concept of academic discipline may be affected. With heavy curriculum supplier competition and the emphasis being placed on "lifetime learning" by various educational authorities, politicians, and mavens of commerce, students may no longer care about acquiring the prerequisites necessary to earn a formal degree. Instead they may pick and choose a mélange of courses from well-known institutions to build transcripts demonstrating their possession of employer-sought technical prowess. Imagine not having to "waste time" on the fluff of non-essentials like "Classics of European Literature," "World History Before the Industrial Revolution," "Secular Post-Enlightenment Philosophy," or other technologically superfluous offerings which have for a century and a half enlightened (bedeviled?) the mass of undergraduates.

Finally, consider the termination of the concept of the college experience for most people who aspire to college level education. If carried to its fullest development potential, distance education offers the user/consumer the opportunity to access a high quality, homogenous product without the confounding distractions of social interaction; distance from the comfortable surroundings of one's personal parochial environment; or involvement with the challenges of a new community of faculty, and peers of different backgrounds. When extended to its greatest possibilities, the only people able to or interested in engaging the anachronisms of an actual collegiate experience will be the wealthy elites. Imagine the potential egalitarian effects of enabling all but the top socio-economic layer of American (or global?) society to obtain their post-secondary education at home, or in remote learning centers at night or at other times designed not to interfere with their daily routines of work and material consumption.

The Environmental Context

Bush defines the environmental context of technology as the nonspecific physical surroundings in which a technology or tool is developed and used. In the context of distance education one might choose to use instead the term metaphysical in the sense that distance education is designed to supersede the physical surroundings.

The scope of an educational system which is ubiquitous for all who possess access to the requisite technology, and is absolutely inaccessible for all who do not, is both positively and negatively arresting. While legislatures and funding organizations are actively enjoying the prospects of reducing or terminating the costly support of tangible, physical collegiate institutions, who will pay for the high tech systems and services? Today tuition represents about 35% of the total cost of higher education. How will the future environment of distance education be supported? And, will electronic alumni dream of winning cyberteams at the NCAA sanctioned Big 12 Doom Bowl?

Citizens, who for a quarter of their lives are children/students, a quarter of their lives actively engaged in parenting, and for three-quarters of their lives taxpayers engaged in complaining about the cost of government, will certainly embrace a promise of future savings if couched in a persuasive, non-carcinogenic, no-risk-of-harm marketing package. For the most part the public's indifference or distaste for their personal educational experiences are offset by a high level of support for the alleged need and benefit associated with "getting a good education" for their nestlings. What better way to support and at the same time make this paradoxical mindset benign, than to swallow the promise of less cost while utilizing the ultimate in technological innovation?

Meanwhile faculty are worried about appropriate compensation, increased workload, and intellectual property issues, while shortsightedly ignoring the real threat to their ongoing employment and the risk that the nation's professorate may be substantially reduced in size and privileges. University researchers and discipline-devoted scholars already bemoan the proliferation of "junk science" and false information which circulates idiomatically. While a reduction in the size of the overall "community of scholars" might qualitatively improve the precision of "in-group" discourse, the ability of that group to draw distinction to that discourse may be significantly diminished in the more anarchic, less institutional environment of distance-education-dominated higher education. A *Gresham's Law* of bad information may be in the making.

As to the student environmental context, earlier expressed ironies notwithstanding, in our current national hand wringing over the anomie and alienation of adolescents in our society, distance education is unlikely to be a positive force for the reinstitution of normative values capable of displacing those currently being debased. If anything, questioning regarding the "relevance" of higher education will intensify; students will find that there are no external rule systems to constrain their own undisciplined behaviors; and as a result, the numbers of non-completing enrollees, which have been rising steadily and dramatically over the last 20+ years, are likely to accelerate (Marchese, 1998). In an environment in which the student/consumer will be expected to pay a larger proportion of the real cost of education - though not necessarily a significantly higher cost in total dollars - one may reasonably anticipate that course offerings will have to increasingly follow marketing trends and appeal to the latest in commerce-driven demand. It would seem that in the environmental context one may perceive severe externalities and unanticipated consequences associated with this new technological conundrum.

The Cultural Context

Bush's framework specifies the cultural context as consisting of the norms, values, myths, aspirations, laws, and social interactions of which the technology is a part. A seemingly straightforward recent technological innovation helps to illustrate how "unthinking contextually" might enlighten our central topic. When the means to electrify and illuminate our homes and factories became commercially feasible at the end of the nineteenth century, America was in the throes of embracing the second wave of the industrial revolution. The elites and the masses of the country were searching for tangible manifestations of our national exceptionalism to distance ourselves from the corruption and decadence of European culture, while laying claim to what today we refer to as superpower status. Efficiency and economy advanced by men like Frederick Taylor and Frank Gilbreth were dominant cultural concepts. In such a milieu the promise of electricity was irresistible. With it we would banish darkness, ease mother's work-a-day burdens with labor saving devices, and produce a stream of consumer products that would enrich all lives. Because the infrastructure would be expensive, and because the benefits of

electricity were viewed as being universal, monopolies were permitted, but heavily regulated by government. Even the concept of monopoly was part of a positive social context at the time. One must always remember that the monopolies, cartels, trusts, and oligopolies the Reformers and Progressives attacked had to first come into existence and be outrageously successful in their excess before they could be railed against and overthrown. What was collectively uncomprehended was the impact modern conveniences and labor-savings would have on the American family when mother could and did go into the workforce, and father's carefully learned craft could be infinitely replicated by a machine. Rural electrification contributed significantly to the process that reduced the proportion of the population engaged in agriculture, from nearly half the population at the end of the last century to the less than five percent of the population directly engaged today. And the documented effects of electric power on the social interactions of the society fills libraries – without it there would be no radio, television, modern medical technology, telecommunications, or, a critical element of our central topic, computer technology. The cultural context of the time facilitated technological implementation, and it has been reshaping the cultural context ever since.

It is here in the cultural setting that one confronts the recognition that the technology may drive the users' construction of the benefits, negative externalities, and unanticipated consequences arising from usage and application. Bush observes that technology is usually embraced because it is a tool which seemingly will make things better while not changing people. "The realization that technological change stimulates social change is not one that most people welcome" (Bush, 1983, 161).

In the case of interactive, computer facilitated distance education the technology is only now beginning to be perceived as confounded and encrusted by the innumerable strata of the cultural context. Consider that distance education is driven by a well-developed set of societal demands among the target audience: immediate gratification of desires; simplicity of delivery and concept; an abhorrence of nuance; an extreme desire for individualization; and rising, near universal, expectations among undergraduates that enrollment, and minimal effort, will result in a passing grade - all perceived as making things "better" for the existing student – not requiring the person to change, but rather serving existing needs better.

While the framers of the Constitution, and Congresses dating back to the Articles of Confederation, revered literacy and education, there are no inalienable rights to them. There is, however, a guarantee of free speech which has been roundly and vigorously defended from numerous assaults. There are no immutable guarantees of "high band width" phone line access, technology possession, mental acuity, or computer literacy. In fact there is no strong guarantee to a college education for any and all who want one. If, as the recent meta-analysis for the NEA and the AFT indicates, the rewards of distance education fall to the self-motivated and technically astute, what are the implications for the youthfully immature, the distracted, the unwed mother, the social learner, and all those genetically or behaviorally disinclined to embrace the toil of the scholar's pursuit (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 1999)? What becomes of the concept of a "community of scholars?"

What to Conclude after "Unthinking" the Contexts

For the college or university professional, the power of the technology coupled with the people's seemingly inexhaustible desire for novelty, suggests that a true conservative or reactionary response is self-defeating. As the villains of so many bad science fiction stories have said so often, "Surrender! Resistance is useless!" But, to borrow perhaps one more overworked analogy, Oriental martial arts teaches how to use the force of one's attacker to one's advantage. In the case of distance education, by rapidly and enthusiastically embracing the technologies and approaches of the new way, paying attention to the skills sets necessary to being an effective electronic educator, incorporating them into the core curricular elements of our fields, recognizing that the embrace may be critical to the preservation of the core cultural elements of the profession, its intellectualism, and epistemology, we may be able to gain the high ground in the discourse over the utility, validity, and future of this technology in higher education. We, particularly in the liberal arts, may be able to survive and prosper in

the new millennium. Each acquiescence to the technical skills and assistance of the practitioners of the electronic technologies, however, opens the door to the subjugation of the intellectual disciplines. Consider, for example, what the fate of the universal Church and the monk's craft of manuscript illumination might have been had the technology of the printing press and the vulgarization of the Scriptures been embraced by the Church rather than resisted.

It is in the nature of vested interests to protect their positions of privilege and resist efforts that aim at either forcing change from the outside, or approaches which suggest alternate pathways to similar outcomes. The American medical establishment's long running resistance to recognizing as legitimate alternative healing practices such as chiropractic or homeopathy nicely illustrates the latter. With regard to the former, one need look no further than Thomas Kuhn's much admired *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (2nd Edition, 1970).

The call to action here is that the disciplines of higher education and research within the academy move swiftly and self-consciously to recognize the shortcomings of self-defeating strategies which normally characterize the threat responses of establishment entities, and to instead act counter-intuitively. If we possess a self-conscious, generalized, and supportive spirit towards the canon of the academy, its freedoms, and ethos, then we must move swiftly to co-opt the dynamism inherent in this most recent challenge. By demonstrating technological competence while defending the ideals and intellectual integrity of our various disciplines, we may yet be able to fend off the efficiency experts, fiscal conservatives, and trend-following sycophancies of institutional administrators, but in doing so we must be able to demonstrate and validate that "competency for grievance;" not the ability to complain, which everyone in our society exercises, but a legitimate critical assessment that can serve to preserve the integrity of the intellectual tradition, speaking truth to power about the legitimate opportunities and limitations associated with this new technology.

While we collectively are pressing the normative issues associated with the threats to sociability, the sense of community, the universality of access to all who are capable, the need for personal interaction in constructing the thoughtful, well-educated citizen, and other positive aspects of a college life in the real world, we have little real documentation of the effects of a distance college education in cyberspace.[4] Approaching these questions with open minds and intellectual curiosity may result in findings which bring us chagrin, but failing to approach them in that spirit will certainly provoke the unruly villagers to set fire to our ivory towers.

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NASPAA Faculty and Their Involvement in Distance Learning

Marvin Hoffman, Dragan Stefanovic, Ruth Ann Strickland, and Dan Gurley

As we begin Year 2000, distance education initiatives are rapidly proliferating on many college campuses in the United States and elsewhere. A recent survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Education found that distance education programs increased by 72 percent between 1995 and 1998.[1] Some universities offer degrees using distance learning, a greater number offer distance learning courses within the context of certificate programs, even more are offering courses based on distance learning technology, and many more are studying how to respond to this rapidly proliferating phenomenon. Few institutions of higher education are immune from the initiatives, either because the universities themselves are pursuing distance education or because they fear that the efforts of other universities and private sector education providers might have an adverse impact upon their traditional student base.

Numerous motivations exist for entering the distance education field. Some schools are responding to legislative or executive mandates to serve geographically dispersed students[2]. Other initiatives have been developed to serve larger numbers of students without the necessity of constructing expensive on- or off-campus facilities. Some responses are based upon pressure from in-service professionals for more frequent or more convenient access to continuing education courses and professional education. Other initiatives are the result of entrepreneurial efforts to undertake programs that can generate new cash flows. Any of these factors, however, have effects on nearby colleges and universities and likely cause ripples of a heightened interest concerning non-traditional course delivery systems. Although critics have pointed out that certain negative outcomes may be expected from distance education initiatives[3], more universities than ever before are implementing distance education strategies and a number of successes have been reported.[4]

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[1] Dan Carnevale, "Survey Finds 72% Rise in Number of Distance-Education Programs," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 46 (January 7, 2000), p. A57.

[2] See for example, "Virginia College Goes the Distance for Students," Washington Post (July 19, 1999) in which the Master of Business Administration degree program at Old Dominion University is offered to U.S. Navy personnel on station in the Arabian Sea.

[3] See for example, Goldie Blumenstyk and Kelly McCollum, "2 Reports Question Utility and Accessibility in Distance Education," The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 16, 1999, and T. Davison, "Distance Learning and Information Technology: Problems and Solutions in Balancing Caring, Access and Success for Students," Distance Education , 10 (1996), pp. 145-158 and Jeffrey Young, "Technology May Not be All That Great, Say Professors at 'Second Look' Meeting," The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 27, 1998, found at http://chronicle.com/.

[4] See for example, Dennice A. Trinkle, "Distance Education: A Means to an End, No More, No Less," The Chronicle of Higher Education, August 6, 1999. A study that debunks the allegation that female students do not fare well in distance learning situations is found in James V. Koch, "How Women Actually Perform in Distance Education," The Chronicle of Higher Education, September 11, 1998.

In public administration, an expansion of distance education initiatives is reported in the literature and at professional conferences.[5] Rahm and Reed reported in 1996 that 38 percent of the respondents to a survey were involved in distance learning. This finding was significant because a year earlier they reported that "only 18 of the 147 responding [programs] offer[ed] any MPA courses off site through the means of technology."[6] With the lowered cost of ever more powerful computers and a widened base over which to spread costs, one can expect that technology will make substantial inroads into the teaching techniques of many professors. Stefanovic and Strickland (1997) identified seven distance learning models that appear to be emerging within the profession. Their paper describes the implementation of distance learning approaches in several graduate public administration programs. The models reflect the reliance placed on technology in content delivery and faculty/student interaction:

Model 1 Email/Web
Model 2 Email/Web/Groups
Model 3 Email/Web/Groups + Scheduled Meetings
Model 4 Email/Web/Groups + Video Conferences/Desktop Conferences
Model 5 Email/Web/Groups + Video Conferences/Desktop Conferences + Scheduled Meetings
Model 6 Email/Web/Groups + Video Classes + Video Conferences/Desktop Conferences
Model 7 Email/Web/Groups + Video Classes + Video Conferences/Desktop Conferences + Scheduled Meetings[7]

Considerable impressionistic evidence exists that distance education has become increasingly pervasive in the past five years, both in public administration and in other disciplines as well.[8] For example, nearly all of the states have undertaken distance learning initiatives. Web searches can quickly identify several hundred sites with information on distance education courses in engineering, education and management. News stories about state-level distance education initiatives are commonplace.[9] Most state university systems are engaged in an expensive and on-going race to remain technologically current while enhancing their traditional teaching mission in new ways and over wider areas.[10] In our own department of political science and criminal justice at Appalachian State University, for example,

[5] For example, during the last five years the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) has held sessions relating to distance education at its Annual Conferences. In 1994 NASPAA sponsored a survey directed by Dianne Rahm and B.J. Reed which gathered the first reliable data on distance education practices in NASPAA-member schools. Rahm and Reed's findings are found at http://www.naspaa.org/dist2.htm on the web.

[6] Reed and Rahm, Distance Education Findings at 1995 and 1996 Annual NASPAA meetings and available on the NASPAA homepage, http://www.naspaa.org/dist1.htm and http://www.naspaa.org/dist2.htm.

[7] Dragan Stefanovic and Ruth Ann Strickland, "Distance Learning Alternatives," a paper presented to the 1997 Annual meeting of the Southeastern Conference for Public Administration, Knoxville, Tennessee.

[8] See Dianne Rahm and B.J. Reed, "Tangled Webs In Public Administration: Organizational Issues In Distance Learning" for an insight into the proliferation of Distance Education in public administration. Also, "Distance Education at A Glance" which can be found at http://www.uidaho.edu/evo/distglan.html. For information on where distance education may be headed see, Steven Cohen, William Eimicke Mark Kamlet and Robert Pearson, "The Information Resource Management Program: A Case Study in Distance Education" and William Earle Klay, "Positioning a Public Administration Program for the 21st Century" located at http://uwf.edu/whitcntr/klay.htm

[9] See for example the following stories in The Chronicle of Higher Education, Goldie Blumenstyk, "Leading Community Colleges Go Nationwide with New Distance-Learning Network," July 10, 1998, Jeffrey Selingo, "Small, Private Colleges Brace for Competition from Distance Learning," May 1, 1998, Goldie Blumenstyk, "Some Elite Private Universities Get Serious about Distance Learning."

[10] See the web site operated by the University of Wisconsin Extension Division which contains an on-line Distance Education Clearing House and is located at http://www.uwex.edu/disted/. This site contains links to a number of other sources of information about distance learning. The Distance Education Clearing House is involved as a sponsor of the 15th Annual Conference on Distance Education which says something about the pervasiveness and

colleagues have developed and are now delivering courses via interactive television to community college criminal justice educators; the university recently finished constructing its fourth distance education classroom in order to facilitate delivery of courses off-campus by way of technology. North Carolina is typical of many states in its commitment of substantial funding for technology and distance education initiatives.[11]

Approaches to Distance Education in Public Administration

This article updates the available information regarding the pervasiveness of distance education initiatives in public administration. In addition to determining what the state of distance learning is in American universities, we also attempt to clear up some of the growing confusion over what the term "distance education" means since the term means different things to different people. For example, there are a variety of delivery techniques that allow the instructor and the students to be geographically separated (Internet, pre-packed tapes and CD's, interactive television, as well as e-mail) that have been lumped together under the rubric of "distance education". Some schools are developing "high tech" classrooms while others are opting to facilitate instruction to remote students through e-mail and other means. Recently the University of Nebraska at Omaha became the first university to be granted accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration for a distance education Master of Public Administration degree program that serves a statewide base of students via technology. All of these efforts, though quite different, have, at one time or another, been referred to as distance education.

Distance education initiatives in public administration range along a continuum from individual courses to entire degree programs that are delivered over wide areas using technology. A varying number of schools can be found at each point along the continuum. Even so, little is currently known about how virtual classrooms are being used. Among the relevant questions are:

a. How prevalent have virtual classrooms become? A virtual classroom is a classroom in which a learning community is established by means of technology and without the traditional face-to-face interaction between teacher and student.
b. What types of classes seem to be most amenable to distance education initiatives?
c. What kinds of technologies are being used to deliver MPA program offerings?
d. What financial support is typically given to programs involved in distance learning initiatives?
e. How much has technology altered the content of courses when they are offered from a distance?
f. What changes have occurred in the technological skills expected of instructors?
g. What impact does the size of the MPA program have on the likelihood that it will engage in distance education efforts?
h. What are the current motivations that are cited by programs when entering into distance education?

Because of our curiosity about the state of the art, we undertook a telephone survey that was started in November and December 1999. We attempted to contact all principal representatives at NASPAA-affiliated programs and to date, our efforts have resulted in information from a total of 100 programs, comprising about 41% of the MPA programs listed by NASPAA in its Roster of NASPAA Member Institutions. The responses are from all regions of the

longevity of distance education. Distance Education, focuses on distance education initiatives worldwide and is maintained on-line at http://www.cisnet.com/~cattales/Deducation.html. The American Journal of Distance Education, published at the Pennsylvania State University is considered to be among the leading scholarly publications in the area of distance learning. See their web page at http://www.ed.psu.edu/acsde/Jour.html.

[11] The University of North Carolina System adopted an Information Technology Strategy in October 1999 which will guide a projected expenditure of $93 million dollars. A large portion of the cost involves network infrastructure, computers, software, support staff, and training costs involved in distance learning initiatives across the sixteen campuses of the University of North Carolina system.

country.[12] Efforts to expand the database of the study will continue but certain preliminary findings emerged even at this stage of our research. Table 1 portrays the geographical distribution of the respondents to our survey. As can be seen, MPA programs from all regions were contacted.

Table 1
Distribution of Responding Programs

REGION	NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	PERCENTAGE
Northeast	14	14
Southeast	49	49
Midwest	13	13
Southwest	19	19
Northwest	4	4
Territorial	1	1
Total	100	100.0

Expanding Use of Virtual Classrooms in Public Administration Programs

Electronic classrooms are becoming substantially more prevalent in graduate public administration programs in the United States than was the case a few years ago. Twenty-six percent of the schools contacted indicated that they were currently using electronic or "virtual classrooms"[13] and we found that some of the schools have considerable experience with this medium. Table 2 lists the years in which the MPA programs began using distance learning technologies.

Table 2
Distance Learning Implementation in MPA Programs

Year Initiated	Number of Programs	Percentage
1992	2	8.0
1995	3	12.0
1996	2	8.0
1997	11	44.0
1998	5	20.0
2000	2	8.0
Total	25	100.0

Among those programs indicating that virtual classrooms were not currently being used, fourteen (or eighteen percent) indicated their intention to use them in the near future as shown in Table 3.

[12] A copy of the questionnaire is attached to this paper as Attachment A.

[13] "Virtual classroom" was defined in the preamble of the survey as referring to venues in which "classes are given off-campus by means of technology and some or all of the students are in a different location than the instructor."

Table 3
Proposed Implementation Schedules for Use of Virtual Classrooms

Within	Number of Programs
6 Months	8
1 Year	1
2 Years	2
2.5 Years	2

Three of the MPA programs contacted indicated that virtual classrooms were used for an entire degree program.[14] Nine of the twenty-five programs using virtual classrooms indicated that the virtual classrooms formed a major part of their degree delivery system. Data on the usage of virtual classrooms are set out in Table 4.

Table 4
MPA Courses Delivered to Virtual Classrooms

One Course	9 programs
Two Courses	7
Three Courses	3
Five Courses	1
Six Courses	1
Seven Courses	1
Eight Courses	2
Thirty-five Courses	1

We asked about the numbers of sites to which schools currently delivered MPA courses because distance education technologies allow course offerings at locations away from traditional campuses. We were curious to learn more about how heavily MPA programs are investing in developing remote instructional sites. Table 5 summarizes the responses given during the survey.

One of the key advantages of distance learning technologies is the potential to deliver a course to multiple sites in order to give students the opportunity to see and hear a professor who, because of geographic constraints, cannot be present with all of his or her students in a traditional classroom.

A key aspect of distance learning technologies is the ability to simultaneously deliver courses to several locations. Once the technology is installed, there is a diminishing marginal cost for a program to offer the instructor's talents to students in several locations. We asked respondents to tell us how many sites their courses are distributed to simultaneously and what their opinions were regarding an upper limit on the numbers of sites that can be feasibly served at the same time. Note that this question differs from the previous one in that while the earlier question asked how many remote sites they used, this question asks how many sites they use simultaneously. We were interested in whether the new technology is being used to substantially expand the student audience or whether expanding instructional networks pose too many technical problems that in effect limit the ability to deliver to multiple

[14] Note, however, that the University of Nebraska at Omaha has established an entire distance-learning based MPA program that has been accredited by NASPAA.

audiences. The responses obtained are set out in Table 6. The data on the potential of serving large audiences in many sites (12-30) may offer insight into how distance learning may evolve in the future.

Table 5
MPA Programs Reporting Remote Sites Served by Virtual Classrooms

One Remote Site	9 programs
Two Remote Sites	5
Three Remote Sites	4
Four Remote Sites	4
Five Remote Sites	1
Six Remote Sites	1
Nine Remote Sites	1

Table 6
A Comparison of Data from MPA Directors Regarding Actual and Maximum Numbers of Simultaneously Served Remote Sites

Number of Sites Simultaneously Served	Programs Serving This Number Presently	Programs Reporting This Number Could Feasiblely Be Served
1	10	2
2	4	7
3	4	6
4	2	0
5	0	2
6	1	0
9	1	0
12	0	1
15	0	1
20	0	1
30	0	1

Data were also obtained about the location of the instructor. Of the twenty-five programs using virtual classrooms, eleven have instructors who alternate the origination of the program among their sites as a means of facilitating direct student interaction with the faculty. A majority (14 out of 25) of those using remote virtual classrooms have the instructor remain at one site throughout the course. Seating capacity in the virtual classrooms does not presently appear to be very different from most graduate classrooms. Table 7 describes the seating in virtual classrooms now in use and compares it to respondent's opinions about how large a virtual classroom can be for effective teaching.

Clearly the majority of respondents favors class sizes of thirty and less. Only two respondents indicated that a class higher than thirty was acceptable for effective teaching. It is noteworthy that MPA program directors apparently feel that the number of students in a classroom poses a greater constraint on future growth on distance learning than does the technical problem of serving many sites simultaneously.

Table 7
Data from MPA Directors Regarding Actual and Perceived Maximum Seating Capacity in Virtual Classrooms

Seating Number	Programs Reporting Current Seating Capacity	Programs Reporting Seating Capacity as Feasible Maximum
10	1	1
12	1	2
15	1	1
20	4	1
22	2	1
23	0	1
25	4	5
30	8	9
35	1	0
40	0	1
45	1	1
47	1	0
60	1	0

Most schools are developing their own remote virtual classroom sites rather than developing cooperative agreements on sharing distance learning venues. This situation may be a function of the generally enthusiastic administrative responses toward distance education. Whether this "go it alone" approach will remain viable once the technology becomes more institutionalized, and subject to normal budgetary pressures, remains to be seen. Survey responses about who owns the remote sites are shown in Table 8.

Table 8
Ownership of Remote Virtual Classrooms

Owned by University	18 Programs
Owned by a Community College	3
Owned by Another University	8
Owned by High Schools	1
Owned by a State Agency	1
Owned by Local Government	1
Owned by Some Other Group	1

Data were solicited from the programs regarding the locations of the remote virtual classrooms and are contained in Table 9. Our initial expectation was that distance learning technology was being used to bridge substantial distances, but this was not always borne out. A surprising response came from one program that reported using distance technology to deliver a course across town in which the MPA program was based.

Table 9
Areas in Which Virtual Classrooms Have Been Placed

Under-served Rural Areas	4 Programs
Metropolitan Areas	10
Targeted State Regions	7
Statewide	1
Multi-state Region	1
National Audience	2
International Audience	2

Programs reported a variety of incentives, resources and support mechanisms being offered to them by their universities once they began using virtual classrooms. Respondents indicate that distance learning provides them with both financial and technical resources that do not come from their program budgets.

Table 10
Support Received for Distance Learning Initiatives

Tuition Returns	6 Programs
Direct Non-Program Funding	10
Support Personnel	12
Equipment Support	8

Respondents were asked what factors were most important at their institutions regarding the decision to offer distance learning in virtual classrooms. It appears that in most instances the decision was a top-down proposition, possibly to allow the program to receive additional resources or visibility. Table 11 summarizes the data.

Table 11
Most Important Factor Influencing Starting the Distance Learning Initiative

Interest from Senior Administrators	21 Programs
Interest from Practitioners	5
Interest from Current or Potential Students	6
Interest by Faculty	7
Market Analysis of Under-served Areas	2
Potential from Revenue Support	2

Finally, information was gathered regarding the opinions held by the program directors regarding the content of the courses in their virtual classrooms as well as opinions about student interaction with faculty members using virtual classrooms. The data are contained in Table 12.

Table 12
Course Content and Student Interaction

Content is Similar to Existing Courses	5 Programs
Content is Identical to Existing Courses	19
Content is Different than Existing Courses	1
Students Receive an Equal Amount of Interaction with Faculty	13
Students Interact Less with Faculty than in Traditional Courses	13

Pedagogical Issues in Initiating Distance Learning

One challenge faced by distance learning programs is whether they are able to adapt to the individual needs of students while creating enough contact with the student to adequately encourage students to develop independence of thought and teamwork skills.[15] As Table 12 indicates, levels of student interaction with faculty vary considerably across distance education programs. A concern often raised among program directors is a fear that face-to-face interaction between faculty and students is diminished. To some, distance education may lead to diminished instructional quality and these persons are alarmed whenever students are less interactive with the faculty. Others apparently see distance learning resulting in increased student interaction with each other, increased teamwork and greater independence of student thought.

Lack of face-to-face interaction leads to heightened concerns about cheating. The potential for cheating in on-line courses is actually very similar to that of traditional courses. The expansion of on-line courses makes it more difficult to be certain that the student who receives credit for work is actually the one who completed it. As the president of the Center for Academic Integrity at Duke University Jeanne Wilson said: "If you don't ever meet the student, it's harder to evaluate the student's work."[16]

Instructors in distance education courses may need a different set of skills than is needed in traditional classrooms. Successful distance education may impose a steep learning curve on technologically challenged instructors. Faculty participating in distance education must not only develop a video presence (in virtual classrooms) but also develop an understanding of the equipment. Knowing the limits of the equipment, being able to address student concerns about it, learning to communicate through new media and also learning to cope with momentary losses in video and audio

[15] Randy D. Garrison, 1993, "Quality and Access in Distance Learning." In *Theoretical Principles of Distance Education*, Desmond Keegan, ed., New York: Routledge; Jeffrey Young, "Rethinking the Role of the Professor in an Age of High-Tech Tools," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (April 27, 1998), http://chronicle.com.

[16] Dan Carnevale, "How to Proctor From a Distance," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 46 (November 12, 1999), pp. A47-A48.

signals are common problems faced by faculty engaged in distance learning initiatives.[17] An instructor's teaching style may have to adapt to technological glitches by pausing longer for student responses due to delayed transmissions. Instructors must engage in more advanced planning to construct transparencies, to make PowerPoint presentations and to create other visual aids essential to effective distance education.[18] Instructors may need workshops on how to construct a Web site and develop teaching materials for the Web.[19]

New challenges face the instructor in managing electronic communications. These include learning how to handle class-wide e-mail processing, potential limitations on the ability of some software to process mailed documents and files as attachments, dealing with students sending anonymous documents and using distance learning software that may involve unique formats or procedures in preparing and processing electronic exam questions.

Extending the classroom walls electronically by means of electronic mail not only imposes costs on instructor time but there may be other costs as well, including a loss in context due to the instructor's inability to detect the body language and non-verbal cues of students.[20] Several companies have developed software system to facilitate distance education but these systems are seldom standardized across universities. The particular system in use at a given university may make it easier or harder to set up and manage threaded discussions (in which one person posts a comment and all other comments by others on that subject appear together and chronologically organized). Does the system chosen make it easy for remote students to participate and share their ideas with the group, or the software may be so unlike anything the student is familiar with that it might be harder for some students to participate in a distance classroom? Moreover, the instructor has to be sensitive to concerns arising from students at remote sites regarding under-performers in their teams but detecting under-performance may not be as easy for the instructor in a distance learning venue[21]

Besides requiring more time, energy and imagination from faculty, distance learning also places greater demands on students. Students who participate in distance education must be more focused and have better organizational and time management skills than their counterparts in traditional classrooms. Students may require extra attention in order to orient themselves to new styles of learning, especially to the active learning approach rather than passive learning and to collaborative learning rather than individualistic learning. The literature on how students react to distance learning approaches shows mixed results concerning student preferences: some distance learning students prefer traditional instruction while others like the benefits and convenience of distance learning.[22]

Other challenges to distance learning initiatives are class size and funding. Although the available technologies allow greater outreach to more students than traditional instruction, many of the modes of distance learning are not well suited for very large class sizes. For example, virtual classrooms are less effective with large numbers of students.[23]

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[17] Terry D. Decker, "Debating Distance Learning," *Communications of the Association for Computing Machinery* 43 (February 2000), p.11.

[18] Nancy Kober, "Not When Distance Learning Reaches Into Schools," *The School Administrator* 47 (November 1990), pp. 16-18; 20; 22-24; L. Sherry, "Issues in Distance Learning," *International Journal of Distance Education*, 1 (1996), pp. 337-365; Maryann Lawlor, "Online Instruction Strategies Require Close Examination," *Signal* 54 (January 2000), pp. 29-32.

[19] Corinne M. Karuppan and Muthu Karuppan, "Empirically Based Guidelines For Developing Teaching Materials on the Web," *Business Communication Quarterly* 62 (September 1999), pp. 37-45.

[20] Tom Creed, "Extending the Classroom Walls Electronically." (23 February 2000) <http://www.users.csbsju.edu/~tcreed/techno3.html>

[21] Natalie Berger, "Pioneering Experiences in Distance Learning: Lessons Learned," *Journal of Management Education* 23 (December, 1999), pp. 684-690.

[22] Susan Imel, "Myths and Realities: Distance Learning," Center on Education and Training for Employment, College of Education (Ohio State University), 1998.

[23] Alfred Bork, "Distance Learning and Interaction: Toward A Virtual Learning Institution," *Journal of Science*

Distance learning ventures require additional funding for programs and this is a major concern for administrators. Funding is needed for curriculum development, technological enhancements, and development of evaluation tools for technologically based courses. New funding formulas are needed for rewarding and valuing faculty time and effort.[24]

Cooperation across state lines and among universities and colleges may lead to more effective strategies in coping with these challenges and contribute to better distance education programs. Cooperative efforts fostered by the Center for Excellence in Distance Learning involving University Alliance members--the University of Wisconsin Extension, Pennsylvania State University and Indiana University-- represent initial steps in this direction. These institutions forged a partnership to collaboratively produce materials aimed at solving implementation and program design problems for distance learning initiatives. Public-private partnerships are emerging and should also receive greater consideration. AT&T provides support for distance learning by designing comprehensive packages for customers, including network services, products and support.[25]

Conclusions

In sum, we received survey responses from 100 (or 41 percent) of the 244 NASPAA member institutions. Of those, 26 percent report using distance learning. It seems likely that the popularity of distance learning will increase because there is a significant and expanding amount of interest and participation in distance learning among MPA programs. In fact, 68.1 percent of those who said that they were not presently using distance learning plan to do so in the future.

At first glance, our findings seem to differ significantly from those found by Rahm and Reed. These differences, however, are mainly due to the variation in the definition of distance learning. If the variation is taken into account, our findings tend to support theirs.

Although only three of the institutions reported that they offer a degree that is available to students enrolled only through distance learning, over one third indicated that they consider distance learning as a major part of their programs. Most of the programs using distance learning seem to be in the initial stages, since the majority currently offers only one to three courses at a time -- only six offer more than three. Over half indicated that they used more than one remote site. Most of the programs (56.3%) do not alternate the location of the instructor. The number of seats at each site ranges from 10 to 60 with a mode of 30.

These results raise pedagogical questions as to the appropriate size of the distance learning classroom, and how much direct contact between instructor and students is necessary to provide an effective learning environment. When asked about the upper limit of how large distance learning classes could feasible be, responses ranged from 10 to 45, with the majority choosing either 25 or 30. This number, in our opinion, may be too high for teaching at the graduate level. This is an area that requires additional research.

The institutions that have chosen to implement distance learning programs have clearly put tremendous effort and resources in this development. Considering the investment in facilities, technology and faculty development, and the numbers of schools involved, this is no small effort. Moreover, more schools are now in the development stage of their efforts. All these initiatives show that many of the public administration programs in the United States are substantially committed to distance learning, either because they have sought a role of being in the forefront or

Education and Technology 4 (1995), pp. 227-244.

[24] Young, 1997.; Dan Carnevale, "Assessing the Quality of Online Courses Remains a Challenge, Educators Agree," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 46 (February 18, 2000), p. A59.

[25] AT&T News Release, "AT&T Joins Leading Universities in Distance Learning Alliance, *AT&T Home Page.* 12 October 1994. <http://www.att.com/press/1094/941012.gba.html> (6 August 1997).

because they see distance learning as a competitive necessity. Significant pedagogical issues, including class size and faculty-student interaction may, at times, conflict with the economics involved in distance learning.

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Attachment A
Distance Learning Survey

Name of School _____ Name of Contact _____ Title _____

Distance Teaching and Technology Survey

Appalachian State University is conducting this survey to determine how involved NASPAA member programs are in using virtual classrooms. By "virtual classroom" we are referring to classes that are given off-campus by the means of technology and some or all of the students are in a different location than the instructor.

Does your program employ electronic or virtual classrooms? Yes _____ No _____

If No,

Does your program plan to offer any Distance Learning using virtual classrooms courses in the future?
Yes _____ **When?** _____
No _____

If No, Please Skip to End Now

If Yes, please answer the following questions:

When did you start your distance learning program using electronic classrooms?____ year

What is your program's level of involvement with virtual instruction?

a. Is it a full *program leading to a degree*	Yes	No
b. Is it a *major part* of your degree program	Yes	No
c. Or do you *occasionally* offer courses to virtual classrooms?	Yes	No

How many courses using virtual classrooms does your program offer each academic year?

At how many remote sites does your program have virtual classrooms? _____

At how many of these sites do you offer a course at one time? _____

What is the maximum number of sites that you feel you can service at one time? _____

Do your instructors alternate locations or do they teach from one central location?

Alternate _____ Do not Alternate _____

If they alternate what is the schedule (for example, every other class session)?_____

What is the number of seats that you offer in your distance learning courses? _____

What is the number of seats in a virtual classroom that you feel is the maximum for effective teaching? _____

Do your remote sites?

a. Belong to your institution? Yes __ No ___ Some _____

b. Belong to other institutions? Yes ___ No __ Some _____

Are these other institutions:

Community Colleges? _____
Universities? _____
High Schools? _____
State Agency? _____
Local Government? _____
Other (Please List)? _____

Which of the following technologies are you using to deliver courses to virtual classrooms?

Satellite up and down links _____
Fiber optics _____
Internet switching _____
Don't Know _____

In which of the following geographical areas do you use virtual classrooms?

a. Under-served rural locations _____
b. metropolitan areas. national audience _____
c. targeted regions within state _____
d. statewide _____
e. deliver to a multi-state region _____
f. national audience _____
g. international _____

What sort of institutional support do you receive?

tuition returns to department or program _____
direct funding to support distance learning _____
personnel support _____
equipment support _____

What do you find most useful about using distance learning?

Is the distance learning course content:

similar to existing courses? _____
same as existing courses? _____
different than the existing courses? _____

Which of the following factors were the most important at your institution in the decision to offer distance learning courses to virtual classrooms?

interest by upper level administrator
interest from practitioners
interest from current or potential students in distance locations
interest by faculty
potential from revenue support
market analysis indicating under-served populations

Do you feel that students in the virtual classroom at the distance learning site receive an equal amount of instructor attention as traditional students getting instruction in person?

Yes _____ No _____

Has the technology you are currently using to deliver courses to virtual classrooms proven to be dependable?

Yes
If no, please comment

Community Building in a Distance Delivered MPA Program at the University of Alaska Southeast

Jonathan Anderson

Introduction

This paper presents a brief case study of the distance delivered Master of Public Administration program at the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau, Alaska. The US Department of Education notes that from 1995 to 1998 distance education programs in the US have increased by 72% (complete study available at http://nces.ed.gov/). Many would say one of the greatest challenges to higher education in today's world is the challenge of distance education, particularly distance education mediated by technology. For years, Universities have undertaken distance education through correspondence courses. Despite the existence of such distance education courses, the fact that they were few in number, that they normally involved only preparatory or elective courses, that they rarely involved whole programs, and that they were normally administered by Departments of Continuing Education made them somehow less controversial.

Concern

However, new technologies have brought distance education into much closer contact with traditional higher education programs. More courses and entire programs are offered through the new technologies. Concern has been expressed that these new programs will draw off students who would have attended traditional on-site programs– that students will choose "theirs over ours." There has also been legitimate concern that the quality of distance delivered courses and programs is not of appropriate quality, that standards of higher education are being sacrificed. Again, this is somewhat puzzling, because there have always been schools and programs where degrees were easier to obtain. Students could always choose to go to less demanding schools, with lower reputations if they so desired. Accreditation requirements preserved minimal standards, and the academy accepted the status quo.

What has changed? There are schools and programs that compete with traditional University programs, just as there have always been. There are distance delivered courses, just as there have always been. The main difference is that now distance education classes are not limited to Continuing Education departments but are being offered by mainstream departments of mainstream Universities. They are right next door to us, literally. Or worse, we are being pressured to teach distance education courses, ourselves. They are "in our faces." They cannot be ignored. In this paper I will address some of the legitimate concerns about distance education, passing over the fact that such issues have always been present, and share what the University of Alaska Southeast has done to address these concerns.

Criticism

Distance Education has been criticized for a number of reasons, most of them dealing with the nature of separating the student from the instructor.

1. The instructor cannot see the student. This is a concern for both pedagogical and control reasons. If we cannot see the student, we cannot tell if they are paying attention, asleep, or even in the classroom. For internet based courses, there is no classroom to be in. Control of students is drastically diminished. From a pedagogical point of view, we often rely upon visual cues from students to know if they understand what is being said. We rely on their looks of puzzlement, boredom, or understanding to direct the organic process of our classroom interactions. These cues are totally unavailable in internet based courses, and limited in televised or audio-conference courses. Some would counter that in traditional, large, lecture classes there is also limited student-instructor interaction. While this may be true, it only means both modes of instruction are subject to the same critique.

2. Students cannot see or interact with each other. This is mostly true for asynchronous internet based classes and somewhat true for synchronous televised or audio classes. The criticism is based on the theory that student-student interaction is a necessary part of the learning process.

3. Instructors are less available for students. Students are unable to meet personally with their instructors and this limits the help they can provide. This is another critique that may be as true for traditional students as for distance students. Availability of instructors varies widely.

4. University services may be limited. This is an issue of special concern for accreditation. Do students who are not on campus have sufficient access to the required school services, particularly library services?

5. Technology problems often arise. In many studies (e.g. Hara and Kling 1999) this is the issue of greatest concern for students. Technology is great when it works, but there are often problems. These problems interrupt the rhythm of the class and sometimes shut down student access entirely. Computers can crash, satellites can have sun spot interruptions, different sites can have different problems at the same time. Technology problems can frustrate students, and such frustration limits learning.

Research with college students shows that high levels of anxiety decrease the storage and processing capacity of working memory and impede making inferences (Darke, 1988a; Darke, 1988b). In addition, high frustration can demotivate students (Jonassen & Grabowski, 1993). Distance education requires that students be self-regulated (Abrahamson, 1998). In this kind of learning environment where students are away from traditional classrooms, frustration can be a major obstacle for distance learning.

These five criticisms can be distilled to three categories.

1. **Limits to learning community**
2. **Limits to University services**
3. **Technology flaws.**

As mentioned above, distance education includes many delivery modes. The aforementioned criticisms are more applicable to some methods than others. In the rest of this paper I will present the case of the MPA program at the University of Alaska Southeast in Juneau. I will outline our general situation, provide some background on the program and how it is delivered, and present how we have specifically addressed the problems discussed above.

Alaska

While the word *unique* is often hyperbole, Alaska does face a quite different environmental context than the rest of the U.S. With an area of over half a million square miles it is equivalent to 1/5 of the lower 48 states, more than twice as large as Texas. However, its population, at about 620,000, is 48th, just ahead of Vermont and Wyoming. The entire state population is less than Jacksonville, Florida, and half are located in Anchorage. After Anchorage, Fairbanks has 80,000 persons, Juneau 30,000 and the rest of the "population centers" have less than 10,000 inhabitants. In other words, outside of Anchorage, Alaska's population is dispersed over a very large area. To further complicate matters, most of the population centers are not linked by roads. For example, the capital city of Juneau is accessible only by air or sea.

The bottom line is that in Alaska people do not just drive off to the nearest University for classes. Distance education in Alaska is much more a necessity than a convenience. If education, particularly graduate education, is not available through distance delivery, it will be unavailable at all to half of Alaskans. Combine the dispersed population with the fact that 25% of employment in Alaska is with some level of government, and the distance delivery of an MPA program becomes a critical mission for the state University (See http://www.labor.state.ak.us/trends/jan00.pdf for full information on government employment).

The University system is tripartite, with essentially autonomous campuses located in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau. The state has two Master of Public Administration programs, one in Anchorage and one in Juneau. With half the state's population and government employees within the city limits, Anchorage has little institutional incentive for distance delivery to small groups across the state. That leaves the University of Alaska Southeast as the logical center for distance delivery of the MPA in Alaska.

Program Background

The UAS MPA program began in 1972 and graduated its first two students in 1976. It began as, and has continued to be, a part time program directed toward serving in-service, mid-career, government employees. In the Fall of 1980 UAS began distance delivery of the MPA through adjunct and traveling instructors, and in 1982 it began delivering classes through satellite television to sites across the State and in Whitehorse, Yukon Territory in Canada.

Delivery Methodology

The present program delivers classes in the evening hours to 10 different sites across the region through one way video, two way audio, televised classes. While this technology is not new, it is, necessarily, limited by the capabilities of its least technologically sophisticated constituents. So while UAS has utilized two-way, interactive videoconferencing with the UA Fairbanks campus, that option is not viable for delivery to smaller communities. However, in recent years televised course delivery has been supplemented by internet technologies which are available to even the smallest towns.

One of the main criticisms of distance programs, as mentioned earlier, has been that it loses the classroom community essential for learning. UAS believes that, particularly for graduate education, student-teacher and student-student interaction is essential. While this is possible, to some extent, through internet technologies we felt that preservation of the traditional classroom community was beneficial for learning. When we surveyed our distance ed students, we found they preferred televised class to internet based courses. For these reasons we have maintained the synchronous classroom as the foundation, but not the totality, of the learning experience.

Students in the UAS MPA program gather at community college sites where there are classrooms, computers, fax machines, video monitors, conference phones and satellite downlinks. While a few cable companies have put the classes on their local menus, we require students to gather at classroom sites. Each site has a distance coordinator available to proctor exams, process administrative matters, and monitor the equipment. This model helps ensure the required technology is available and similar across sites. It also helps ensure prompt maintenance of technological problems.

Students gathered at individual sites are able to support each other personally and academically. One of the greatest frustrations for students is when they feel alone in their efforts, particularly when they encounter problems. Maintaining the community sites limits some potential problems and, further, makes the statement that public administration is a community, rather than an individual project.

Class Discussion

One of the difficulties in the synchronous distance classroom is the technological awkwardness of discussion. While phone interactions through conference technologies allows for voice communication, organic discussions are often difficult. Traditional classroom discussions, however, also have shortcomings where vocal students dominate and discussion is often superficial.

As many experiences have indicated, on-line, asynchronous discussions have the potential to be deeper, more thoughtful and involve more students than traditional class discussions. Students have the chance to more fully consider their comments. Vocal students do not dominate, and less vocal students tend to participate. Asynchronous, on-line discussions encourage students to consider their thoughts before responding, without concern that the discussion will move on without them. Students can truly listen to others when they do not need to focus on remembering what they want to say. No one can be misquoted when responses are in print on the site. Threads of discussion are less likely to be derailed, and students can respond to ideas put forth several comments previously.

Most classes have students introduce themselves the first day of class. Those introductions provide a good feeling, but are often forgotten by both the instructor and fellow students. When introductions are posted on-line they can be remembered by all. For instance, if you recall that a student works somewhere or has some hobby, but you cannot remember who that is, a record exists to refresh your memory. Such permanent introductions contribute to the sense of community of the class.

Just as important, the instructor can monitor the discussion, keep it on track and provide positive feedback without interrupting the flow. Asynchronous discussions may continue for weeks, parallel to other discussions, and students can participate when they have the time and energy to focus. Our discussion sites at UAS are password protected and limited to University registrants to ensure a degree of privacy. The instructor may further limit who may view the discussions to class members only.

We have also used discussion software as virtual locations for small group discussion and group collaboration for student presentations. Students exchange their ideas and their presentation outlines, even charts, graphs and power point slides through their on-line discussion site.

From a teacher's point of view on-line discussions provide a much more empirical, if time consuming, method of evaluating students' discussion participation. There is a factual record of how many times a student participates and what is the quality of that participation. Traditionally, the participation element of students' grades is mostly subjective, and often based primarily on class attendance. With the written record, on-line discussion can becomes a much more accurate measure of students' understanding and performance. Most

discussion software programs show date and time of participation, allowing the instructor to note if there are students who do not participate until some deadline.

UAS Online

The on-line element of a UAS MPA class, however is not limited to discussion. A class web site, known as *UAS Online*, becomes the focal point of class information exchange. It includes all instructor contact information, class assignments and announcements. It forever eliminates students' "losing" their syllabus. Lecture notes or power point slides may be uploaded to the site. In fact anything that can be translated into electronic form, may be posted on the site and made available to students wherever they are. In my distance classes I ask that all students provide me with pictures of themselves. These too, are posted to the site, bringing a greater sense of community to class members as they can "see" each other.

The second purpose of the class site is to be a conduit for University services. The lack of access to such services has often been a criticism of distance classes. Our most important link is to the UAS library. The class page has direct links to the library catalog, but also on-line interactive links to reference librarians and for interlibrary loan requests.

A significant limitation for many smaller schools has always been the limits of access to journals. The cost of journals acts to limit dissemination of professional knowledge to large research Universities who can afford large numbers of journals. With the advent of electronic media, more and more journals are making their contents available in full text format. [e.g. *PAR, Public Personnel Management, Sage Public Administration Abstracts*] These, in turn, have been collected by vendors and integrated with search tools to provide journal access to anyone with an internet connection. Such a service, linked to our class web page, provides distance students with most of the same access to journals as the home library. Students in our classes are normally required to prepare annotated bibliographies of articles from academic journals. These, in turn, may be posted to the class site to be shared with the entire class.

The class site also provides links to other University sites and services. The UAS Writing Center provides a site for submitting writing problems or papers to be critiqued by the Writing Center staff. The Computer Help Desk similarly has a site for dissemination of software, FAQs and other information. The Help Desk responds to e-mail questions and has a toll free number further assuring that distance students have the same technological support as local students.

Other links may be included on the class page as desired. For instance, the Public Administration class pages at UAS include links to ASPA and certain government sites.
One further feature we have included is a so-called "Webliography" where students and instructor post useful web sites, which are linked to the page, and provide descriptions and critiques of site content. Another link connects to the UAS MPA web site which includes course schedules, descriptions and application forms.

UAS has been working to include other features on its class pages including tools for multiple choice and essay testing, paper submissions and other assignments. These remain in a usable, but experimental state.

The "Class"

The classroom portion of the course is central to building a learning community. First, I will provide a short description of the UAS distance classroom environment, followed by some technical solutions to various problems we have encountered. The distance education classroom at Juneau is a small studio/auditorium in the library media center. The instructor stands behind a lectern/counter which limits the habitually prowling

professor. An earbug allows the instructor to hear communications from the video technicians. Three cameras are used; one focuses on the instructor, one on the Juneau students and one is directed from the ceiling to the lectern, acting as an overhead projector. A computer terminal may be projected to the broadcast screen, allowing power point and, indeed, anything that is receivable over the internet, to be broadcast. Classroom cameras focus on Juneau students when they talk. When distance students call in I normally put their pictures, which have been posted to the class web site, onto the broadcast screen

A great deal of effort has been devoted to the televised classes. This is the place where the learning community is based and where it also finds its limitations. Satellite transmissions depend on local reception, which occasionally can be interrupted by storms or sunspots or simple equipment failures. As with all technological systems, redundancy is a key to success. Before focusing on the solution to this particular problem, an interrelated issue should be introduced.

The central problem for distance education is transmitting information from the instructor to the student. That may fail for several reasons. As mentioned above, there may be technological difficulties. However, the failure may also result from a student's inability to attend class. The traditional student was located on campus, and schooling was their full time occupation. However, with non-traditional, part time students- either local or distance – work related duties often conflict with class. Students who are mid-career public managers travel or are involved with activities that conflict with class times. These are unavoidable issues that have nothing to do with student motivation or commitment.

One solution open to the traveling UAS MPA student is to attend class at another site. With class sites available in many of the population centers, students who are traveling can attend while on business trips. An side benefit is more student interaction across sites. A second solution available to students missing class because of personal or technological problems is that all classes are videotaped. Distance sites normally videotape classes, but when they cannot, Juneau may send a tape to the site. When sites have video problems, or when traveling students are not able to attend another site, students may log into the class web site and listen through live streaming audio. In the event of video problems, this enables class to continue despite the loss of picture. A side benefit of this process is that streaming audio recordings are saved and archived on the class web site. The student may review past lectures from their home computer, rather than having to borrow a videotape. For the instructor's benefit, no longer do announcements have to be repeated as people come in late. Any student may easily review the first or last five minutes of class for important announcements or assignments. For good or ill, neither student nor instructor may claim something was, or was not, said without the proof being readily available.

Normally, the students interact during class through telephone technology. The classroom has a number of incoming phone lines that enable students at different sites to interact with the instructor or other students. When breaking down into small group discussions during class, I arrange to have sites with single students call in and participate in a private conference call, creating one small group from the various single student sites.

One limitation of telephone interaction is that traveling students normally have a single phone line to receive the streaming audio through their computers. To partially compensate for this bottleneck, UAS developed a message tool that essentially sends an e-mail note to the instructor. In this way a student can make comments, ask questions and even respond to questions while listening to class on the single phone line. This technology enables students to participate in class, not only from other parts of Alaska, but from anywhere there is internet accessibility. Last semester students participated in class from Colorado, Vancouver, Toronto and Florida. When power point outlines are used and are posted to the class web site prior to class, students can follow that visual communication online.

This kind of flexibility is essential to enable mid-career professionals to maintain their commitment to the course in the midst of work and personal demands. There simply is no way most of the professionals we serve

would be able to otherwise fully participate in class. These technologies enable ongoing participation by working professionals in the learning community, despite the conflicts and demands of the lives.
Classroom flexibility and continuing on-line discussions have built a sense of classroom community for the MPA program at the University of Alaska Southeast.

To supplement this process there are toll free fax and phone lines to the University, and I make it a point to answer most communications as quickly as possible. Further, I make it a point to visit each distance site at least once a year and to meet every student personally.

Student Reactions

Response to the UAS MPA distance program has been extremely positive from distance students, less so from local students. This follows logically from the fact that distance students are grateful to have a program that would not have been otherwise available to them. Local students are less enthusiastic because they see the technology as limiting their traditional class interactions. In a survey of UAS MPA students at the end of the Fall 1999 semester, overall satisfaction was rated at 8.3 on a 10 point Likert scale.

Like other schools, UAS has found that distance students' class performance levels are, on average, the same or higher than local students. It has been hypothesized that this is because distance students, on average, must be more motivated to start with, in order to undertake distance mediated education.

Continuing Issues

There are, of course, many continuing issues and limitations for the distance classroom. Equipment and technology keeps changing, offering new solutions, posing new challenges, and costing more money. Administrative support is essential for high performance distance programming.

As any distance instructor knows, the distance delivered class takes much more time to prepare than the traditional class. Much better organization is mandatory, and the instructor can never just "wing it." A crucial aspect of student satisfaction with a course is the quality and quantity of interaction with the instructor. Communication with distance students by phone or e-mail must be a priority for instructors, and such communication takes up a large degree of time. This time commitment must be understood, accepted and compensated by administrators.

There are definite limitations to distance delivered education, but the technologies exist to mitigate many of them. In fact some of the technologies provide advantages over the traditional classroom. While the mediation of technology impedes community, it also has the potential to enhance it. The learning community is an achievable goal for distributed education. The definition of classroom will continue to change as our lives change. The case of the University of Alaska Southeast demonstrates that the technology mediated classroom achievable and is not limited to the large research University.

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Teaching Criminal Justice Online: A Case Study in Systems Improvement

Mary Ann Eastep

When I first put my *Women and Crime* course online, I started by uploading course notes, preparing exams that I believed would be challenging, and devising a very detailed syllabus. I availed myself of the resources provided by the University to support distance learning so I could understand the basics of communication with students using the various server functions. That was the easy part. And, while I felt prepared to tackle the fundamentals of online education, nothing could have prepared me for the learning and growing experience that was to follow.

The *Women and Crime* course is one I teach frequently so I am very familiar with the text and with the issues that are most (and least) appealing-to most students. This familiarity was helpful to me in getting started in my first online endeavor.' The first term I taught the course online was a short (6-week), concentrated summer term. I had taught this same course during the summer term in the classroom, so I knew the material was manageable for that shortened time frame, given a significant commitment on the part of students taking the course, and given good planning on my part. *Women and Crime* covers some controversial topics and the text presents one or more feminist perspective(s) on all of the issues covered. When teaching the course in the classroom, discussion is a significant component. My greatest concern as I embarked upon this endeavor was how to facilitate the discussion I believed was necessary for a successful learning experience. The planning process had to include a viable discussion option, which was feasible using the server functions available.

While facing the challenges presented by online education, I have made several discoveries and I have had several other preliminary beliefs confirmed. Probably the major discovery is that teaching and learning online do not constitute a new form of education. Online education is merely a different delivery system. The processes of teaching and learning are the same. My concerns about classroom discussion proved to be unfounded, not because the discussion no longer was necessary, but because the forum for discussion is available in the virtual classroom just as it is in the physical classroom. My biggest concern ironically provided fertile ground for my biggest discovery: the quality of the learning that takes place between an instructor and a student has nothing to do with the physical setting.

My own feelings on the topic of distance learning have evolved as I have successfully taught students from a distance, and I have grown from a skeptic to a cheerleader. The longer I am involved with the process of delivering a course to students over the Internet, the more deeply I become involved in conversations on the topic. In the pages that follow, I will discuss some of the issues that typically arise in discussions with colleagues, parents, new web students and other interested parties with whom I find myself engaged in internet teaching/learning conversations, and I will highlight some of the ways in which my own online teaching has improved.

Facilitating Productive Discussion Online

I am often asked how it is possible to actually conduct productive discussions online. The answer to this question is that it is as easy to stimulate productive, quality discussion online as it is to stimulate quality discussion in the classroom, and probably easier. Most who have successfully engaged students in useful, productive and intelligent discussion in the classroom probably will answer that there is nothing "easy" about it in the best of conditions. Certainly in a large classroom (over 45 or 50 students), there is a certain proportion of students who have something to say and who would participate, but feel too intimidated to do so. Then, there are others who are simply too shy to speak out in front of any number of peers. Other factors also influence participation in classroom discussions. Factors such as successful discourse in other classes, self perception, perception of overall knowledge level of the individual participant as well as peers, -length of time into the term, atmosphere fostered by the professor, and even the appearance of the student can contribute to participation levels. Online discussions eliminate some, if not most, of the sociocultural considerations that might otherwise limit discussions. Students reading the postings of other students are reacting to what they are reading and not the physical features of the individuals making the comments.

I think we make an erroneous assumption when we teach a course believing that there is one best or even better way to reach students, and that that better way is the traditional lecture/discussion format. Many students are not reached at all in that setting. Some find it torturous.

Electronically-delivered courses offer several discussion formats. I use both a live chat (primarily for exam reviews and for virtual office hours) and a listserv function aptly called the "forum." This is what I consider to be the heartbeat of the "virtual classroom." I require students to participate on the forum, and a small portion of their grade is based upon this participation. Students post their thoughts and others react to their posts. For each unit I teach on the e-course, I include some questions for discussion. This often opens the discourse related to certain issues, but it is equally often started by a particularly insightful comment offered by a student who has completed the assigned reading. The delayed post function provides students with the opportunity to write a comment, review it, edit it, and then post it. That removes the element of fear of having their thoughts come out differently than intended. It also removes some of the intimidation factor.

Students who register for online courses expect some differences in the learning environment, and many expect both more independent activity and more interaction through the written word. Some express appreciation for the opportunity to freely express opinions without some of the traditional constraints. One of my recent students observed, "I did enjoy the stimulating debates and learned more about feminism - more than I really wanted to know in some cases. . . thank you for allowing the free discourse throughout the course. . . " It seems to me that any educational format that requires students to think issues through, to develop an opinion, and to communicate intelligently in writing, has the major elements of a true learning experience. Phillips (1997) discusses how many of her undergraduate students in their 40s, 50s and even 60s bring a good deal to the table. As a teacher who has studied philosophy in Greece, Phillips sees the value of teaching others to think critically and to depart from the traditional "factory model" of the American college classroom. She emphasizes that education takes place in the minds of the students and not in any particular place. She comments on the virtues of the classical learning that occurs through discussions that take place in a virtual classroom:

> In cyberspace, I listen, read, comment and reflect on what my students have to say – each of them in turn. What they know, they must communicate to me in words. They cannot sit passively in the back row twiddling their mental thumbs as the clock ticks away. They must think; and horrors of horrors, they must write. Thinking and writing: Aren't these the hallmarks of a classically educated mind? I know my students not by their faces or their seat position in a vast lecture auditorium; I know them by the words and ideas they express in their weekly

assignments, which everyone reads online.

My final comment on how it is possible to actually stimulate discussion online is to address how my own discussion has improved over the several terms I have taught online. Like any other student-teacher interaction, the commitment on the part of the teacher to recognize and respect the student and to consider his/her opinions as valid contributions to the course that is being offered is the key to the creation of a successful discussion environment. In their book, Virtual Sandcastles: Teaching and Learning at a Distance, Lamb and Smith admonish instructors to consistently treat students as individuals. They remind the reader that just as students undertake the classroom experience with differing levels of preparedness and skills, students undertake learning in the virtual classroom bringing a variety of skills and interest patterns to the table. Recognizing the value of having field professionals and older adults as participants can enrich the discussion. Removing the barriers of physical appearance also removes stereotyping and can promote a higher level of mutual respect. As I have attempted to communicate regularly and independently with each student and to foster that respect my online discussions have reflected the students' confidence.

The Prevalence of Online Learning - Where We Are and Where We Are Going

I can relate the benefit of the research of others, with the caveat that some of what is out there is provided by commercial entities having a financial interest in creating the illusion that distance learning is the wave of the future. That having been said, I would also admonish that some see all higher educational entities, state colleges and universities included, as motivated in large measure by profit.

The Phi Delta Kappan reports that colleges and universities nationwide are offering courses online at record rates. For example, the University of Colorado had 180 courses offered online as of February, 1999. The following are reported by the Phi Delta Kappan and other sources:

- The University of Phoenix, a profit-making organization, has an estimated 5,000 students taking on-line courses. The University of Phoenix is regionally accredited and offers an associate degree, 12 different bachelors degrees, 7 graduate (masters) degrees and one doctorate completely online (http://www.online.uophx.edu).
- The California Virtual University Consortium, which consists of nearly 100 institutions in the state, conducts over 1,600 courses on line.
- New York University is creating a for-profit subsidiary to sell Internet courses, and plans to raise money through stock offerings and private partnerships.
- Penn State has created an on-line world campus that offers associates degrees, certificate programs, a wide variety of courses and even a master's degree in adult education (http://www.outreach.psu.edu/DE)
- Western Governors University now has agreements with 17 state and Guam, and will be offering on-line associate's degrees in liberal arts and applied science in the near future.
- Great Britain's Open University is applying for accreditation in the U.S. and said to be discussing partnerships with schools like Florida State (p. 421).

Some private entities, including Denver-based Real Education, assist colleges and universities put courses on the Internet as a profit-making enterprise. The company helps in all aspects of the process of building online courses. By late 1998, Real Education had formed partnerships with Simon & Schuster, and Microsoft Corporation's education customer unit. The Phi Delta Kappa reports that some of its customers include Western Governors University, Drexel University, and Seton Hall University. Weber State University (WSU), located in Ogden, Utah, began offering online courses in the fall of 1997. Starting with 19 courses and 167

students, WSU Online now serves more than 2,000 students with up to 90 courses, and students can complete requirements for an associate's degree online. At WSU Online, students can register for classes, purchase books, work with class advisers, and take the courses, including exams (PC Week, 1999).

In terms of the future of distance education, there seems to be a growing consensus that it will be a major force in coming years. Significant growth is projected in the 18 - 21 age group, with many traditional college students taking online courses at the campus in combination with other courses. Kirk (1999) notes that cost factors associated with campus infrastructure and overhead will promote the expansion of distance course offerings. Both older, nontraditional students are taking more online courses, and younger students are exhibiting a significant level of acceptance of online course delivery. Jafari (1999) reports that Indiana University has set up an "Oncourse" project, which provides the technical framework for creating Web environments for every course offered by the university. As envisioned, all students and faculty members will have personal profiles online that include personal home pages and other e-filing and tracking mechanisms. Current literature supports a growing niche in education for distance offerings in general, and courses offered entirely on the Internet in particular.

From my own experience, I can say that the online courses offered by our department are filled, often within weeks or sometimes days of the course announcement. The popularity of online courses seems consistent, even when word is circulated that they can be more difficult than traditional offerings. To speculate as to why this is the case, I can draw from comments made by students and from some deduction on my part. Some students have commented that they are homebound for some reason or another. Common reasons are new parents with infants to care for and physical disabilities. Others refer to busy lifestyles with jobs, families and household responsibilities, and find it much easier to study at nontraditional hours. These students will post their comments at 2:00 AM or 3:00 AM, and several have expressed gratitude for the opportunity to take a course that would probably be out of reach if offered during traditional times. Most of my students fit the same profile as in-class students, and a significant proportion of them live on campus, or close enough to commute. They choose the online option for reasons other than commuting time. I suspect a certain proportion of students register for online courses thinking they will be easier or less time-consuming. This generally is not the case. Since there is more independent work involved, they are often more difficult and time-consuming. Making this clear to students at the onset of the course helps assuage misunderstandings later on.

Online Cheating: Can It Be Prevented?

I believe most cheating can be prevented, at least to the same degree I believe it can be prevented in the classroom. The cheating issue was one of my biggest concerns when I embarked on this journey. I have never been a fan of take-home exams, and I could not imagine a fair assessment of progress without having to use those or similar types of testing instruments. I have found what I believe is a good mix of writing assignments, verifiable project assignments and objective exams. I challenged myself to create exams that would assess the students' knowledge of and familiarity with the material, even though the exams would necessarily be "open book." My objective exams are timed, so students who have not read the material are not able to understand the questions, locate the correct responses, and complete the exam in the time allotted. I hold a live chat review with students so they have the opportunity to ask questions and have their study efforts focused prior to the exams. At those sessions, I explain that the best way to succeed is to make a good outline while reading the chapters. Students who follow those directions are most successful in the course and they learn the material in the process.

The exams count for a little over half of the final course grade. I also assign research projects, including interviews that can be completed alone or in groups of two or three. Understanding that teaching online is

different than teaching in the classroom requires instructors to adjust their methods and the types of assignments they make. I often assign specific topics, requiring students to apply specific concepts or research specific cases, to minimize the possibility of plagiarism. There are also good websites available to help detect plagiarism. In fact, I have shared this fact with my in-class students as well, since Internet cheating is not only a function of Internet students. The site, www.plagiarism.org., was created to counter the effects of some of the internet term paper mills such as *School Sucks, Cheater.com, Dorian's Paper Archive, The Essay Depot,* and *The Evil House of Cheat.* Plagiarism.org allows instructors to upload term papers to a site where they are "finger printed" and checked against a database that includes all cheat sites and other sources of manuscripts. Other services such as *Essay Verification Engine* and *Integriguard,* provide similar searches. The willingness to find and use plagiarism detection sites may be one of the different skills involved with teaching college students both online and in the classroom in the virtual age (Mayfield, 1999).

Some Concerns Continue to Pose Challenges

There are several concerns that need to be addressed. Each term the course is taught, I discover some ways of minimizing those concerns. But some areas continue to be particularly challenging.

The subject matter of the course lends itself to a paradox when it comes to discussion on the forum. Since crime is such an over-worked media topic, there are virtually no students who have not been exposed to crime stories, crime statistics, op-ed columns on crime-related issues, crime movies and crime TV. Thus, almost every student has an opinion on what the root causes of most crime are and how society can best address the crime problem. When two or three students "gang up" on others, the sheer might of their ill-informed yet free flowing opinions often steers the course discussion. I have found that careful monitoring of the forum and quick response to ill-conceived ideas helps. Sometimes the biggest challenge is to keep students thinking and freely expressing opinions while keeping their minds open to new ideas about crime etiology and crime construction. If the instructor interrupts the flow of the forum too often with his/her ideas about what is "right," particularly when there may be many or even no "right" answers, that free expression may be undermined.

There is another concern related to what I have termed the *double-edged sword of anonymity.* As previously mentioned, the relative shield of the online format of course delivery facilitates free and open discussion. Students are able to write their comments, edit them, consider them, and finally post them. Since the responses are not instantaneous (as they are in the classroom), students are able to give some thought to their feedback to fellow students, and to relate to them in terms of their opinions and thoughts rather than their physical attributes. However, that same shield of anonymity also seems to allow students to feel a little more free in expressing opinions about course management, instructional techniques, exam questions and appropriateness of assignments. The first time I taught the course online, I was taken aback a bit. I have now come to expect open criticism of my teaching, and I am much better prepared to deal with it. Thomas Cyrs, Professor Emeritus of New Mexico State University, and president of a distance learning consulting firm, makes the point that online education is much different, and that instructors must develop different communication and organizational skills if they are to succeed (NEA, 2000). My experience tells me that is good advice. Online courses are much more "student-driven," and the instructor must recognize the implications of that condition, and prepare to confront them as the course progresses.

A final concern to note here is the lack of research skills some students exhibit. Part of the challenge of developing assignments is to clarify methods of research as well as topics. Students taking online courses often expect to complete all or most aspects of the course via the Internet. Often they are not well-prepared to embark on academic research online, and need direction. One of the ways I have addressed the research void is by including a listing (with links) of online resources. At the University of Central Florida, our library has

developed significant tools to help students conduct research online, and there are many full text journals available. But I have found it is up to the instructor to make that connection between the assignments and a reasonable starting point for research. Once students have been directed to some of the outstanding research sites available, their confidence in their own abilities is elevated.

A Word about Performance

Since I teach the same course online and in the classroom, I can generalize to some degree concerning the relative performance of the two groups. However, since the classes are taught very differently, it might not be a fair comparison to examine scores and paper grades. In general, my online students get slightly higher grades than my in-class students. But the rate of dropping the course is greater for online students and the grade distribution is more polar. It may be that since online learning requires more independent study and collaborative work, it attracts, or at least holds, a more serious student.

A study quoted in CNET News.com claims students taking an applied statistics course online at California State University at Northridge tested 20% higher than students learning in the traditional classroom. The study, conducted by professor Jerald Schutte, examined scores of students randomly selected for a virtual learning group, as compared with in-class students. Students in the virtual classroom collaborated more and outperformed traditional students on identical tests (Staff, CNET, 1999). The University of Phoenix, which holds a majority of its offerings online, claims their online graduates achieve scores 5% - 10% higher on standardized tests than graduates of competing on campus programs at public universities (Schulman, 1999). Learning assessment is an area where more research is currently underway and it is anticipated that additional resources will be devoted to such evaluations as the numbers of online offerings increase. Dominguez and Ridley (1999) suggest that assessments and evaluations conducted over the past fifteen years have been directed toward academic rigor of distance education courses, by considering factors such as the nature of the mediating technology, different instructional approaches and course content. They suggest the emphasis should be shifted to the course and the subsequent performance of the distance education student in other classes (1999).

Improvement as a Process

Improvements have been incremental, but my course is significantly better than it was the first term it was taught. Considering the course as a delivery system has helped me implement better notes, better exams, better assignments and a better discussion forum. The process of improvement must be continuous and it must be proactive. As I allow myself to learn and to develop skills, I pass along more skills to my students. I began this paper with the admonition that learning takes place in the mind of the student. I will end it by expressing my gratitude that educators are willing to embrace the computer as a means to include more students and to reach traditional students in nontraditional ways. As the processes of technology improve, means to facilitate learning will also improve.

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Teaching with Computer Technology: A Professor's Story

Willa Bruce

In the Spring of 1998 I accepted the challenge to develop and teach a graduate level, computer-mediated course in administrative ethics. This is an account of that experience. It contains a description of course development, lessons learned in the experience, and advice for other faculty who are considering the same challenge. It is a case study of only one person, teaching 8 students in one class in one semester. It contributes, however, to collective knowledge about computer-assisted teaching because the field is so new that anecdotal data are needed as a precursor to developing empirical studies.

Indeed, the field is so new it is difficult to find literature written before 1996. Yet today's faculty need to be knowledgeable about computer based-teaching for at least five reasons:

1. University administrators across the country are pressuring departments to create technologically provided course and degree offerings (Kaplan, 1997; Rahm and Reed, 1997).

2. Social and ethical issues are involved and not often considered (Lawhead, 1997).

3. Faculty support and commitment are essential, yet faculty may resist because they fear exploitation, obsolescence, more work, and job elimination (Kaplan, 1997).

4. Students view the web as a provider of well-organized access to vast amounts of subject material, self-paced learning, and distance learning (Kapur and Stillman, 1997).

5. Restructuring, distance learning, and virtual classrooms are but a few concepts universities cannot ignore lest they become obsolete (Maly, et al, 1998).

For these reasons knowing what is involved in computer-mediated course development and delivery is very important.

The next section describes the techniques of computer-mediated teaching and explains how I designed a computer-mediated graduate course in ethics. The section following it recounts what I learned from teaching the course and provides a list of "do's" and "don'ts" for any faculty member who embarks on a similar project.

Computer-Mediated Teaching

"Computer-mediated teaching" includes all those activities that involve some form of computer-assisted activity designed to provide a "teaching-learning" experience. These activities may range from an isolated use of Power-Point

to enhance a class lecture to an entire semester of activities that require extensive use of cd-rom and the internet - which may or may not include interaction between students and faculty.

Current models of web-based education include:

1. The web as a source of information through which supporting details for traditionally-taught courses can be accessed;

2. The web as an electronic book from which students follow screen instructions, read material, activate multimedia demonstrations, take quizzes, or participate in some activity;

3. The web as a teacher who guides students in using the web as an electronic book and with whom students can interact via e-mail or chat rooms;

4. The web as a means of communication between teacher and students through which students learn from the teacher, but through the web through some "face-to-face" strategy. (Casey, 1998)

The class I taught used the web extensively as an electronic book, and as a means of communication between me and the students. The way I designed the course was expected to enable their learning through all these means. The next section describes the course development process.

Description of Course Development

A number of guidelines for course development are available. Ones identified by Oliver, Omari, and Harrington (1998) address:

> "ways to organize the content" (Jonassen, Mayes, & McAleese; 1993); "strategies for ensuring the orientation of the learner in the media space" (Gay & Mazur, 1989; Collis, 1991); "navigation strategies" (Chandler & Sweller, 1991); "guidelines for interface design" (Brooks, 1993; Wynn & Harrington, 1995); "ways to perform the best forms of text presentation" (Gillingham, 1993; Thuring, Manneman, & Haake, 1995); "improving document readability" (Higgins & Boone, 1990); "minimizing text fragmentation" (Thuring, Mannemann, & Haake, 1995); and "designing effective interactions (Oliver, 1996).

Books to guide development of computer-mediated teaching are becoming available in 1999. They include The Wired Professor: A Guide to Incorporating the WWW in College Instruction (Keating, 1999) and Will Technology Really Change Education? From Blackboard to Web (Kent, 1999). A not-yet published graduate paper also addresses the issues. It is Instructional Events and Strategies in Web Based Instructional Environments (Cai, 1998).

When I designed my course I did not know such materials were available, and, of course, some of them were not. I approached developing the computer-mediated course as I would approach any course: think through goals, choose books, prepare the syllabus, identify resources such as videos and cases, prepare teaching "assists" such as transparencies and discussion questions, develop quizzes and learning exercises, and prepare lectures.

The difference between getting ready for a computer-mediated course and a regular one is that preparation for the computer course must all be done before the class starts and in time for a computer expert to get what one has prepared into an electronically-accessible form. That is a tremendous amount of work, all of which must be done before one knows who will be taking the course, what personal interests they might have, and what their career goals are.

To provide some idea of how much work the preparation for my course was, I will compare some elements of it with a regular course. I typically take about 3 full days to do a syllabus for a class I have never taught and my syllabi are usually five to seven pages long. They include detailed explanations of course requirements, text selection, grading practices, and a schedule of classes that contains every reading and written assignment required in the class.

Preparing the syllabus for my computer-mediated class took approximately 2 months working full time on it. I did not teach a class, nor actively engage in research or university service during this preparation period. I have written books that took less effort. Indeed, one scholar of the subject concludes: "Attempting to place on the Web everything that would be said in a semester's series of lectures is tantamount to writing a book" (Casey, 1998, p. 54).

The syllabus, like its cousins in regular classes, was about six pages. The supplemental instructions and reading assignments that accompanied it required an additional 153 pages, designed to enrich the assigned material with wisdom I would have offered had students and I been present together in the same room.

I had hoped to use three of the models of computer-mediated instruction (Casey, 1998). First, I had wanted the web to be an electronic book from which students would follow screen instructions, read material, activate multimedia demonstrations, take quizzes, or participate in some activity. So, in addition to the 153 pages of material I either wrote or assembled, I spent uncounted hours searching the web to identify web sites that would enrich student learning on each topic we covered. The 153 pages and web-page addresses were placed on a cd-rom that the students obtained when they enrolled in the class.

Since a semester typically contains 16 weeks, the material to be learned was divided into 8 modules, with each to be finished in a 2 week period. The cd-rom contains a menu from which the students can choose each module and work at their own pace. Each module contains a substantial reading and writing assignment. One of the concerns of the graduate dean was that students would devote the requisite number of hours to the class. I attempted to insure they did. I required written assignments that allowed them to demonstrate that they were reading, learning, and spending at least 2 hours and 40 minutes being exposed to information about ethics and another 2 or more hours in preparing assignments for submission.

I also wanted to use the web as a means of communication between me and the students through which students would learn from me, but through the web using some "face-to-face" strategy (Casey, 1998). Incorporated into the cd-rom were 8 segments of me giving a 15 to 30 minute lecturette about the material in each module. Students could access these "talking professor" segments via a menu, then view and listen as often as they wanted or needed.

Preparing for the taping of the lectures was arduous. Time available was limited. Each brief section contained a condensed version of what I usually said over a period of two weeks. I did not want to be filmed sounding boring or not knowledgeable, so each lecturette's preparation and rehearsal time was approximately 4 hours. Time available to do any supplemental reading was scarce as two lecturettes were taped each Tuesday and Thursday over a two week period.

I also wanted to use the web as an electronic means by which students could interact with me via e-mail, and with one another through chat rooms. Thus a web page was established and students were encouraged to send their photos, and to be present to one another and to dialogue. They could use e-mail to ask me questions and I could use e-mail to provide them feedback on their written assignments - which were considerable.

A computer-mediated course requires highly sophisticated technological knowledge, skills, and abilities. Few faculty have them. I certainly do not. "Professionally prepared [web] pages often require input from technical people, content developers, graphic designers, and code cutters.... Those who see the Web as a means of cheap mass

education will be disappointed" (Casey, 1998, p. 54). Developing a computer-mediated course requires both subject knowledge and technological expertise. "It is the rare faculty member who can pursue such a course" (Kaplan, 1997, p. 51).
Developing a course which will be taught via computer-mediated activities is very laborious. The process is much more time-consuming than creating a regular course. One needs a great deal of technological assistance. Once the course design is completed and a cd-rom is created and distributed, the course is essentially un-changeable during the semester. Adjusting at the margins to meet individual student needs or interests is difficult, if not impossible.

This section has discussed the development of a computer-mediated course. The next section will talk about the actual teaching of the class, will identify some of the difficulties that emerged, and will comment on the benefits that became apparent.

Lessons Learned in the Experience

Before describing the lessons I learned from teaching a web-based course, I want to say, "it was not a good experience." The section below identifies unexpected difficulties in two areas and the lessons I learned from them.

Unexpected Difficulties

Problems with distance learning from either the perspective of the student or the instructor seem largely undocumented in the literature. Unexpected difficulties occurred in the areas of student characteristics and technology. Students presented greatly differing levels of computer literacy, maturity, and interest in the topic. Both the cd-rom created for the course and some relevant web pages created further problems. These obstacles are described below.

1. **Student characteristics**

   a. Uneven computer literacy
   Several students who enrolled were not sufficiently computer literate to manage a cd-rom, to connect to web sites, and participate in e-mail dialogue. Even though the class was marketed as a web-based class in which students would work independently, two students who enrolled were not computer literate. One called just before the semester started to ask if he would need a computer to take the course. Being told "yes" he dropped the class. A second never figured out how to use the cd-rom and requested permission to receive an "Incomplete" for the course, then take it as a "regular" class. Permission was granted. Two others were only slightly computer literate. One took three months to figure out that the reason the assignments kept "bouncing back" to her was that she was sending them to a non-existent e-mail address. Another changed e-mail addresses twice in the semester, never notified me, and got behind in the assignments.

   b. Maturity and curiosity
   Typically graduate students approach their studies with maturity and curiosity. One-half of the students enrolled in this class took a minimalist approach to learning. An example is one student's response to the assignment to write a two to three page essay on administrative ethics. She submitted a two sentence dictionary definition. When she did not get a passing grade on this assignment – she complained that I did not know how to grade. Other professors report an experience similar to my own: "While there appeared to be many opportunities for the students to reflect on issues and to discuss ideas and findings, they did none of this" (Oliver, et al, 1998, p. 277).

c. Interest in topic
A class web page and chat room were provided. Students were asked to send photos to post on the web page, and to engage with one another in dialogue. Only one student ever signed on. Since I had not understood the importance of making chat room dialogue a required activity, I could not enforce their participation.

2. Technology

a. Cd-rom
The cd-rom that was provided needs the "Acrobat" software to be read. For someone who is very computer literate, this is routine. I've already said that one student never figured out how to use the cd rom. Neither did I. The Computer Center at the University took care of access there. I never did figure out how to configure my home computer.

b. Web pages
Web pages to enhance learning were identified during the course preparation. The cd-rom was configured so one could simply click on the web page address and access the page. However, several critical web pages were removed by their web masters before the time came in the semester to access them. I had to quickly find substitutes - which took a great deal of unplanned-for time.

c. Technical knowledge

The difficulties I describe are not unique to my experience. Another professor recounts the situation of a computer-mediated class that began with 10 students:

> Over the weeks that followed, class participation stabilized with four active students. While it is difficult at this early stage to assess all of the factors involved, it appears that some of the enrolled students either did not have the necessary computer hardware and software necessary for the course, or did not have the needed expertise to complete a course in online form. At least one student elected to move to the traditional classroom version of the course, while another student requested an incomplete.... (Grubbs, 1998).

Thus, a number of difficulties can occur in computer-mediated education. Teaching and learning assisted by computer technology, however, has several benefits. They are discussed in the next section.

Apparent benefits

Literature on computer-mediated classes tends to extol their benefits and to ignore the kinds of difficulties identified above. Others have found the following benefits of technology-assisted teaching and learning:

1. Access to great amounts of data enriches the learning experience (Jarvis, 1997) and stimulates learners to find more information than they might otherwise (Sloane, 1997).
2. Computer-mediated courses provide "easy, flexible, well-organized access to vast amounts of subject material (and)...self-paced learning (Kapur & Stillman, 1997, p. 317).
3. These courses offer access to education from remote geographical areas (Rahm & Reed, 1997).
4. Universities are able to acquire students who otherwise might be unable to choose their offerings.

The greatest benefits I observed were for the students who were mature and curious. The class was available to some who otherwise could not have taken the course - of the students who remained with the class, two were at far away

military bases, one lived in a geographically isolated area, and one was nursing a sick spouse and was not free to leave the house to attend class.
My experience and the material I have read suggest that computer-mediated education is not for everyone. That caveat is reflected in advice for faculty in the next section.

Advice

Faculty who are considering offering a computer-mediated class need to carefully weigh the benefits and difficulties described in this paper. A plan to minimize the difficulties is essential. Morris Partee (1996, p. 79-82) offers these tips:

1. Make certain the instructor and each student has an e-mail address and understands how to use e-mail.
2. Establish other essential computer-assisted communication vehicles. These include a home page with course and participant information, a news group, listserve, and chat room.
3. Recognize that some students have "computer-phobia or general intellectual inertia" (p. 82) and "build in" ways to keep them involved.
4. State clearly the special requirements of the course in the syllabus. Include criteria that make on-line participation a major part of the grade.

Additional tips are provided by Starr in a list of "essential considerations for successful instructional design for the World Wide Web" (1997, p.10-11).

1. Analyze the degree of computer-phobia or literacy of your learners.
2. Identify sophistication of hardware necessary for students to access your computer-mediated information.
3. Search for existing web pages that will enrich your teaching.
4. Collaborate with knowledgeable colleagues.

My experience supports this advice. To it I would add:

1. Plan to spend a lot of time in course delivery, grading papers and working with individual students. If a regular semester course requires 3 hours a week in the classroom and another 6 grading papers and preparing for class, expect to double that time commitment. A computer-mediated course will not save you time.

2. Remember that communication experts suggest that about 80 percent of communication is non-verbal (Garnett, 1997). This means that both you and your students are deprived of communication clues that enhance understanding and relationships. Do as much as you can with technology design to improve non-verbal cues.

3. Read everything you can find on designing and teaching a computer-mediated course before you do it. Take a class on the subject if you can.

4. Insist on extra release time to develop the course.

5. Obtain the assistance of a technologically sophisticated colleague and rely on it heavily.

If I had received this advice before I had embarked on designing and teaching a computer-mediated course I believe my experience would have been more positive. Hopefully, this advice will assure a more positive experience for others. This description of the experience with its difficulties and benefits is provided to that end.

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Dissertation Proposal Defense – "High Tech Style:" A Student's Perspective on Another Use of Distance Learning Technology

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Most discussions of the increased use of distance learning focus on using distance learning technology for providing academic courses, a natural response to the high number of students taking distance learning courses. In fact, by this year (2000) it is expected that 11.6 million students will have taken one or more distance learning courses (Goldberg, 1998 in Banas and Emory, 1998). However, there are other uses for this technology within the educational setting. One such use of distance learning technology in the graduate educational setting is for dissertation proppsal defenses, particularly when dissertation committee members are located on university campuses that are geographically separated. This paper is a case study describing such an event: a dissertation proposal defense facilitated by the use of interactive television (I-TV) distance learning technology. Included in this case study is the presentation of a student's perspective on using distance learning technology, supplemented by faculty[1] responses to a survey distributed by the student[2] soliciting feedback on their experiences in participating in the I-TV facilitated proposal defense.

An Interactive Television Dissertation Proposal Defense: The Context

My interest in distance learning, especially within the graduate educational setting, began in the Spring of 1997 when I took a Capstone course titled, "Space and Public Administration," examining the social interpretation of architecture under the guidance of Dr. Charles Goodsell. This course was my department's (the Center for Public Administration and Policy [CPAP] at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University [VPI]) first experience in delivering a graduate course through VPI's interactive television (I-TV) system. This Capstone course is described in detail, including student experiences, in a 1998 Public Administration Teaching Conference paper by Hollar and Moffitt (1998). This first I-TV graduate course experience can be considered a great success in that it led to the publication of three papers[3] by students on two university campuses separated by many miles – a process facilitated by the use of distance learning technology. This introduction to using distance learning technology, particularly the use of I-TV, sparked my interest in pursuing other applications for using I-TV technology in the graduate setting. In the fall of 1999, another opportunity for using I-TV surfaced as I was able to "try out" using I-TV for conducting a dissertation proposal defense.

I decided to use I-TV for my dissertation proposal defense with the hope that using I-TV would overcome a complication of my dissertation proposal defense, namely that my dissertation committee is split among two

[1] "Faculty members," in this paper, refers to faculty members who are on my, the author's, dissertation committee.

[2] Because the author is the student described here, for the remainder of the paper personal pronouns will be used instead of the term "student."

[3] Papers were published in *Administration and Society*, *Public Voices*, and the *American Review of Public Administration*.

VPI campuses. Three faculty members are located at the main campus of VPI in Blacksburg, VA, and three are faculty members at the Northern Virginia (NOVA) campus of VPI. These campuses are about 4.5 driving-hours apart, and face-to-face meetings are not always convenient. Traditionally in our department, when a committee consists of faculty members from the two university campuses, dissertation proposal defenses occur via telephone conferencing. After my previous positive experience using I-TV during the Capstone course, I decided that using I-TV might be a more effective and fun way to conduct this defense. I hoped that using I-TV would allow for a "real" meeting experience by enabling faculty members who did not know each other[4] to meet "virtually," and in general, by allowing all of us to see each other and thus be able to read some of the non-verbal messages that are missed when using telephone conferencing,

An I-TV session was set up for my dissertation proposal defense, despite some hesitation on the part of some faculty members. On the day of the proposal defense, faculty members on each campus met in their respective I-TV communication rooms located on VPI's campuses (which required quite a walk for the faculty members on the Blacksburg campus because parking is not available near the Communications Center). I joined the NOVA group of faculty members at their center. In my perspective, the I-TV dissertation proposal defense was successful, with a few minor problems. My personal reflections on this I-TV dissertation proposal defense are described below.

Personal Reflections on My I-TV Dissertation Proposal Defense Experience

All in all, I believe that this experience of using I-TV for conducting my dissertation proposal defense was a positive one. While there were "glitches" along the way related to equipment problems and "crashes" of servers, my perception is that I-TV allowed my committee and me to interact in a qualitatively superior manner, compared to traditional telephone conferencing. We were able to see and respond to each other's non-verbal expressions of satisfaction, confusion, surprise, and so forth, which, I feel, greatly enhanced my learning, and the outcomes of the dissertation proposal defense. Below I describe some characteristics of the I-TV experience, including the initial planning for, and conduct of, the defense; provide general reflections on the defense; and make some recommendations for others who are considering an I-TV proposal defense.

Planning the Defense

Planning the defense was a relatively easy process thanks to VPI's system for scheduling I-TV use. Administratively, the university has a system for reserving "virtual time," i.e. the availability of communications wires for conducting I-TV conferences, and the communications classroom space on each campus. After soliciting dates and times from my committee members via email, and forwarding this information via email to our department administrative assistant who electronically submitted the reservations request, the I-TV session was reserved – and all of this was completed without picking up a phone!

Last Minute Preparations for Defense

One of the most intense and stressful moments I experienced during this I-TV experience occurred when I arrived 45 minutes early for the defense to test out the equipment, only to find that the I-TV equipment was not operating properly. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that the local communications support staff (CSS) were nowhere to be found. I used the phone in the communications classroom to call the main campus communications support office and found out that some of the wires connecting the equipment to the source jacks, and to themselves, had been erroneously switched around.

[4] One professor on my committee is from a different academic department, Sociology, and did not know some of the Public Administration and Policy faculty on the committee.

The technological problem of these switched wires manifested itself in the fact that while I was able to see faculty members at the opposite site (they were "on camera" at the remote site waiting for the defense to begin), they could not see us. Also, those of us in NOVA could not see ourselves on the second monitor at our site.[5] I explained these issues to the Blacksburg CSS while the faculty members at my campus were entering the NOVA communications room. After consulting with the Blacksburg CSS, we were able to fix one of the problems, allowing the Blacksburg faculty to see those of us at the NOVA campus. But because there were only five minutes left before the defense was to begin, the CSS and I decided that there was not enough time to rewire the equipment at the NOVA end to enable us to view ourselves on the second monitor. Thus, those of us in the NOVA center had to be resigned to the fact that only one television monitor was operable. Thankfully it was the one that displayed the Blacksburg (remote site) communications classroom. Needless to say my anxiety level was at an all time high, but my faculty members were wonderful in assuring me that all was "okay."

The Dissertation Proposal Defense

After relaxing a minute after dealing with the wiring problems mentioned above, we began the dissertation proposal defense. Things went smoothly during the introductions of faculty members and the first twenty minutes of the defense. At that time, another communications problem occurred that disrupted the flow of the defense, again causing my anxiety level to skyrocket. All of a sudden our one operable monitor went blank! In response, faculty members at the Blacksburg campus went in search of their local CSS, and I immediately ran over to the telephone, dialed the Blacksburg communications support office (again, because there were no on-site CSS available at my center), and found out that the Blacksburg communications/computer system had crashed. The CSS in Blacksburg assured me that "the system will be up in 5 minutes." So, we all waited, laughing about the "wonders of technology." Within a couple of minutes we were back online, and continued with the defense. However, as expected, there was a bit of backtracking to do in order to get back to the point of discussion prior to the crash of the system. At this point my anxiety level had yet to wane, and I would guess the same was true for the faculty members, especially my chair.

Reflections on the Experience

I would like to comment on some specific aspects of the I-TV defense experience, and how they affected me. Again, one issue relates to equipment issues that occurred at the Blacksburg end of the communications activity. Whenever a faculty member in Blacksburg pressed their individual microphone to make a comment and/or ask a question, the camera would zoom in on them. While this was not overly problematic for me because I had previous experience with this aspect of the equipment, I felt that the faculty members were uncomfortable with the "zooming in" aspect of the video equipment (you could see the shock on their faces when they looked at the monitor displaying a "full-face" shot of themselves). When I did feel frustrated with this aspect of the equipment was when multiple faculty members, at the same time, would press their microphones and the camera did not seem to know what to do. The camera would zoom in and out, without focusing on anyone. In addition, when faculty members activated their microphones by pressing the button, and the camera zoomed in, it took a while for the camera to pan back to the larger group view. This tended to interrupt the flow of some of the conversation.

Another aspect of the defense that was uncomfortable resulted from what I call "I-TV accentuated" body movement. This experience with I-TV reinforced my perception that some body movements are accentuated when viewed on television monitors, more so than they would be in a traditional classroom setting. Thus there

[5] Ideally, two television monitors are used in each communications room during I-TV sessions. One displays the main campus classroom, and one displays the remote classroom. The importance of being able to see your own classroom on a television monitor (in addition to seeing the remote classroom on a second monitor) is that this allows you to adjust the video camera angle at your site ensuring that everyone remains visible on the television monitor throughout the session.

were times during the dissertation proposal defense when I felt distracted by body movements of faculty as viewed on the monitor (faculty at the remote site). For example, when the camera panned to the classroom view (versus the individual, zoomed-in view of one faculty member), I noticed that a member or two had unknowingly moved out of the view of the camera. When they realized that they were not on the television monitor anymore, they abruptly resituated themselves within the view of the camera. While I do not feel that this movement interrupted the contributions of these faculty members, and quite the contrary, their contributions were quite significant, the seemingly abrupt movement, viewed on the television monitor, seemed to be distracting to those of us at the opposite site. It makes me wonder how the faculty members in Blacksburg felt about my constant movements as I attempted to maintain eye contact with the faculty members at my table, as well as with the faculty members at the remote site (those on the television monitor) which probably resulted in distracting "I-TV accentuated" body movements on our monitor.

A final aspect of the I-TV defense relates to how hard it is to maintain eye contact during I-TV experiences. When trying to maintain eye contact with faculty members, I found it somewhat difficult to maintain eye contact with the faculty members at my site (NOVA). I found myself concentrating on the television monitor more than on the set of faculty members as a whole, something I feel is a natural response to using I-TV. Luckily, I noticed that I was doing this early in the defense, and forced myself to focus on ensuring that I maintained eye contact with the faculty members sitting at my table in NOVA as well as those in Blacksburg.

Some Recommendations for Conducting an I-TV Proposal Defense

Based on my I-TV dissertation proposal defense experience, I have the following recommendations for people considering using I-TV for conducting a dissertation proposal defense:

- Practice using distance learning technology, I-TV, and become familiar with how it operates *prior to* the proposal defense.
- Get to know your CSS in order to learn about the equipment beforehand, and to determine if CSS will be onsite during your I-TV session. If they will not be onsite, then make arrangements for another means of technical support, such as someone being available via phone in case help is needed.
- Arrive early in order to test and/or adjust the I-TV equipment.
- Know that not all faculty members are excited about using distance learning technology (especially I-TV because of the video feature that people often find uncomfortable) and thus they may need encouragement and/or technical training on the equipment before they agree to participate in an I-TV proposal defense.
- Come to the I-TV experience with the understanding that technical problems can arise, and try to explain to your faculty members that this is the case so that no one is too surprised if technical problems should arise.

Faculty Members' Perceptions of Participating in the I-TV Dissertation Proposal Defense

A couple of weeks after my dissertation proposal defense, I sent a survey via email to my faculty members asking them about their perceptions of the I-TV proposal defense (see Attachment A). Five out of the six faculty members who participated in my I-TV proposal defense reported having used I-TV in the past. Three had taught a class using I-TV, two had participated in a class, five had used I-TV to conduct and/or attend a meeting, and one had used I-TV for a proposal defense. Overall, faculty members reported being satisfied with the I-TV proposal defense experience, but their comments were not overly enthusiastic. They cited the technical difficulties, i.e., the crash of the server, having to leave the room to search for technical support, and poor video and sound quality, as taking away from the overall experience. However, faculty members reported that using I-

TV was preferred to the traditional means in my department for a proposal defense, i.e., telephone conferencing. Some of the specific responses to survey questions are given below.

"What did you like about using I-TV for the proposal defense?"

Faculty members cited a number of reasons for liking the I-TV proposal defense experience. Two faculty members valued the convenience of I-TV, for both the student and the off-campus faculty. "It allowed us to schedule and hold the defense more quickly than if we had to meet face to face...[and without I-TV], I would not have had the opportunity to 'meet' committee members I had not yet met... I had not met one of the committee members, so this provided me with more information about [this faculty member] than possible by phone conference call." Echoing this comment, another faculty member appreciated the ability to bring everyone together in an almost face-to-face situation, explaining that "[i]n terms of ease of discussion, it was almost as good as real face to face." Also, a few faculty members were pleased with how I-TV allowed for enhanced communication, in that both non-verbal and verbal communication are possible via a video conference. Two faculty members indicated that they did not like the I-TV experience.

"What did you dislike about using I-TV for the proposal defense?"

As mentioned above, two of the six faculty members indicated their dislike for using I-TV for the proposal defense. One reason for not preferring this type of experience is that I-TV "creates too much ambiguity about what is going on." Of those faculty members who reported liking the experience, some shared problems with the I-TV experience. One faculty member explained, "I did not like the fact that I could not see the faces/expressions of the student and NOVA faculty, at times. It was like talking into a well at times." Three faculty members cited the technical glitches and voice delay as problematic. One faculty member commented that the glitches "slowed down the process and interrupted my train of thought."

Faculty Members' Preferences About Repeating the I-TV Process

The concluding questions on the survey addressed whether faculty members would prefer using I-TV to telephone conferencing for future dissertation proposal defenses. Overwhelmingly, five out of six faculty members indicated that they think using I-TV is better than using telephone conferences for conducting a proposal defense, and one faculty member wrote in the margins that I-TV is "far superior." Further probing on the information above, the next question asked, "If a student's committee is split between campuses, would you again be willing to participate in a defense using I-TV?" Again, five out of six faculty members stated that they would participate.[6] Finally, a question on the survey explored whether faculty members would prefer using telephone conferencing in the situation described above. Four faculty members indicated that they would not; one stated that they would prefer telephone conferencing, "but only because I don't have to go clear to other side of campus by walking or driving and getting a parking ticket because I don't have a $75 parking sticker;" and one faculty member did not respond to this question.

[6] The quote in the previous sentence is a direct quotation of the question as asked on the survey. This question was problematic in that it only contained the word "defense" rather than "proposal defense." The one faculty member who responded negatively to this question wrote in the margins that appropriate use of I-TV is "not for a dissertation defense!" I would guess, based on other responses by this faculty member to other survey questions, that this faculty member would be willing to participate in future "proposal" defenses, but not in "final dissertation" defenses, using I-TV.

Conclusion

Overall, I feel that my experience of using I-TV to conduct my dissertation proposal defense was positive. I was able to feel more connected to my "distant" faculty members than I could have had we used telephone conferencing, and this feeling of connectedness is the factor that I valuable most highly. Granted, there were some "glitches" throughout the process related to equipment problems and "crashes" of servers. However, I highly recommend using I-TV for dissertation proposal defenses in instances where students and/or dissertation committee members are located on geographically separated universities/campuses. And I expect that faculty members, such as those who participated in my dissertation proposal defense, would agree that I-TV is the preferred communications technology for conducting proposal defenses.

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Attachment A
Emailed Questionnaire for Committee Members About the Use of Interactive Television (I-TV)

1.A. Prior to my dissertation proposal defense, had you ever used I-TV?
___ No
___ Yes (if yes, please answer 1.B. below)

1.B. For what purpose did you use I-TV?
___to teach a class
___to participate in a class
___to conduct/"attend" a meeting
___to participate in a proposal defense (masters or Ph.D.)
___other _____

2. Reflecting on the I-TV experience last month (when I defended my dissertation proposal), how did this I-TV experience make you feel?

3.A. What did you like about using I-TV for the proposal defense?

3.B. What did you dislike about using I-TV for the proposal defense?

4. In general, when a committee is split between the Northern VA and Blacksburg campuses, do you think that using I-TV is better than using telephone conferences for conducting a proposal defense?
___No
___Yes

5.A. If a student's committee is split between campuses, would you again be willing to participate in a defense using I-TV?
___No
___Yes

5.B. Would you prefer to use telephone conferencing in this situation?
___No
___Yes

Fiction

Going Virtual

John A. Nicolay

> When Gregor Samsa woke up one morning from unsettling dreams, he found himself changed in his bed into a monstrous vermin.
>
> Franz Kafka, "The Metamorphosis" Bantam Books, 1972.

In March the cadence of life in the Department of History, St. Elgin's College burped. Professor Ian Gestrode settled back in his wing-back leather chair, surrounded by shelves overflowing with complimentary review copies of books, a desk cluttered with an avalanche of papers yet to be filed from the previous term, memoranda yet to be read from the previous year, a calendar yet to be flipped from the day he sat it next to the miniature grandfather's clock his wife had given him to celebrate his twenty-five years in higher--than what he wondered--education. It was a calendar that one had to tear each day from, and each day proclaimed sage advice on the good life. He was re-living January 1, 2000 each day: "Wisdom befalls the man who sees the reflection of himself in the mirror of life." What exactly did that mean?

He had just returned from one of those "mandatory" meetings with the Dean of Arts and Sciences, Frank Oblivious, as he was known to those who didn't care. It was at this meeting that the Dean announced the "College Learning Initiative", a massive infusion of money from nearby Redwood to establish a "state of the art technology infrastructure to create a premier center for distributed learning through computer mediated" wizardry. Because Gestrode stopped listening at the word "mediated", he added "wizardry" to the otherwise tedious monologue of Dean Frank O. Superfluous. Superfluous would be Gestrode's appellation for the man, or any administrator really who seemed to substitute the bully pulpit of the classroom with the bully pulpit of the mandatory meeting.

Exactly how was this mandatory? Tenured now these last many years, he felt himself removed from the necessity of appearing to care about campus politics, and distanced himself since his unfortunate immersion in the demise of the gay right's advocate, the coed infatuated with the advocate, and that legacy on film of him putting his coat around the naked coed in a touching renaissance of Elizabethan chivalry.[1] That seemed four years ago, and indeed it was. Yet deportment begged him to attend, and he did.

He sat next to Charles Notting, fresh from some lackluster doctoral program, not nearly tenured, and not likely to be at his current abysmal rate of publication. Charles was the department's computer gee-whiz, which is to say that he talked a language no one seemed to understand, actually liked e-mail (the only thing Gestrode liked about e-mail was the delete key), and represented the department on the College's Information Technology in

[1] "Miserere" *Public Voices*, Vol. II, Number 3, 1996, pp. 79-120.

the Curriculum Committee, to which one applied if one desired to purchase some software to use either in the computer labs or privately for whatever reason. There was some hypocrisy in Gestrode's attitude about computer technology inasmuch as he did learn to use the word processor, and found it much easier to compose examinations and papers on the thing. But he didn't play music on his computer, had no games, didn't care to put a cute puppy or pastoral panoramic wallpaper on his desktop screen, and would not have thought to use the World Wide Web for much more than accessing the conference schedules for the American Historical Society.

But Gestrode was painfully aware of the impact that these machines had made on his department and his college. There was a huge infusion of tax dollars to get the desktop computers back in the late 1980s. These boxes were replaced periodically with new machines based upon faculty rank not need. Then there was the installation of the network in the early 1990s. Then there was the magical appearance of a large cadre of individuals who dominated the scene of every meeting: the system administrator, the half-a-dozen computer technicians, and last year, the instructional technologist... some half-baked former English teacher who went around proselytizing faculty to set up a "web presence" and now got paid to do it. She was empty headed as an English teacher, and even more so as the standard bearer of a cause that few thought warranted paying her full time to advocate. He found her condescending, arrogant, and irascible. But the Dean of Libraries, her employer, seemed to find some joy in her company, and in this business, that is about all that matters for administrative types. Her latest public cause was to enlist enough faculty to teach distance learning courses to warrant getting some monster computer program to manage them. That knock would never come to Gestrode's office door, despite the lack of a "Go Away Claudia Plistrome" sign posted thereon.

Gestrode liked the St Elgin's that he knew these decades. It was for many years an oasis in the City, a place of contemplation and liberal arts, a place of engagement, for good discourse, and classes energized by the content. But he had noted, as had many of his colleagues, an insipid erosion of these status things, a detectable shift to a discourse of money, and corporate influence with administrators inviting fewer renowned scholars and more business leaders to address the collective. He heard the word "partnering" so often that now the term was parlance; and his other favorite shift in perception in the language to "customers" not students. It would have been difficult for him to justify the study of Jackson's America on the basis of its commercial appeal, even though last year every faculty member had been told to do just that for each course. So he made up some blandishments about the tourism industry. Good Lord, he thought at the time, the Northwest wasn't even much of a thought on anyone's mind during the Jackson years except that it had beavers. But he wrote it anyway, knowing perfectly well that the ritual of doing it was more important than the content. He doubted if anyone actually ever read the compiled justifications. Just a way to get the faculty to think about their courses as expendable in a world of "credentialing students" and "market driven economies." He wouldn't even talk about his courses as leading to "improved critical thinking skills" as so many of his colleagues had done. He knew better, and he knew that life, alone, improved that faculty.

Charles Notting salivated as the Dean, dressed fastidiously in a brown tweed blazer, hand wound bow tie, wool brown slacks, and pale beige shirt, blathered on about technology, the future, cutting edges, and generosity. He dressed this way when pontificating before the faculty. Most of the time he wore funerary garments, as if the next meeting of the president's cabinet would see him shot and ported out on a folding table for public exhibition in the library foyer. And with administrators this could happen. Some faculty actually longed for this to happen. They secretly pined for the demise of any administrator, and it really didn't matter which one. You might say it was an occupational distraction since administrators served as the only common conversational ground for faculty whose scholarship rarely overlapped with that of their colleagues. Good administrators used to get buildings named after them. Now it was corporate sponsors. Good administrators would move to larger institutions for larger egos or to the private sector for larger paychecks.

Gestrode whispered to Notting, "Please stop cheering him on." Notting strained to turn toward Gestrode, now facing forward again, without giving the appearance that he had lost interest in the Dean. "This will put us on the map."

Gestrode chagrined, "We are on the map. Three miles from the Sound."

The Dean's speech lasted twenty minutes. There followed a representative from the Money at Redwood, who spoke for ten minutes and accepted a plaque in exchange for the five million dollars. On the dais with these two were the chairs of the departments within Arts and Sciences; the System Administrator Bill Halsworth, who was actually wearing a sports coat today instead of his usual mock-green plaid shirt and jeans; and of course Claudia who reminded Gestrode of the woman who shows up to clean the church half way through the wedding uncertain as to whether the bride or the groom's side needs an extra body. Fortunately none of these people talked. They were props.

Gestrode wondered how many plaques this man would receive if he was addressing each of the academic colleges separately. This thought preoccupied him as there came the call for questions, and true to form, Notting flagged his arm like an eager first grader.

"How will the departments organize their efforts to convert all courses to the new technologies of computer mediated instruction? Will the departments receive additional staffing to manage the transfer of audio and video to the server for streaming, or do you anticipate that those within the department with requisite technological skills will be called upon to lead the initiatives?" Notting clearly took advantage of his recognition from the podium if only to ingratiate himself with the Dean, who seemed quite understandably not to know this Notting.

"I can only repeat what I said in my remarks, that the College anticipates enthusiastic support for the distance education distribution initiative, and that we will create appropriate structures for meeting these challenges through the President's Office on Technology Infusion, existing college committees as appropriate, and the excellent staff presently in place dedicated to the College's instructional technology support." The Dean moved to the next question, the eagerly anticipated question on faculty compensation.

Notting collapsed dismayed. Gestrode felt sorry for him. It was a moment of rare empathy, for when Gestrode was seven he was chosen last on a pick up softball game. He noted that Claudia seemed to stiffen a bit, but he doubted that the Dean really was thinking about her and her web pages. In fact, he concluded the Dean was celebrating his articulation, as well he should in these rare moments.

The Q & A lasted another twenty minutes. Gestrode distanced himself with thoughts on his wife, their adopted daughter, the upcoming Church potluck and bazaar, his garden, and any number of fleeting topics that could help him while away the tedium. He could hear Notting panting, but closed it out.

The faculty meeting hastily organized a week later to address the Dean's inspiration was sparsely attended, which indicated a good turn out. Gestrode took his student's seat at the rear, although he could have easily sat in the front. The Chair, Dr. Gwinton Hope, had only recently moved into the esteemed ranks of attending committee meetings as department representative, completing the endless stream of paperwork channeled his way, and begging for dollars from the Dean. Claudia sat next to him at the instructor's desk. Notting sat squarely in front of them as the student begging for attention.

"As you all know, the College has received a large influx of money to purchase a new computing network

designed by our benefactors and to install a course delivery system, also designed by our benefactors, so that we can complete the President's vision of becoming a premier institution in the delivery of our degrees via this technology to a student population worldwide."

"And exactly why would we want to do this?" asked Jerome Fisher, alumnus of Princeton University, and author of the well received monograph, *The Medieval Armies of Christ,* published by University Press in 1987.

"May I?" asked Claudia. The Chair seemed to nod. "The world is changing, and to remain competitive as a college we must step up to the challenges. Our students demand the flexibility in scheduling that distributed education provides, and if we don't provide this, we risk losing them to other institutions that do provide this flexibility."

A campaign stump speech thought Gestrode.

Fisher continued, "Doesn't the character of the institution, its reputation for intimacy, a faculty taking pride in engaging scholarship mean much to you? Do you suppose we should sell out for enrollments we clearly do not need, to open the floodgates for solicitous groveling before the cafeteria mentality of the hordes? Did it occur to anyone that we have something precious here that we ruin with this remote control mentality toward higher education?"

The Chair took exception, "We will have to accommodate both, Jerome. I think there is a concern that our current student population will dissipate in the face of consumer choices in higher education. Students come to appreciate what we have to offer only after arriving, not as a matter of anticipation."

Oblivious to the frustration Jerome evoked, Claudia drifted into her non segue, "We see the strategic plan evolving this way. Each department will create a schedule of course conversion and development. I have brought with me a guide to course conversion" and she patted the stack in front of her containing five times the number needed, and ten times the number to be read. "These guides provide you a detailed description of how to convert your courses for delivery at a distance, handle student assessments on electronic submitted papers, and meet college outcome performance requirements for continued accreditation. I have created a web directory for each of you, and the first step will be the transfer of all paper-based class materials to electronic format. Your department will submit its conversion plan to the Dean, and the Dean will forward to Instructional Support for review." She drew a short breath forestalling anyone–if they cared, from jumping in with rebuttal. "Now I know that many of you are apprehensive (Gestrode thought "Here comes the inevitable"), but change is a part of life, and we think that once you get involved with this technology you will embrace it. This is a wonderful opportunity for the college."

Notting broke free. "Oh, yes. What types of technology does the conversion involve?"

Claudia brightened, "Thank you for that excellent question Charles." Several chortled, and one guffawed. She continued. "Every classroom will be outfitted with several voice activated television cameras, every class will be recorded for broadcast through a new video streaming technology that will allow students throughout the world to dial-up our classes anytime they want. Class registration will be on a rolling basis, so that a student can start and complete them on their own terms. You will have available to them all supporting textual materials on the new course delivery software that will allow students to post comments, review their grades, or even engage in real time chats with fellow students."

"Who are at different stages of the course?" asked a voice from the rear. Gestrode thought it was Mary Dennings, but he wasn't sure as he checked his watch.
"Yes, this might pose a bit of an inconvenience," Claudia sighed.

"Inconvenience? And we are to deliver lectures in a real-time course schedule, which are then canned for off-time review throughout the year, and we are to grade and evaluate these students as their papers come dribbling in, and respond to the first week question with the same breath that we respond to the twelfth week question?" Yes, she was Mary.

Claudia rebounded, "We anticipate creating a 'Frequently Asked Questions' bulletin board for students, and a voice automated telephone system that will provide students with a number of pre-recorded options. So the student that needs clarification on the syllabus can listen to your message on this, and so forth. It is really the genius behind this new system. It is fully automated."

Mary looked incredulous, "And we are going to do this for every class, every term?"

Claudia dismissed her with a flip of the hand, "Oh no," laughing now, "Just the first year. After that all of the classes will be recorded, so you won't have to reinvent yourself each term. We anticipate that most questions will be fleshed out after the first year, so you will be able to focus on what you really do well, namely evaluating student performance."

Gestrode stood. "I respectfully beg to differ. What we really do well is deliver our specialized content. What we really do not want to do, and I trust I speak for my colleagues, is to face incessant grading repertories."

Claudia, "I understand your concern. I felt this myself as a teacher." But of course she didn't, Gestrode thought, or she would not have left teaching, which to his mind was the most noble of all professions. "But you can use on-line testing that will grade student examinations. And here is the great contribution of the new software platform. It evaluates student essays for plagiarism, for writing style, and for content appropriateness, driven by a set of parameters that you create as a key phrase data base. It is really an exciting innovation in education assessment."

The normally reticent James Holstead asked, "What about the technology capabilities of the students? Is that a concern?"

Claudia, "No. All students will be required to purchase a computer especially equipped to work with the new system."

"From whom?" asked Holstead.

"The folks at Redwood will supply the system at a nominal cost built into the cost of tuition," she responded, diverting her eyes to Hope.

Gwinton Hope, "I anticipate that there will be many more questions in the future. But let's keep an open mind about this. It is the vision of our President that this technology will dramatically improve the college's penetration...." Gestrode, although not given to vulgar metaphors, knew exactly what his colleagues were thinking at this juncture. "... into the market, and earn us a new reputation as an institution of quality. If we didn't have the requisite talent here, we probably would not have been chosen for this rather sizeable contribution." Claudia moved around the room with her handout.

It was probably fortuitous that Jerome left the room first, for he deposited Claudia's manual into the trash receptacle near the door, and so created a chain reaction followed in suit by all others who exited, save Notting.

It was on this day that Notting began to disappear one pixel at a time.

In a perfect world, Ian Gestrode would give little thought to the market viability of his courses, or long range strategic visions for the college and his department. He was a man of letters, an avid reader within his discipline with occasional forays into other texts that captured some sense of the immediate. But he was also a man of consuming habits, perfected these many years as an academic having achieved the stature and security of tenure. He was interested in the history of governance. He liked to believe that somehow a cumulative historical imperative drove the nation. With this in mind, he had read Richard Scolve's *Democracy and Technology*. This text suggested to him a blind acceptance of the inevitability of technology without regard for the impact that it had on the institutions of democracy, ultimately corrupting the institutions themselves. Now it faced him in a real way. He was not especially concerned that the grand scheme of the technologists would actually carry the day. At this juncture, it was more an annoyance than a practical concern. The press of corporate dollars on the ultimate design of the academy struck him as pandering of the worst sort, as it did his colleagues, but ultimately they would each settle on the reality that in many ways their days of genteel, sober erudition would be surmounted by this racing stallion of transformation in style, if not content. Perhaps, he thought, that unhappy day of finding his types relegated to a background of social indifference spoke more to their unwillingness to grasp the import of how technology had incrementally eroded the bastions so carefully constructed these last few decades. Had they been more diligent would they have kept the hammer appropriately locked in a tool box for days of pounding nails instead of allowing the hammer to beget the pneumatic nailer, and it diminishing the craftsmanship of the carpenter to a mere instrumentality? Like his colleagues, he accepted the arrival of new technology, lamented the dollars shifted into telecommunications infrastructures and personnel, evoked the occasional hallway banter regarding all this shift in focus, but still carried a stack of papers to class.

The mimeograph gave way to the photocopier. Then one day the copy center disappeared with the issuance of counter-keys for machines placed here and there to log the number of copies each faculty member used. At one time he would have handed off to a secretary his syllabus or examinations to be typed up. Now these individuals were gone, and faculty did their own typing. It seemed inconsequential at the time, for in the trade, each got a series of humming wonders that did these things and made them feel progressive. He had used the same Remington typewriter for twenty years. He liked banging on it. On it he pounded out his dissertation, and subsequent articles for tenure publication rituals. It sat in his attic at home, a friend with whom he could not part, but clearly a guest in his home with no purpose save the warm nostalgia it evoked. But his predecessors had written examination questions on slate walls with Dover chalk. So he had participated in the institutional demise of their pedagogical frame as much as had these new high priests of the obscure. On the human scale it was foolish to blame them, and he imagined that their logic seemed impeccable to those sharing a belief in the power of technologies to transform meaning.

The thought of who he was in the grand academic scheme of things had never previously crossed his mind. Indeed, he was comfortable with his footnote accomplishments. Now an unsettling feeling of obsolescence, which he did not voice, gnawed at him. For the first time in his life he began to feel irrelevant. He began to sense that the liberal arts were like lumbering creatures whose petrified remains dotted the landscape, something to be unearthed and measured, reconstructed for museum voyeurs totally absent of the immediate. Just curiosities for a Saturday excursion, and little more.

In the two weeks since the meeting of the department, all members now rejoined routine issuance of jeremiads. The paper flowed from the instructional technology people, much of it from the insipid, unrelenting Claudia who invariably legitimized everything with a preamble anchored to her own roots within the ranks. One did not

know whether to denounce her as a Charlatan, or to tremble in fear that the technology Gestapo would stage their own version of Kristalnacht, tossing generations of thoughtful scholarship to the bonfire, or worse, relegate it to some electronic database for students to cut and paste. It was to many the end of history, the end of governance, some sort of H. G. Well's "Time Machine" future in which all hunger and strife had ended, and the hapless inhabitants of this world had all knowledge they would need--after all, it was argued, what more could these historians say?—on little polyvinyl disks to be spun on a machine reader for the absent minded amusements of the creatures being fattened for tomorrow's feast.

Jerome plagued Gestrode's office. He had no thought to circumvent the installation of cameras into the classrooms. This had begun immediately following the revelations of inevitability. In the prototype classroom, it was true that you could not escape its roving eye. Jerome's lamentations served little purpose, for none of them had that radical streak necessary to make statements sufficient to persuade. Who would they persuade anyway? Each other?

For the first time in years he heard his colleagues openly discussing retirements from lives without which they would have no purpose. Nothing consumed historians more than to become an artifact of history themselves. They were not trained in the arts of political intrigue save gossip, which had little value except as a kind of release valve from the annoyances of petty bureaucracies and the petty egos thriving within.

Notting was another matter. He was a weed blooming in a desert rain. He was already a world wide web presence with lectures and content available for immediate download anywhere within a circumnavigation of the globe, and probably beyond if aliens had the technology, and now it seemed they probably would be the next great market venture. Notting's little committee once provided the department a brief respite from his vacuous conversations. Now it took on the distinct character of policy shakers. This aspect surfaced within the week as his name became officially attached as the department's technology liaison. So the fortunes of college life cycled. Those unable to bide their time paying tariffs to the system often struck out to establish their fortunes elsewhere.

The college's public relations office, once safely secluded from anything significant in the life of the college by the overwhelming detail of promoting the president and his entourage, now mounted a campaign of flooding the fields with visionary statements. There was the obligatory article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education,* and in several of the lesser read higher education technology journals. The faculty were too dazed to respond thoughtfully to the random phone calls from reporters, and the CNN news cast featuring the spokesperson of the Money from Redwood with St. Elgin's own dapper president clutching a mock text on technology in education by some obscure futurist.

The Money from Redwood had designed a dazzling multimedia presentation from which a twenty second clip ran the airways, as if GM was building a market for a car that did not exist, and consumption should precede product development cycles, for without demand, why would there need to be a product? The floodgates were opened, and Gestrode braced himself for what would disrupt them as surely as a 7.0 on the Richter scale.

Jerome and Mary came into his office after the CNN broadcast. What would they do?

Gestrode thought for a moment, then in a glib moment of genius said, "Conduct all classes on the campus grounds."

"Even in the winter?" mused Mary Dennings.

"I would think especially so," replied Jerome Fisher.

The movement became known as Socrates' Forum. While the pro-technologists faction took their prisoners of war, mostly the fearful untenured, others customarily convened their classes, oblivious to the cameras, and beckoned their students to "follow them". Off they went: sometimes to the verdant knolls of the campus; sometimes to rooms reserved for meetings in the library commons; sometimes to hallways; and sometimes to simply wandering the paths. Their numbers from the St Elgin's academe were few at first. The teachers of chemistry and physics saw no resources outside their laboratories. The mathematicians needed their electronic white boards for drawing out theorems and the graphs. All this was captured to computer memory to be run as a split screen with the professor scribbling on a quarter screen, and the text appearing through the balance.

What struck Gestrode about the affair was how much the technologists had accomplished prior to the coming out ceremony. Obviously meetings had taken place well before the announcements, and how could he have been so oblivious to this bellwether change not to have taken some wind of it? A midsummer maelstrom of fire across the plains could not have moved as quickly. A great many succumbed, and perhaps, he thought, they were genuinely intrigued by the possibilities revealed before them as the "new university" unfolded. The College did not hesitate to reward those who followed, and lucre from Redwood came tumbling out of these slot machines for who all who played. Gestrode saw it differently. He anticipated a final day of reckoning, but not before all those with residual memories of halcyon days relegated to the Old Professors Hall, to draw on pensions and reminisce amongst themselves about the "Little House on the Prairie" or "Leave it to Beaver" as if all these memories made sense, and in the reflection took on a character little resembling any reality of what had really transpired that Spring term 2000.

Many courses were available for the new rolling enrollment policy. For classes replete with fresh recruits not being met, the administration hired adjuncts. Within the term, enrollments swelled the ranks of the nominally employed adjunct faculty, branding them with a false hope of permanency within the ranks. His own courses were handed off to a young woman he had never met, had never seen in print, and about whom he knew little except that she was a "working mother" with a doctorate in the wings. The department chairs routinely had the authority to hire adjuncts, seen as simply an annoying administrative detail in former days to cover the sabbatical or untimely illness of the front line faculty.

Dean Frank O. Superfluous summoned Gestrode to his office exactly two months from the Day of the Tweed. Gestrode suspected it had something to do with the Socrates's Forum, and he let his immediate circle know that he was the first to be brought before the tribunal. Tribunal it was: Claudia stern and drawn, her resources clearly exhausted weeks before; the Dean in his now formal executioner attire; and Notting--aloof, distant, poised to play the sycophant, and now exceedingly transparent. Gestrode strode before them proud and confident. He looked hard at Notting. He was indeed somewhat transparent, as if a vanishing Cheshire Cat. A trick of the eye? Gestrode looked again. Yes, he did indeed appear as if he was more technique than substance.

"Ian," The Dean rose to extend his hand. Gestrode took the chair positioned strategically to put him at a distance from the three without attempting to reconcile with a handshake. The Dean fell back. "These are heady days for St. Elgin's. Who would have thought inquiries into our programs would exceed 400% the normal flow for this time of the year? Quite extraordinary."

"I would have guessed that five million in free tuition would have had the same effect, Dean," Gestrode flatly stated. This assessment was not his alone, for many had calculated what this money would have done in terms of

building the library, or providing endowed chairs, or reducing tuition costs."

Claudia, "Five million? We are at five times that now. With the new Dean of Instructional Development in place, our coalition of corporate sponsors has grown dramatically. The world is hungry for the training opportunities we can now provide."

"Makes you wonder how anyone ever got an education without it, eh?" quipped Gestrode.

"I would say it makes me wonder how your breed continue to be employed," stamped Notting to Gestrode's disingenuous assessment.

"Well, Dr. Notting is being a bit facetious here." The Dean's face contorted with the uncustomary attempt at conciliation. "So the business at hand, Ian. Dr. Notting has accepted the dual position of Department Chair and liaison leader for the Arts and Sciences Technology initiative since Dr. Hope's untimely resignation." Gestrode's jaw dropped. "A temporary appointment, of course, for the Department will need to ratify his appointment. I see your role to expedite that endorsement so that we can move on with the conversion as quickly as possible. We have to have the infrastructure and faculty in place for a full curriculum offering this summer."

"This summer? Summer is respite from routine classes. Faculty use this to re-tool, and to write." Gestrode's thoughts perambulated across the panoply of fragmented images.

Claudia snickered, "Come now. We all know perfectly well that little of that takes place during the summers. I taught English for many seasons, and never found it to be the case that..."

Gestrode cut back, "Claudia, I think you can drop the professorial pretense now. You were never much of a teacher, and certainly never aspired to the life of ideas. Whether you are called to the voice of another muse I do not know, but I doubt that you could muster a single vote to reclaim your life as an educator." This much was common chat in the college where divisions between department politics dissipated over a game of bridge among colleagues from the disciplines. But Notting here, this poor fellow has yet to publish a single article, and I doubt that the faculty would endorse his accession to chair. I see black smoke on this vote."

"Since the Faculty Senate has given voting privileges to the adjunct faculty, the vote may not be as predictable as you would anticipate Ian," said the Dean. Gestrode looked at him in disbelief. The Dean continued, "Oh, didn't you know this? Well, it pays to keep one's allies in the loop, doesn't it? There was a meeting of the Senate called last week."

"I sit in the faculty Senate. Who called it?"

"Oh, I believe the President has the prerogative to call a session as necessary. Notices were delivered to the elected faculty thirty minutes into classes last Monday. Didn't you receive your notice?"

Gestrode saw it exactly. "Well I congratulate the rats for their mutiny. I hope they can steer."

"This is not helpful Ian. The case is quite simple. You are a senior member of the Department. We are meeting with the senior faculty of each of the divisions, to... ah, persuade you to see the practical side of matters. You have been with St. Elgin's now for many years, and while you have elected to be a rather obscure member of the College Faculty, your name is prominently associated with this upstart effort to stall the conversion. The College trustees are unanimous in their endorsement of this endeavor, the President of the College has become a prominent leader in instructional technology enhancements, and quite frankly, we are all a little mystified that there should be any resistance to what obviously brings to this college wonderful opportunities in leadership and revenue enhancements. Now I know that you have an adopted daughter with special educational requirements,

and an estranged daughter to whom some additional financial considerations might prove helpful. The President has authorized me to increase your salary by 50% if you will join our ranks. You will have some modest increases in student load, but nothing you can't handle with some thought to adjusting course requirements beginning with the summer term."

"I see," Gestrode stared past the three through a window behind them giving a wonderful panoramic view of the manicured pastoral greens punctuated with the college's Department of Agronomy's nationally renown collection of exotic perennials. "I wasn't prepared to accept a bribe today, so this will have to be carefully weighed in light of your obvious efforts to resurrect J. Edgar Hoover."

Notting stood. Gestrode could see the chair behind him unobstructed by what must have been the corporeal Notting displaced by the shadow Notting. "I have the adjunct proxies Ian. They outnumber the full time faculty on a bad day, and equal your votes on a good day."

"Notting, you overestimate how important you are," Gestrode enveloped the room with a grand gesture. "This has never been about you. You have found your moment in the electron. This chess game is not as complex as you would like to believe. The larger issue, which you do not grasp, is that we are seeing the death throes of a great American institution. St. Elgin's power does not come from the immediate, but the legions of our past, our graduates. Our reputation does not rise or fall because something named Notting was conceived and belched upon the earth thirty years ago. We are indeed the sum of all who have come before. A business plan does not change that. And if we die because a worm has chewed its way into the vine protecting us from the sun and hot winds, then the worm had best digest slowly, for the vine cannot be replenished when the core has rotted."

"So elegant, and so anachronistic," sighed Claudia. "I told you," she spoke to the Dean, "that this fellow lacked the vision to succeed."

Gestrode shook his head, "No Claudia, you and I simply have a different appreciation for what success means in higher education."

Jerome Fisher burst into Gestrode's office. Gestrode was reading the last of a series of student essays, a task made more laborious since he would no longer accept any paper typed out on a word processor. Students were required to read facsimiles of primary documents culled from the College's collection of early 19th century papers and to estimate social conditions leading to the Jacksonian spirit of democracy. He had taken his own office computer and positioned it in the hall along with several others from his colleagues. In many ways he felt reconnected to his discipline, although his students obviously strained from the politics of peaceful civil disobedience, and had themselves bifurcated into contentious camps of pro and con technologies of learning, a concept rife with complications in a modern context.

"Gwinton has retired! Just like that. No cake. No plaque. Just a fishing pole on the Sound."

"And a nice check to wish him bon voyage no doubt," shrugged Gestrode.

"Charles Notting is the Chair?"

"So he tells me, his adjunct proxies in hand."

"This bodes ill, Ian. I don't believe we will win this one." Jerome Fisher collapsed into Gestrode's heavy chair. "Mary Dennings just signed on for the summer broadcasts. She will tape all of her lectures and work from her home. She has been given a nice stipend, and two student 'work studies' to collect and post grades. There is talk of leasing out a part of the Administration Building for the Money people to set up a nerve center for the technology initiatives." He shrank into the chair.

"Did you suppose winning was ever what we were about? I always felt something of a kinship for Custer at Little Big Horn. What thoughts must have rumbled through his mind at those last throes on this earth? Dreams of his wife? Perhaps the dying embers of a nourished political career. No, Jerome, we weren't about winning. We were about writing a page to the history of this business. But we blame ourselves. We were never vigilant enough. We sated on the routines, and filled our buckets with empty excuses. We had it in our hands to make of the tools a hammer, and instead, allowed the hammer to make of us nails."

"The English Department has already signed on to the conversion. Philosophy? Well, who the hell knows what they're thinking? We never had the sciences in our camp as shackled as they are to the grants funding cycle. A good third of the department chairs are either suddenly AWOL or sipping tea at Redwood. And the rest, well, as best I can tell, precipitously clinging to the vines dangling over the cliffs. My wife tells me to collect and head out. Maybe farm or something."

"You a farmer? Your tractor will be stuck in the mud and you'll be busy reviewing an article for some historical journal." Gestrode laughed at this image of Fisher.

Jerome smiled, "What will you do Ian?"

"I will continue to discover how to best teach history, and when history is no longer to be taught, then I will sell French fries to the obscure of the next generation. We tried to make a statement, Jerome, but the world has deaf ears. You and I want to believe that 'the art' of teaching would triumph, but it never has, and when it did, it only became the subject matter for people like you and me. I don't see myself as that relevant really. Perhaps that is my saving grace. There is very little nobility in me. I am just a man of uncertain terms, struggling to meet my Maker's certain terms."

There was a long silence of the type enjoyed by good friends whose mutual company alone sufficed to whittle away the time together.

"You see," Gestrode lifted himself from the grading desk, "Good teachers are remembered by their students, and when there are no students to remember, then good teachers are forgotten. Our success comes not through our library shelves, but through those kind enough to reflect on their moments with us. The more the pity for the Nottings and Claudias who call themselves educators, but have no legacy beyond how they spent their paychecks. Perhaps we hungered too much for the anticipated revelry following their defeat. Notting and Claudia were already defeated."

"Lofty sentiments," Fisher mumbled, "But I doubt that they will see it that way."

"I suggest we work hard at not debasing ourselves through debasing them."

Gestrode didn't recall who called first with the news.

It came suddenly following an announcement in the *Wall Street Journal* that a German company had flushed onto the market a new information technology strategy that made operating systems obsolete. The new technology was based in a neural network design that few understood, but it promised to revolutionize the computer industry as surely as Vint Cerf's introduction of a coding language for the World Wide Web had revolutionized information sharing.

On the heels of a dramatic downturn in NASDAQ technology stocks, a solar flair sent hurdling toward the earth gamma radiation of unprecedented magnitude, engulfing the two hundred communication satellites orbiting the earth as easily as a tsunami would engulf Japan. Computer screens didn't even blink when the satellites' little solar panels crinkled and wrinkled. Cell phones went dead. Large sections of the Internet grid went down. Defense systems choked, then died. Redundancy systems were taxed beyond their capabilities. The full implications were yet to be unraveled, and the President of the United States cautioned investors not to panic, that engineers around the world were engaged in resolving the dilemma "as he spoke."

The moment was one that organizational theorist Charles Perrow would call "Normal Accidents," that is, when complex systems fail through simple things interacting with each other.

That Monday in June, just a few days before the faculty would embrace an ancient custom, robing for the last time of the season to signify the accomplishments of St Elgins' current generation of graduates, the College President announced that the Technology Initiative was put on immediate hold for the foreseeable future as they grappled with the economic consequences, ramifications and a dozen other suitable miscreant descriptors. Naturally, tuition would be reimbursed, summer classes would be re-vamped to fit the exigencies, and adjuncts furloughed.

Gestrode's plans for the summer included a leisurely drive to Kentucky to rekindle bonds to an elderly aunt whose health had declined. He wanted his young daughter to have a sense of connection to his family. He saw no reason to change any of this. He also built into the trip a few days at the Hermitage, just to walk the grounds that Jackson walked.

Then he would spend a few weeks reviewing and reading for the fall term.

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Welfare Class Identity and the Rhetoric of Erasure in Academia

Vivyan Adair and Sandra Dahlberg

The Myth of Equalization

In response to the increasing disparity between the lives of the poor and the privileged in this country, politicians, education policy makers, and citizens respond with the credo that a "good education" is the great equalizer. Education, as the myth goes, will unlock the door to economic opportunity and thus enable disadvantaged groups to "pull themselves up by their own bootstraps" allowing them to live the American dream. According to Roslyn Mickelson and Stephen Smith in "Can Education Eliminate Race, Class, and Gender Inequality?":

> The dominant ideology assumes that American society is open and competitive, a place where an individual's status depends on talent and motivation, not inherited position, connections or privileges linked to ascriptive characteristics like gender or race. To compete fairly everyone must have access to education free of the fetters of family background, gender and race. Since the middle of this century, the reform policies of the federal government have been designed, at least officially to enhance individual's opportunities to acquire education. (328)

Education envisioned to facilitate at least the promise of upward mobility is designed for a model student, and it is around this archetype of the model student that curricula, methodology, pedagogy, and ideal scholarly interaction are envisioned and set. Education in this country was founded on the premise that to educate superior classes of Americans was to hone and refine privileged knowledge, which white, propertied men enjoyed and education justified. Although educational theorists have worked to change the reading of the model or normative student to address charges of racism and sexism, the values that underwrite the original model are extant in present day hierarchical valuations.

The normative Universal student today is marked and read as naturally singular, rational, ordered, stable and mobile—qualities originally associated with white, propertied, educated males—or capable of progressing to become so. These privileged codes are juxtaposed against the alleged multiplicity, disorder, irrationality, illogic, instability, and stagnation of those who do not—and therefore, in this logic should not—enjoy power and authority. In "Order and Disorder" Ruth Smith explains that in this narrative logic:

> Poor [women] are on the outside not as a result of external order and rule, but as a result of their own nature. They are not marginalized because of socially constructed interpretations or institutions. Rather, according to this construction it is by their own nature that they prevent themselves from participation and allow marginalization to happen to them. Within the logic of this ideology the 'natural' extends into the interior

> of the person, erasing essential signs of outer control and rule, a logic that finds its home in the bodies of the poor. (211)

In academe, poor single mothers are marked as internally deviant as they are juxtaposed against the "deserving" normative students who are read as ordered, stable, singular and progressive. In this way privileged epistemes are written into a script of naturalized authority. This dichotomous and hierarchical binary, pitting the deserving student against his undeserving counterpart, shores up myriad valuations that reify and naturalize hegemonic power.

As ideals of American democracy emerged in our national consciousness and began to fuse with capitalist visions of education as a utilitarian project, women, non-whites and the poor were allowed and then eventually required to be educated. Yet, those "others" were only to be educated to the degree to which they could become productive workers and compliant citizens; certainly they were educated to mitigate their threat to those whose power was viewed as fragile and yet just. In recent years schools—including graduate schools—have attempted to include the voices of those education had previously denied. Yet, as always, only certain voices are heard. Women and people of color may enter and gain the credentials of the academy only when their values, language, and presence mesh with privileged academic codes. The same is true, of course, of working-class and poor students. A chosen few may enter, but only if they are willing to transform themselves and then to market their transformation as proof of equal access to upward mobility through education. In this closed circuit of desire, only specific bodies are read as mobile, as being able to make the transformation from "undeserving" to" deserving" student/citizen.

Working-class students *can* be read as being mobile, indeed our entire national narrative is based on the promise of upward mobility through work and sacrifice. To the degree that their presence can reinforce the myth and absolve the privileged members of the academy of guilt, working-class students are read as deserving albeit "rough" idealized students. This is not so with poverty-class individuals. Poor students, and particularly poor single mothers are de-historicized, de-contextualized, and made to represent static "others" who can rarely be transformed. This static otherness is read as an essentialized truth of poor women. The fact, once again, that poor women *have* neither authority nor voice in the academy, is offered as proof that they *should have* no power and thus are not entitled to education.

Gayatri Chakrovorty Spivak, in her work on the academic subaltern in "Explanation and Culture: Marginalia," points out that the center welcomes "selective inhabitants of the margin in order to better exclude the margin" (206). When individual poor women *are* allowed to transcend adumbrated class boundaries, their newly positioned bodies are read as evidence that the system works and that individuals and not systems are to be blamed for their own failures. Allegedly transformed bodies are produced and read as narratives of facilitated mobility, freedom and choice, allowing us to maintain a belief in both an economic system based on exploitation and an ideology that marks us all as beyond exploitation. These figures in motion are read and made to bear signs that shore up hegemonic privilege and values, yet they are never allowed to speak openly, for if they did, the story would not be one of fluid and absolute movement, but rather one of contradiction, loss, and erasure.

We want to present the stories of Campbell and Lee, two poor women who made it into and through graduate school. Theirs are stories of vexed and thwarted paths of "upward mobility" in the Academy. The two began their lives as poor children in generationally impoverished families and grew to become profoundly poor single mothers. Their stories are not reflected in the paradigmatic myth of even "working-class" mobility. Working-class is still the term being used to define "outsiders" and yet as truly poor single mothers, Campbell and Lee are still fighting for recognition both in and out of the academy. Both believed, perhaps naively, that the academy was a place where they could be freed of class and maternal stigma, a place where they would be judged on their own scholarship and hard work. The process Campbell and Lee began of moving from poverty to an allegedly professional class was full of twists and turns, carrying with it examples of rejection and loss, oppression and resistance, denial and erasure. Indeed, both contend that throughout their educations and into their early careers,

rather than being transformed they were simultaneously "silenced and indelibly marked and mis-marked with class, gender, motherhood" with the ideologically coded devaluations thrust upon them. Their stories are not unique, and we offer these as representative examples of the experiences of poor women in higher education, including our own.

Mobility and Resistance: Lee's Story

Shortly after Lee began graduate school, a member of the departmental graduate studies committee advised her that her chances for success were slim unless she took quick steps to improve her situation. Lee was stunned. She had been admitted to other highly selective programs and did not understand why she would be admitted and then disenfranchised. In the course of the conversation, Lee was assured that her academic credentials were strong, but that there were questions about her "commitment" to the program because she was a single parent—and she was poor. When Lee asked how she could demonstrate this "commitment," the answer was swift, "you need to prove yourself through institutional service, and hire a nanny." What was not said explicitly, but was very clearly conveyed, was that this professor assumed that Lee needed to learn to work hard, and that she needed to "pay" for the opportunity to study through extra work.

Lee grew up facing class discrimination. In her family more than four generations of children were raised in poverty and on welfare. Although a fifteen-year marriage in a working-class environment had removed her from poverty temporarily, divorce in the middle of Lee's education resulted in a return to poverty for herself and her children. That Lee was indelibly marked by the program as a poor, single mother was her serious "flaw." What she was experiencing was the reality poor people face, particularly poor single mothers, when confronted with the rhetoric of class erasure in academia. This rhetoric of erasure, although present at the undergraduate level, is, as Lee learned, significantly heightened in graduate school in what can easily be compared to welfare policy that is, according to Handler and Hasenfeld, "driven by the belief that the poor pose silent, insidious threats to dominant ideologies and the social order . . .. [and] a major threat to the economic order" (27-28). It was one thing to obtain an undergraduate degree and move on, it was quite another to attempt to enter the professorial ranks. Lee states that, "Before the department would accept me, they wanted me to 'erase' my poverty—with what resources I am not sure." It was as though they viewed Lee's poverty the same way as the public often views welfare recipients, they wanted to believe that she chose it. In doing so, they were able to make deliberate distinctions between "deserving" graduate students and those such as Lee, the "undeserving" poor, through the application of simplistic stereotypes that according to Homi K. Bhabha not only present a "false representation of a given reality," but reinforce "an arrested, fixated form of representation that, in denying the play of difference (that the negation through the other permits), constitutes a problem for the *representation* of the subject in significations of psychic and social relations" (80).

In the United States, education is routinely touted as the great equalizer that will reward talent and ambition, regardless of class affiliation. In "Tired of Playing Monopoly?" Donna Langston states that "in the myth of the classless society, ambition and intelligence alone are responsible for success. The myth conceals the existence of a class society, which serves many functions. One of the main ways it keeps the working class and poor locked into a class-based system in a position of servitude is by cruelly creating false hope" (127). Lee points out that this "position of servitude" in graduate school was ensured through the "work" mandate of institutional service, and the edict to hire a nanny "cruelly created false hope" as the department asked the impossible of her and defined her inability to meet that requirement as a deficiency of commitment.

Handler and Hasenfeld in *The Moral Construction of Poverty* examine the symbolism of work that defines the deserving/undeserving categories for the poor:

> Those who are deserving are morally excused from work. . . . For this group moral ambiguity has been resolved. . . . The undeserving are not morally excused from work, and it is among this group that the contradictions and ambiguities are manifest. (38)

The actual labor of teaching as a teaching assistant was viewed as a reward, as a preliminary entry into the profession. It was status, acceptance, but not "work" in the same sense that is implied in the welfare policy. The welfare policy definition of "work" more appropriately applies to the concept of institutional service which is unpaid, time consuming, and when required to prove "commitment," stigmatizing. As Handler and Hasenfeld posit, "the work requirement casts welfare recipients as morally depraved because it assumes that they lack the inner motivation to work, which must, therefore, be forced upon them" (38-39). In academic terms, there was an assumption that poor students lacked the "inner motivation" or "commitment" that must, therefore, be inscribed upon them through mandated institutional service.

In Lee's program, institutional service was not required for the "deserving" graduate students; in fact, most were advised to avoid such service as it might detract from their studies. This rigid divide and discrepancies in expectations reinforces two major components of welfare policy in an academic environment: humiliation and false hope. Langston notes that "the creation of hope through tokenism keeps a hierarchical structure in place and lays the blame for not succeeding on those who don't" (127). Lee demonstrates that the burden of institutional service, when added to outside work loads, course loads, and parenting, undermine potential success in the program while offering "hope" of acceptance when sufficient service is rendered. She is convinced, however, that "had I *not* succeeded, my failure would undoubtedly have been attributed to my class affiliation and my inability to survive the 'academic' rigors."

As a poor single mother, Lee was kept on the perimeter, constantly warned that her "progress" was being evaluated on a quarterly basis and that her inclusion was "provisional." Although Campbell had a teaching assistantship, Lee was told she would not be considered for one until the issues concerning her commitment were resolved. At the same time, Lee and Campbell were required to perform institutional service, and both were told (separately) that one Incomplete grade would be grounds for dismissal from the program. In separate conversations with different professors and program personnel, Campbell and Lee were advised that a rigid and rigorous academic schedule must be maintained to remain in the program. At the same time, accommodations were routinely given to the "deserving" students – that is upper-class and middle-class students – including lenient Incomplete policies, a more relaxed schedule for academic progress, added financial assistance, and less restrictive teaching assistantships—because it was assumed that they *belonged* in the program, and the program did not want to lose them. However, as poor single mothers, both Campbell and Lee had to continually prove that they "belonged." Lee and Campbell both met the mandated requirements and each finished a master's degree and a Ph.D. in less than five and a half years. In doing so Campbell and Lee completed the graduate program (and found good, tenure track jobs in a tight academic job market) *years* before their "deserving" peers did so. To Campbell and Lee, the correlation between this academic rhetoric of class erasure and the rhetoric of welfare was obvious—the "deserving" students had little obligation to work or to prove themselves, while the actions of the "undeserving" poor were suspect.

In "Arts of the Contact Zone," Mary Louise Pratt examines the autoethnographic process against the application of linguistic power. Pratt explains that:

> Descriptions of interactions between people in conversation, classrooms, medical and bureaucratic settings, readily take it for granted that the situation is governed by a single set of rules or norms shared by all participants. Despite whatever conflicts or systematic social differences might be in play, it is assumed that all participants are engaged in the same game and that the game is the same for all players. Often it is. But of course it often is not, when speakers are from different classes or cultures, or one party is exercising authority and another is submitting to it our questioning it." (38)

Such was the case with the graduate school "game" in which the rhetoric of protecting academic rigor was used to justify the perpetuation of privilege, in which two very different sets of rules were in play and the rhetoric attempted to conceal the prosecution of poverty that these dual systems produced.

Lee survived the first two years of graduate school by working two low-paying, on-campus jobs to make ends meet. She sold plasma, participated in paid experiments, and sold her eggs to a fertility clinic. At the same time, Lee maintained full-time enrollment and earned excellent grades. When she completed her master's degree, Lee owned up to the fact that she would forever be marked in the program by her poverty and maternity, and sought ways to advance her career in the larger academic arena where her class status was unknown and, therefore, not a liability. Lee accepted a teaching position at a nearby community college while still pursuing full-time graduate study. She learned to pass. When she was awarded a fellowship from Harvard University, the graduate program decided that Lee was now "deserving" and offered her the chance to quit her secure teaching position (with benefits) and become a TA. Lee offers that, "I resisted the temptation to remind them that I still did not have a nanny." In addition, Lee's rags-to-riches success was immediately exploited by the program as proof that academia is unbiased and not classed. Lee had proven that she could indeed pull herself up by her own bootstraps, and the program's professors and personnel then prided themselves on giving her the opportunity to do so. Lee feels that, "Most people in the program seemed genuinely unaware, or unconcerned, with the way that I was treated when I began the program, as if the additional requirements had 'made' me succeed rather than recognizing that I succeeded in spite of those added burdens." The very professors that had blocked Lee's way then asked her to disclose her strategies to the program so that the "hardships" faced by the "deserving" graduate students could be further alleviated.

By rejecting their offer of "acceptance," Lee says that she was immediately perceived to be "ungrateful," a quality routinely applied to the undeserving poor who do not allow themselves and their experiences to be appropriated by the dominant class. Yet, in doing so, Lee had reclaimed her voice by embracing what bell hooks calls "marginality as [a] site of resistance" whereby "understanding marginality as position and place of resistance is crucial for oppressed, exploited, colonized people" (342). Thus ensued a battle to determine who would produce the text of Lee's upward mobility. Horatio Alger-type rumors began to circulate in the department that tokenized and fetishized Lee's positionality in a way that seemingly offered hope to disenfranchized "others" but, at the same time, appropriated her transformation in a manner that attempted to reify her silence, making Lee "complicitous in the exploitation of those with whom I shared the margins." Lee's resistance to silence, from her place in the margins, further allowed her to retain her culture of origin and to resist the disavowal of the self inherent in the transformative process. Langston reminds us that, "Becoming college educated doesn't mean we have to, or want to, erase our first and natural language and value system. It's important for many of us to remain in and return to our communities to work, live, and stay sane" (131). Lee concurs, "Becoming college educated, earning a Ph.D. has not erased my culture of poverty but has transformed the ways in which I am able to interrogate the hegemonic class stratifications. I now have a voice."

Redressing the Unspeakable: Campbell's Story

Lee's story is one of attempted erasure. Campbell met a very different fate, but one that ultimately served the same purpose. She was not erased but was re-written. As Campbell entered graduate school she was warned by her program chair, that in order to make it as a student, and as a graduate teaching assistant, she would have to make some of the same "tough choices" that the chair, as a woman and as a parent, had been forced to make before her. Her advisor's first piece of advice was to find "superior" child-care – she recommended several – and to make sure that Campbell's husband was willing to let her make graduate school and teaching her only priorities, as the professor had done. Campbell recalls, "When I made it clear that I had no husband and could never afford her idea of childcare, she simply shook her head, lamented my inability to make good choices and refused to advise me from that point on." The advisor's sense and sentiment that Campbell was making bad

choices, like having the bad taste to be poor, was a portent of the way her position would be framed throughout her graduate career.

Campbell felt that she was fortunate to have been offered a teaching position when the department suspected that she would be unreliable—as they often pointed out—because she was a poor welfare mother. There were a few other mothers in her teaching program, but, as Campbell recalls, they were never made to feel suspect because they were "committed enough" to be able to leave their children with husbands, and had enough economic resources to attend costly conferences and take prestigious international research positions that would further entitle them to good jobs. The teaching stipend Campbell was so lucky to receive was about $900 a month. In order to teach, Campbell had to sign a contract stating that she would not work anywhere else, even though that $900 per month put she and her five year old daughter at 70% of the poverty level for a family of two in her area. When she applied to do extra work-study Campbell was reprimanded and told by her teaching advisor that graduate students *could* live on that salary and that she would just have to buckle down and be more budget conscious. This salary could, indeed, support a single "normative and thus deserving graduate student." Campbell's position as an aberration was one that her advisors could use against her, but never really were able or willing to interrogate. Campbell's body, her child, and her material needs were simply reinscribed as pathological in a paradigm that marked her as "other" in contrast to the normative and thus "deserving students."

Campbell remembers, with great anguish, that:

> "As profoundly poor children our bodies had been indelibly marked by poverty, and those signs were now being read and reinscribed by our professors, peers, and superiors as proof of the mistakes we had made, and would presumably make again. I came into academe with teeth that had never received adequate care, childhood injuries and ailments that had not been properly treated, tattered and ill-fitting charity clothing, and a posture that reflected my fear of taking up space, resources, time, or even air."

This earnest and diligent student's body – a worn transcript of the sacrifices she had already been forced to make – was read as need for further proof of her willingness to sacrifice in order to transcend her origin of alleged stagnation, disorder, and illogic.

In order to transcend that lack, Campbell's language and thinking had to be sacrificed in order to prove her worth. In her cohort, middle-class and wealthy students were learning to hone and clarify what were presumed to be their native abilities, working-class students were being taught to reshape their useful but unpolished senses of the world by becoming bi-dialectal, and Campbell was being forced to give up and make abject her otherwise useful and productive ways of thinking, speaking and being in the world. Advisors, who were admittedly committed to her advancement, guided Campbell into literary studies and European cultural theory that would distance her from her background and illustrate her ability to transcend what they perceived as her lack – perhaps her triple lack as a woman, a mother, and a poor person – with speed and rigor.

Campbell's sense of dislocation and fragmentation was further exacerbated in classes where she often became both the subject and the object of investigation. Experiencing an overwhelming sense of liminality she recalls one particularly painful experience:

> "In my class students and teachers alike were both lamenting and laughing at the inability of the poor to come to political consciousness. One student, the daughter of a doctor and a lawyer, pointed out how welfare women in particular were 'too busy bowling and breeding, and too numb with complacency' to fight for political equity. As the class chuckled with amused agreement, I once again felt myself ripped in two. I was laughing with my colleagues about my own existence. In the bitterness of that moment, I knew that I was homeless."

As Lee pointed out, for the entirety of their academic careers she and Campbell were also strongly encouraged to perform an extraordinary amount of institutional service, so that, as one teacher pointed out, they could never be accused of being lazy or "sliding through on a pity ticket." This work further disenfranchised Campbell materially, emotionally, and intellectually. The extra burden of hours of weekly service work was required of poor women like Lee and Campbell in addition to their already backbreaking schedules. Campbell remembers those days:

> "Rising at 3:00 am to correct student papers and make lesson plans; taking buses from home, to childcare, to the university and then back again every day; using public transportation with my daughter every evening to do my laundry, go to food banks, try to collect food stamps, access assistance in paying energy bills, or to visit free health clinics; arriving home at 7:00 or 8:00 in the evening so that I could care for my exhausted and often ill daughter, and then cook, clean and study until midnight; trying to get three hours of sleep so that I could start all over again in the morning."

Throughout her education Campbell continued to sell her blood, engage in paid medical experiments, survive on rancid and expired food bank donations, and work and study to the point of exhaustion. Her "otherness" was continuously inscribed on her body, while at the same time, her tanned, relaxed, and collected peers were preferred and rewarded – as one of her favorite professors put it – for not being so "tightly wound," for being "natural and easy scholars who had a healthy sense of proportion and balance."

While Campbell's body was read as pathological, she indeed began to suffer from anomie and a sense of fragmentation. Yet, she felt that she had to keep her anxiety over her dislocation hidden. She knew that her shabby clothes were welcomed as proof of her inferiority, however an expression of her internal pain would have irredeemably signaled her inability to transcend what was perceived as her naturalized bodily condition, her weakness of character, her lack of commitment, and her potential inability to survive the demands of graduate school. She notes:

> "I internalized and began to try to erase this image of my own undeservedness. I believed that if I missed even one day of work or school to take care of my child I would be dropped from the program. As a result, when on several occasions my five-year-old daughter was ill, I was forced to leave her at home unattended. On only one occasion did I complain to a counselor that I was being forced to leave my daughter at home because I was so fearful of being dismissed, even though my counterparts took off days and sometimes weeks for personal trips. On that one occasion, after telling me that 'all graduate students have it tough,' the counselor called the Department of Child Protective Services to report me for abandoning and neglecting my underage child."

Campbell learned from that experience to pretend that she had no child at home, that she was not spending afternoons selling blood or trying to get food stamps, that she was not up all night worrying about the $78,000 debt she was accruing, that she chose to wear Salvation Army clothes, and that she did not go to costly conferences because she was doing more important things. She learned to pass, and the more she passed the more Campbell was rewarded. She learned to pretend that her cultural history was nothing but a site of chaos and lack that she couldn't wait to leave behind. Campbell recalls that:

> "I learned to laugh with others at my supposed disregard for my physical appearance. I never spoke of my child. Eventually, I was heralded as the model of working-class mobility. I had been a skinny kid from the projects, a high school drop out, and an unwed mother, but was now a respectable member of the working-class who would someday be transformed into a professional with their assistance."

By passing Campbell was marked as single and ordered, dedicated to only the academy, and living proof that Lee and other poor women had nothing to complain about because her position was somehow proof that the academy was valuing and supporting those it was being accused of silencing. In this way, as in so many other venues, the have-nots are pitted against the have-nothings, and the winners in this contest are, as always, the privileged. Campbell was tokenized and made to represent the new, inclusive and enlightened graduate academy, while inside she knew that the truth of who she was, was simply unspeakable.

Policy and the Penalty of Poverty

Campbell and Lee were allowed to remain in the academy as poor single parents only if they agreed to erase their identities of origin and adapt the personas of working-class students diligently attempting to transcend even that identity. Both women contend that there are some experiences that even today they cannot bring themselves to face, let alone share. On the other hand, as Langston points out, histories of class oppression "don't just float out with the rinse water." The inscriptions and the pain of their experiences are still with Lee and Campbell, and will continue to mark them. Passing today as academic professionals, Lee and Campbell are only now able to come to grips with some of the oppression and erasure they experienced as poor single mothers who were attempting to "pull [them]selves up by [their] own bootstraps" through education, and yet they feel that it is crucial to do so.

In sharing their stories we hope to disrupt the use of poor women's bodies and positions as proof of American academic class and gender mobility, and complicate the notion of education as the great equalizer. Lee and Campbell are not anomalies. In our institutions there are hundreds of thousands of women like them; there are many more who did not make it in their educational pursuits and remain trapped in poverty, not because they lacked the drive or the intellect, but because they were unable to keep clearing the road-blocks placed in their paths.

Clearly, policy changes are needed to address the disenfranchisement of the poor in higher education. But the first step is exposing the issue to debate, which we hope this article does. Tough questions need to be considered: With competing policies for multicultural awareness, is class identity recognized and sensitively addressed? Are academic personnel shown how to recognize unconscious class stereotypes and negate them and their impact? Is the fallacy that class status is chosen challenged and replaced with a recognition of systems that perpetuate economic and social marginalization? We are not asking for either leniency or concessions for the poor in academia. Rather, we are seeking a more level playing field on which class-based assumptions and concomitant policy are acknowledged, interrogated, and critiqued.

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Beyond the Limits: Reflections of a Black Working Class Academic

Frank E. Dobson

"You have tenure," they say. "Relax," they say. "You've got it made now." What they don't realize is that I wasn't supposed to be here in the first place. These white walls were not supposed to be my walls of my work, except perhaps for me to wash, as the presence of numerous black custodians attests to nightly. On my campus, there are more black custodians and cleaners than professors and administrators combined, campus-wide. I always speak to these brothers and sisters, "what's happening," a ritual of greeting that I hope gets past the fact that they clean my office, take out my trash. Based on my background, I shouldn't be walking these halls as another Ph.D. but cleaning them instead. The only cleaning I do in this place is within the essays and stories of my students, scouring their prose for mistakes like my momma scoured a white family's kitchen. Black, working-class and first-generation college graduate, I am aware that my presence within these halls is perhaps a source of pride to some ("the university has another black prof") and a menace to others (I have colleagues who've never greeted me), but I see it as testimony to the lessons I learned from hardworking parents who, together, haven't been on a college campus more than a dozen times.

As a black boy growing up in Buffalo, NY during the 50's and 60's, I observed how my parents worked. My father labored in a steel mill for over forty years. My mother worked in our home, in canning factories, and as a domestic in the home of an upper class white family. Yet, growing up, I didn't know my family was working class--didn't realize we were *any* class. I learned early that my parents worked to pay bills. I learned, whether we lived on Myrtle, Kingsley, or Welker Streets, they worked to pay the rent. And, later, after they purchased the house where they still reside, I realized they would have to continue paying for our home, which meant they would continue working. I knew, in whatever neighborhood we lived, the jobs of my friends' parents were similar to those of mine. Republic Steel, Chevy, Buffalo Forge, Bethlehem Steel, the names of factories, were familiar words for black, white and brown kids of my generation and class in the Nickel City. Our dads and, later, when the factories seemed to have caught the "enlightened" mood of the country, our moms, might be working "midnights," "the swing shift," or "the 4 to 12." Our parents might forego spending a holiday at home to get "time and a half" or "double time."

Throughout my career in academe, when I have been asked to assess my occupational outlook, my reply has frequently been, "it's a job." This response is due largely to the lessons my parents taught me about work. My dad worked for and at Republic Steel. For many reasons, including the union, he considered himself a steel worker. But that was it. He worked long hours for many years, yet it was always for him "just a job." Clearly, some of this is attributable to the distinction between a job and a professional career. But not all of it. This man, like his wife, was an avid reader. Furthermore, for a number of years, my father was offered a promotion, from assistant foreman to foreman, which he steadfastly rejected. I now understand why he refused this promotion (like I understand my own refusals to serve on yet another committee). He declined the promotion because it would mean becoming a salaried employee, losing the protection of the union and being "on call," ready whenever the plant beckoned. He would become less anonymous, less invisible, within the factory. My dad treated the plant as loosely as possible. Although I do not know if he ever stole anything from Republic

Steel, I now regard his cavalier attitude toward his job as an example of something more than simple disinterest. In *Race Rebels*, Robin Kelley suggests there is a "hidden transcript" of resistance and repudiation on the part of black working class people expressed in "daily conversations, folklore, jokes, songs, and other cultural practices." Kelley further notes that this "hidden transcript," sometimes manifested in "theft, footdragging, [or] the destruction of property" constitutes what anthropologist James Scott terms "infrapolitics"—daily acts of survival and resistance (8). Ultimately, Kelly taps into notions of a tradition of resistance among African Americans, even when, on the surface, that resistance is masked. However, my father's resistance to Republic Steel was not masked from me. Because of his stance, I grew up with no debts concerning his way of life. I knew Republic Steel fed us, but I neither loved nor hated it. However, the plant, as he always called it, never became real for me like it, and other Buffalo factories, did for so many of my friends.

My mother's predicament was different. While resistance for my father lay in anonymity and distance, for her, as a domestic, defiance was a matter of intimacy. The white family (the "Hamiltons") for whom she cleaned house during all of my childhood owned an amusement park. I imagine they were "rich." But, whereas with my dad we, his children, never heard about the proceedings within the plant unless he was discussing a personal friend who also worked there, with my mom we knew a great deal about the lives of her employers. It wasn't "just a job." She made these people more than that to us. However, even though we knew of their wealth (one of my sisters once accompanied her to work), we were never in awe of this family. Periodically, my mom shared bits and pieces of their lives, including making us aware of their problems, problems not implausible yet, somehow, impossible for us to have. I felt, even at age eight or nine, that I would not have the problem of getting into college that Ronnie, the son in this family was having. (My mom's recitation of his lack of success at college admission is my earliest recollection of a family discussion on higher education.) Consequently, though the hand-me-down clothes and toys she brought us from the Hamilton's house confirmed their status as "well off," they weren't, I felt, better off than we. The thought never entered my mind. These people whom I never met but who became real in the words of my mother were never employers, in the sense of my father's company. Like us, they were a family. Some chores which she performed for them, she also did for us, in our home. But for us, I knew she did them better, much better.

How, then, does a black working class woman, resist assimilation, when daily she leaves her house and neighborhood to go to a (better) neighborhood to clean the (better) house? This question confronted my mother (and countless other black women) whose jobs as domestics helped sustain their families. Two works by noted black members of the academy, Toni Morrison and James Comer, address this question. In Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye* (101-102), the character of Pauline Breedlove is a domestic whose "assimilation" into the world of her white, wealthy employers has tragic consequences for her children:

> It was her good fortune to find a permanent job in the home of a well-to-do family whose members were affectionate, appreciative, and generous. . . . Here she could arrange things, clean things, line things up in neat rows. Here her feet flopped on deep pile carpets, and there was no uneven sound. Here she found beauty, order, cleanliness, and praise. . . . Pauline kept this order, this beauty, for herself, a private world, and never introduced it into her storefront, or to her children. . . .
>
> All the meaningfulness of her life was in her work.

Unlike the character of Pauline Breedlove, my mother never allowed her children to become overwhelmed by the beauty and abundance of the family for whom she worked. She refused to succumb to what Morrison terms the "master narrative." According to Morrison, the "master narrative" is: "White male life. Whatever ideological script that is imposed by the people in authority on everybody else. So when these little girls [in *The Bluest Eye*] see that the most prized gift they can get at Christmas is this white doll, they are told . . . this is beautiful, this is lovely, and you're not it." My mother seems to have approached the doing of "day work" in much the same way as Maggie Comer, the mother of James Comer and subject of his book, *Maggie's American*

Dream. At one point in the oral history, Maggie Comer observes, "I didn't just cook and clean. I worked with my eyes and ears open. I watched and listened to them and the way they lived. For me it was like going to school" (69). Likewise, my mother related the world of her employers to my sisters and me, yet the intimacy which we thereby gained into the world of the Hamiltons was an intimacy of the ordinary. Their house seemed neither my mother's private world nor her place of perfection. It was just a home and the people living there were just a family; and neither their whiteness nor their wealth privileged them.

These, then, were the lessons I learned from my parents about working: the need to distance myself from that within work which seeks to limit or define me; and the necessity to exercise wisdom regarding what I bring home from work. It is, of course, clear that these tactics regarding work and the work place on the part of my parents were determined in large measure by the entity confronting them. My dad's stance made Republic Steel, and all factories, a mere physical presence to his children, like that of a monster on television or a scary roller coaster at an amusement park. Our responses were thus that we never thought of turning to that channel; we never considered purchasing a ticket to ride. In my mother's mind, I know there was never a chance we would end up cleaning white folks' houses during our adulthood--she walked us (miles) to the library too many times for that to happen. As James Baldwin notes in *The Evidence of Things Not Seen*, "One cannot allow oneself, nor can one's family, friends, or lovers--to say nothing of one's children--to live according to the world's definitions: one must find a way, perpetually, to be stronger and better than that" (86). This is precisely what my parents accomplished with me regarding their jobs. I learned to abhor and disregard the limiting definitions, the stereotypical expectations, regarding my race and class.

My philosophy of work was partially forged in the steel mill of my father's labor and further filled in by my mother's absence from our home so she could clean someone else's. What my dad and mom did year after year in Republic Steel and the Hamilton's home was, to my mind, work. What my father did on the farm where he grew up was work. What my mom did in our home was work. However, what I'm doing now, would not, to me then, have been classified as such, nor would your reading of this. As a child, and even as a young man, I always wanted to witness, yet was also fearful of seeing, my father laboring in the steel mill where he lost half of one thumb in accident. (I never saw the inside of the steel mill; perhaps he never wished that for me.) To my childish mind, you could *see* someone at work. You could watch them do it, like I longed to watch my father operate the crane that hoisted red-hot bars of steel like King Kong picked up people. Work for which one was paid, unlike the work which both of my parents performed within our home, meant that you *went* somewhere. You went to work. In our household, the word "work" was used as a noun more than as a verb. Work was a locale, a place where you did a job. A compartment, if you will, in which one's role was clearly defined. For my dad, it was defined by a massive metal gate and a time clock. After I began driving, I frequently drove him to and from work, and it was obvious: he was *at work* once he mounted the steps to the time clock room, once he "punched" the clock and told Republic Steel, "I'm here, I'm back, I'm yours." Yet, his daily life of resistance and survival sent a different message, one of "infrapolitical" struggle against this monster, against the notion that his life, and ours, could be defined by his work. My mom's work(place) was emphasized every time she brought home second-hand clothes and toys. The message of such goods was clear: superiority, them; inferiority, us. But just as clear were her recitations of resistance countering the myths of whiteness and upper class life. Her words uncovered what might have otherwise been invisible to our young eyes when we gathered in the kitchen to see what she'd "brought home for us this time." Her words, concerning life on the other side of the color and class lines, rendered these "rich white folks" real, a family, with problems, and thus confronted any notions they were superior and we, inferior.

Two metaphors in African American culture shed further light on the strategies my parents employed toward work. Paul Laurence Dunbar, in his poem, "We Wear the Mask," suggests that the African American situationally utilizes a facade so the world will neither perceive nor understand his/her physic condition, so the world will not "be overwise." Doubtlessly, my mother's stance regarding the Hamiltons involved wearing a mask at times, if for no other reason than it was clear to my sisters and me that she possessed higher standards for us than these wealthy whites had for their children. W.E.B. DuBois speaks of the concept of "twoness" in

The Souls of Black Folk: "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity." Doubtlessly, the Hamiltons viewed our mother differently than how we, her children, regarded her. And I am certain that my mom fulfilled whatever needs the job required; she was in their employ for over a decade. Thus, it is safe to assume, she understood quite well how they regarded her, a "black domestic." Yet, in a reversal of DuBois' dictum, our mother possessed her own tape measure, that of a tough minded, black, working class, Christian woman and, according to her measurements, the Hamiltons were lacking in some areas. We, her children, saw *this* manifestation of twoness, *her* measuring of wealth and whiteness and privilege.

Finally, the question really is one of place: my place in academe. For a long time, I believed I had none, especially not as a faculty member and, thus, following graduate school, I took several administrative posts prior to teaching full-time on a tenure line. It wasn't that I left grad school disillusioned. I never had any illusions about English departments. They were not my home. This was made clear when I had to petition in order to study Langston Hughes as major author for prelims. This was clear when I had to go outside my department in order to find a chair for my dissertation committee. (I was at one point angry with all English Departments.) Because I had no illusions, I sought not teaching posts, but administrative ones where race and class consciousness was articulated within mission statements, positions where I felt I could implement change programmatically. For some of these positions, such as those within minority affairs, it was apparent a black body was needed. In others, such as those within remedial education, Special Services or Upward Bound, my background as a working-class, first generation collegian was beneficial. Rather than running from the politics of race and class on college campuses, I ran to them. For over a decade at four different institutions, my personal mission was, in large measure, to effect change for students who were like me (either black or working class). As an administrator, I could not always inform these students individually that the institution might not see or understand them, but I tried. Nor could I always alert them that they might encounter racism or classism masquerading as institutional policies; rather, I attempted to change those policies. But the politics of race and class are everywhere in higher education, even in programs where there seem to be no statements reflecting such. (Actually, especially in such programs.)

The longer I stay in higher education, the more I am convinced that one of my strengths, much of what I have to give to the academy is that fact that I'm not supposed to be here. I alluded earlier to the notion that there are some at my institution who see my presence as a sign of change. However, I haven't fallen prey to the superior Negro syndrome, the belief that I am gifted and special. My black presence at the predominantly white institutions where I've studied and worked is something which was earned. One could of course suggest that I earned it, through study and degrees and publications and superior teaching. It *was* earned, but less by me than by forefathers and mothers, black and even white, who fought and marched and prayed. Paul Laurence Dunbar once referred to himself as "a black white man." I cannot afford to see myself as that. I believe, instead, that I'm on trial, daily. And, although the trial is never merely about race or class, they are invariably factors. Someone might say that I exaggerate, that I am not working in either the home of wealthy white folks or a steel mill. Yet for many working class black students, the university is "white folks' home." And, instead of cleaning it, like my mother did, for years, I clean myself, daily, of any delusions about why I'm here and what I must do while I'm here. I never watched my mother clean the Hamilton's home. I imagine that she did it bit by bit, dusting, sweeping, straightening. That is my job. The university is also, of course, a factory. A place where minds, not metals, are molded. Consequently, I strive within the classroom to help students see beneath the masks; aid them in understanding the ways in which "twoness" affects us all. Black and working class from a steel mill town, I teach August Wilson's *Fences*, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, or even John O'Hara's *Appointment in Samarra* in such a way that students begin to visualize the various means by which race and class menace and manipulate lives. Like Troy Maxon in Wilson's play, I am still at times an angry black man, painfully aware of the fences which I must kick down daily. Like Pecola Breedlove in Morrison's novel, I know what it's like to be "outdoors," alienated, told that I'm less worthy, due to my race or class. I know what it's like to *not* be Julian English, the tragically privileged white male of O'Hara's novel. (If only Julian could have

ceased being white, relinquished his privilege, for even a moment. Perhaps he would have lived.) I do not know if I attempt, as an educator, to help some of my students and colleagues cease being white. Rather, I strive to help them see "black"; see "working class"; see life from the opposite side of the color and class lines. I do not know if I work toward those moments when race and class disappear, but I do know that I remember them. And those moments have as much to do with whites relinquishing whiteness, seeing beyond it, beyond the white walls, as they do with my shedding blackness.

The lessons I learned from my parents about work are an abiding legacy. In more than twenty years in academe, as both administrator and faculty member, I have consciously and unconsciously utilized them to, as they say in my mom's church, "fight the good fight." At times, that fight has been about matters of equity in education. My background has afforded me a vantage point from which to understand the plight of "working class collegians" in whose eyes the institution may seem uncaring. At times, the fight has been more personal, involving my own battles, and I've had to either employ the strategies of my father or my mother. Sometimes, I have to leave the job and sometimes I must bring it home, but then only to deflate its importance. It really is a matter of perception, of eyesight. Thus, within the academy, I cling to my working class roots as tenaciously as I do to my African American heritage. Each affords me a different set of eyes from the institutional norm. They function well together, these sets of eyes, "black" and "working class"; and together inform and influence choices I make regarding scholarship, pedagogy, and service. Part of me will always loathe the academy for its elitism and racism. Part of me that wants to see the blast furnace into which my father poured forty years of his life; wants to witness the household of the family whose foibles my mother so tactfully told. Yet, I now realize that I am already a witness to that which is most needful. As an academician, that witnessing involves appropriating the spirit and the soul of my black working class background to consistently confront and redefine traditional perspectives regarding race, class, and the academy.

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Reflections on the Production of a Working Class Academic

David Greene

Introduction

All of these reflections are personal; those of one fifty-five year old male, white, Jewish, straight, working class academic. As with everything else, there are innumerable ways that the experiences reflected upon here have been influenced not just by class, but by sex, race, ablebodiedness, sexual orientation, individual and other group circumstances, historical period and the particular set of academic institutions that I encountered.

In hearing my particular story, what might be most useful would be for each reader to listen for commonality as well as for difference; for things that ring true, as well as those that do not; for things that bring the knowing warmth or biting sting of that which is familiar, as well as those that bring bewilderment or disbelief at that which is alien. Perhaps in this way, after my particular story has been told, we can together begin to look at the ways in which social class has interacted with other aspects of our identities and guided each of our journeys through the land of academe.

Secondary School

I grew up in a small gritty city--mostly poor and blue-collar; heavily immigrant and heavily white ethnic. The school system reflected the town. The curriculum was very basic and the horizon that was presented didn't stretch much beyond the next block. The emphasis was on the three Rs, good behavior, patriotism, and Judeo-Christian values. The point of it all was preparation for good citizenship and a job somewhere in the lower reaches of the industrial economy. And even though I was placed on an "academic" rather than a vocational track in high school, the "college prep" message was nearly drowned out by the surrounding peer culture. High grades in school meant low marks on the street. And the street was the last place that you wanted to be seen as a traitor.

But outside of the school and off of the street there was home. And fortunately mine contained a mother who introduced me to books, took me to museums and encouraged my curiosity about the workings of the world. As graduation became a reality and decisions had to be made, I decided that I wanted to go to college.

My school didn't have much of a guidance department and my family and neighbors knew even less about the nuts-and-bolts of getting beyond high school. But a guidance counselor did make me aware of a State Scholarship program for kids who met certain financial need and academic performance standards. And my family did do the necessary paperwork. And I did get that scholarship--a scholarship that could only be used at a state institution and that covered only tuition.

After looking at my financial reality, I soon figured out that living on a campus was not an option; that giving up my part-time job was not an option; that buying and insuring a car of my own was not an option. And so I applied to, and was accepted at the two public colleges that I could get to *on the bus*.

Undergraduate School

Although I was now in college, my working-class background continued to heavily influence my academic experience. I was now at The State University--Branch Campus. Yes, the "real" university was located on an attractive residential campus about forty miles from my home (too far for the bus). But the closer branch campus was officially a part of the real university too. It just happened to be housed in an old brewery, several former factory buildings, an old YMCA, a converted bank and lots of rented space in small downtown office buildings. The student body was largely comprised of commuting working-class white ethnics and working class African-Americans. While the physical plant left a lot to be desired, the faculty, at least, were first rate. So first rate in fact, that many of them believed that they deserved something better than this branch campus with its sixth generation buildings and first generation college students.

While these faculty members were indeed first rate scholars, they put very little effort into their teaching. The curriculum and pedagogy were not aimed at producing the leaders of tomorrow, but rather at producing functionaries to supervise and provide "professional" services for my gritty-city classmates at the lower levels of the industrial economy. Needless to say, once again, I got very little guidance. This bunch certainly had no mentor for me. But, somehow I got it in my head that I wanted to be like them--or, more accurately, that I wanted to have the job that they had. I wanted to be involved with books and ideas and theories and research. I wanted to be involved with students in the classroom, sharing those ideas and theories and opening up their worlds in the way that mine (despite an indifferent faculty) had been opened. I had little idea what an academic career really involved, but I did know that I had to go to graduate school to get one. So I worked with my assigned "advisor" and applied to several graduate schools--most of which I could not afford to attend, some of which did not really have the programs that I was interested in and others that I did not have a prayer of getting accepted to. And so I wound up in a Master's degree program at a city college in a neighboring state--public; affordable with part-time jobs and several loans; a commuter school with affordable housing nearby and a student body much like that at my undergraduate branch campus.

The Master's Program

While the students at this college were similar to those at the one that I had just left, and the facilities, while contained within an actual campus, were only marginally better, the faculty was certainly different. There was less social distance. There was no pervasive contempt for working-class and first generation students. And there was actual concern for students' futures. I even found two professors who came close to being mentors. Some of these differences may have been due to the fact that this was a graduate program. But, although it was never discussed, I suspect that a few of these folks were actually working-class academics, and a few more were probably academics who saw the provision of expanded opportunity as actually being part of their job.

Getting a Ph.D.

After getting my Master's degree, I "stopped-out" for two years and became a social worker. The reasons for this were partly political—hey this was 1968—partly financial, and partly personal.

Two years later, when I arrived at the Ph.D. program, I had my first encounter with an "elite" institution with state-of-the-art facilities, a world-class faculty and very few working-class students. Here I actually found a

mentor--not a working-class academic role model--but another Eastern European-American Jew with liberal politics, a scholarly interest in American racism and an honest interest in my life and in my future.

Here, I also found that I was different from most of my fellow students--I had gone to public colleges; I was living on loans, my partner's salary, part time work during the school year and full time social work during summers; I was relatively uneducated in the classical curriculum; I was relatively untraveled, having never been off the continent; and my life experiences seemed to them to be interestingly "colorful" while theirs seemed to me to be beyond my reach (or, at times, my imagination).

Getting Hired

In 1973, I was abd, partnered, had a two year old child, lived in a three room apartment back in my hometown, was adjuncting at a public college, was working full time summers and was on food stamps. One day I got a call from a friend who told me about a new, interdisciplinary state college that had just opened two years before and was looking for a psychologist with just my talents.

My mentor tried to convince me NOT to take this job. He told me that it would severely limit my career possibilities; that it would delay the completion of my dissertation; that it would interrupt the path to success that I was steadily moving along; that at such a college I would never have time to really do any research; that if I took the job, I was likely to get stuck there.

Well, I didn't take his advice. The job sounded fine to me, and I really needed the money. Looking back, I can fully understand why my mentor reacted the way that he did; from *his* perspective within *his* academic world, this was sound advice. But from *my* perspective, within *my* world, this job sounded like a good deal. I only wish that, at that time, my mentor had given me the advice that I really needed—advice on how to negotiate rank and salary. I wound up being terribly underhired—as an Instructor, step III. But, at that point this twenty-eight year old working- class kid felt like he had finally made it. I was now a full-fledged, certified, name-in-the-catalog, office-key-on-my-belt, college professor!

Twenty-Seven Years at a State College

Well, now it's twenty-seven years later. I'm still at that same college (just like my mentor said I would be). I've gone from probationary Instructor, step III to tenured Full Professor—with stints as a program head, a school director and an associate vice-president along the way. As I look back, I can see many ways in which my class background has shaped my career.

Actually, shortly after I was hired, it didn't look like I was going to have much of a career. I had immediately gotten involved with the faculty/professional staff union-- the AFT. And after being a bit too visible during our first strike; and after being a bit too supportive of minority students who were protesting misuse of federal financial aid dollars; and after being a bit too student-oriented; and after being a bit too engaged with members of the "support staff" who reminded me of my hometown relatives and neighbors; and after being a bit too disdainful of some faculty and administrators who saw the "academy" (even this version of the academy) as an elite club; I received a *conditional* third year reappointment.

Three years later, when I came up for tenure, I was denied by the President and Vice-President. The reason that they gave was that I had not yet finished my dissertation. They were right, just like my mentor had been right. Teaching a twenty-four credit per year load along with all of the other faculty responsibilities did not leave a lot of time for dissertating. And some of that precious time was taken up with being a union activist (now a state delegate), with supporting and mentoring "non-traditional" students and with struggling to keep elitist notions of

"the academy" at bay. On top of this, I still really needed more money just to stay afloat. So more of that precious dissertating time was taken up with teaching overloads and summer school and with child care and with manuscript typing--my own manuscript--that now very late dissertation.

But I did wind up getting tenure, despite the fact that I didn't finish my dissertation for another year (at the age of 34). Like a scene from a typical '70s movie, the ground level of the institution, the community to which I had given all of my precious time rose up and said, no! The Board of Trustees bowed to the pressure of petitions, speak-outs, lobbying, a press campaign and other actions and reversed the President's negative recommendation.

And during all of this, just in case I was accepting the lack of dissertation argument, and just in case I doubted that any of this had to do with class based issues, the Vice-President called me to his office. As he sat in his high-backed leather chair, framed by a wall of books--no doubt the Western Canon, he touched his thumbs together forming a makeshift picture frame with his fingers. As he moved that frame in front of his eyes, capturing my face as its resident snapshot, he said in a slow, serious, refined tone, "when I form a picture of a t-e-n-u-r-e-d c-o-l-l-e-g-e p-r-o-f-e-s-s-o-r, you somehow just don't fit."

Well, in many ways he was right. I really didn't fit. And in looking back over the years, it's clear to me that that lack of fit was due to my working-class background, and especially to my maintenance of a working-class identity. In fact, it was that background and that identity that greatly shaped my experiences as an academic professional--as a member of the professoriate.

For example, several years ago, my college began a drive to recruit better students; "better" primarily meaning higher SAT scores. Most of the faculty lined up solidly behind this effort. What seemed to dance in their heads were visions of classrooms filled with bright, poised, well-educated students; students who spoke their language; students who reminded them of themselves during their own undergraduate days. But what immediately arose in my mind was the well-documented positive correlation between those SAT scores and family income. What danced in my head was the spectre of restricted access and opportunity; the erasure from this state college of the kind of student that I had been in my own undergraduate days. This sounded to me like the same siren song that had fueled the contempt of my own Branch Campus teachers who felt that they deserved something better.

I had confronted this same attitude many times before. At a faculty meeting, we listened to a report about the high percentage of our students who were working part and even full-time while carrying a full load of courses. Several of my colleagues were dismayed and suggested that we find ways to persuade our students to take their educations more seriously. They truly believed that these students were working in order to fill their dorm rooms with televisions, stereos and other expensive frills. When I suggested that many of these students were working in order to just be able to go to college (or to do so *and* contribute to supporting their families), my remarks were met with sighs of disbelief by too many and knowing smiles from too few.

I listen constantly to complaints about the students. Those that have to do with a lack of motivation, seriousness or respect make sense to me--I too have students like these in my classes and I don't enjoy trying to teach them. But comments about students' lack of skills, limited world views and deficient knowledge bases are suspect to me. They sometimes sound like code words for poor and working-class. They suggest to me that some faculty (and administrators) are blaming the victim; taking the easy way out; complaining that they deserve "better" students rather than doing the hard work necessary to develop ways of reaching people with sufficient motivation and ability, but deficient educational and material backgrounds.

I certainly didn't fit any better as an administrator. After nine years as a faculty member in a multi-program school of social science, I accepted an administrative post and became the director of that same school. I became the supervisor of twenty-two faculty members and two office staff. Relations between the office staff and many of the faculty were quite strained; both sides were constantly in and out of my office. I had known about this problem long before I became the administrator. I knew about it because my colleagues had complained openly

amongst "ourselves." Their complaints about lack of service, incompetence, laziness and disrespect had drifted into my then professorial ears--the ears of one who they assumed would be sympathetic.

But I also knew about this situation because my friends among the office staff had told me about it--my office staff friends who could have been my home town neighbors or members of my family (my mother was a clerical worker for most of her working life). They had told me about faculty members who treated them like office furniture or hired help, and who made unreasonable demands upon their busy days (like asking them to type scholarly manuscripts, or to schedule dentist appointments, or to fill-out pre-printed post cards for desk copies of books, or to leave the office on the spur of the moment to pick them up at the bus station or the car repair shop). What made these demands particularly unreasonable was the fact that the office was seriously understaffed and we were getting by only because the more "humble" members of the faculty were comfortable doing some of their own clerical work such as typing and duplicating. Armed with these insights, I attempted to mediate the situation. I did not succeed.

But I did come to realize that I lived in a land of conflict and contradiction. Back at Branch Campus U, I had decided that I wanted to be an academic. Given my working-class world view, I thought about this as a job. I didn't really understand the concept of a professional career. I believed that the goal of one's work life was to find a job that you were good at and one that you enjoyed. And then, if you worked very hard, you could earn enough money to live a decent life. Going to college increased your chances of winding up in just such a utopian situation.

My understanding of the job of an academic was that you worked hard to master the world of books, theories, ideas and research and then worked equally hard to open up that world to the students in your classes. Even in graduate school, I didn't really understand the conflict between the world of ideas (research) and the classroom (teaching). I didn't understand that there is a class system within academe. That at the top of the order sit the most elite faculty at the most elite institutions. Most of their time is spent in the world of ideas and very little time is spent in the classroom; they teach the fewest courses to the most elite students. At the bottom of the order are the community colleges where faculty teach the greatest number of courses to the least elite students.

The game in academe is to find ways to get out of teaching and/or to get out of teaching those who are the hardest to teach. It is because of this game that first generation students and overburdened support staff come to be seen as impediments to one's professional mobility (especially at a state college like mine where the teaching load is a heavy eight classes per year). This is what my graduate school mentor saw so clearly when he warned me not to take that state college job twenty-seven years ago. He was grooming me to make a run for the top of the game--a game that I didn't really understand. And a game that no one, at three institutions, ever saw a need to explain to me.

And so I have journeyed through this land of conflict and contradiction. Like many working-class academics, my journey was a long one. Like many working-class academics, my progress was slowed by the economic necessity of finding ways to augment my salary--primarily by doing even more teaching-- during summers and via overloads. Like many working-class academics I had to play catch-up, in terms of both my educational and experiential "deficits." Like many working-class academics I had to struggle against the "imposter syndrome"--the nagging remnants of internalized oppression that made me question whether I was really good enough, whether I really belonged here, whether I was going to be found out.

But, happily, at the age of fifty-five I have resolved most of those contradictions and conflicts. And that is why, in many ways, I still somehow just don't fit. While I do pay lots of attention to ideas, research and the advancement of knowledge; and while I do pay some attention to advancing my career, these things seem to be somehow secondary to my real job. For this working class academic, my real job is to use my position to improve the working conditions of all of the people who labor on my campus (and on campuses around the State). For this working class academic, my real job is to use my position to provide access to higher education

for people who have been traditionally excluded. For this working class academic, my real job is to use my position to teach, support and especially, mentor working class and other non-traditional students. For this working class academic, my real job is to make sure that the neglect and contempt that I experienced at Branch-Campus U are *not* duplicated for the students who pass through *my* little corner of the academic world.

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Star Search: Learning from Prominent Scholars

N. Joseph Cayer, Zhiyong Lan, Louis F. Weschler

Introduction

Although many scholars and doctoral students are Lone Rangers, we all learn from others. Like it or not, we constitute communities of scholars regardless of the social, spatial, and epistemological distances that separate us. Part of graduate education is overcoming these distances and engaging each other in fruitful dialogues about the study of the administration of public affairs. Students often find it difficult to engage the prominent scholars of our field. They read their tomes, sometimes eagerly. They become adept at using their work as authorization and validation of questions, concepts, theories, and laws. Yet, for many students personal contact with the stars of academe is limited to faculty at hand or infrequent visits by distinguished scholars.

Developing conversations with distant stars is a daunting task. Such conversations, however, offer students opportunities for learning and emulation that otherwise would not be available. This paper reports on the efforts of the authors to encourage and facilitate student-star conversations and dialogues. We try to help our students reach out and touch notable scholars in the study of public administration. Some students have used the opportunities outlined below to initiate long-lasting, ongoing dialogues with leading scholars. Others have treated this as a course assignment to get over. Nonetheless, we feel that student conversations with noted scholars have enriched the lives of both students and scholars.

Geneses of Star Search

The first class of doctoral students in public administration at Arizona State University began their studies in 1981. The faculty associated with the program searched for ways to better connect the new students with the scholars and scholarship in public administration. This need was particularly acute. The doctoral program was designed to meet the advanced educational needs of the practicing public administrator. Although a number of the inaugural class' students aimed at academic careers, eight of 14 were full-time practicing administrators in the greater Phoenix metropolitan region. The faculty sought ways to integrate all of the students more fully into the habits of scholarship and to immerse students in the field's classic and current works. The students needed opportunities to develop the habits of scholarship. In Kaplan's (1964, pp. 3-11) terms, the program wished to promote understanding and use of the reconstructed logic of the scholarly form of public administration as a parallel to their well-developed skills in the logic-in-use of practicing public administration.

All the doctoral students here enroll in four core courses during their first year of study. A lead course, Seminar in the Foundations of Public Administration, offers the chance to introduce students to the work of our leading scholars and theorists. During the initial year of operation, the faculty associated with the foundations course required students to "adopt" a leading scholar who has produced significant theoretical contributions to the field. The adopter studied the

personal, professional, and intellectual biographies of a specific person. In addition, the adopter read a selection of the scholar's published work. During the semester, the student became the course "expert" on the adopted star and made central contributions to critical assessment of that person's contributions to the field.

White men, many of them deceased, dominated the first seminar's efforts. Although Mary Parker Follett made the first star list, others were men: Max Weber, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Simon, Charles E. Lindblom, Dwight Waldo, Vincent Ostrom, Paul Appleby, Chris Argyris, Chester Barnard, Peter Blau, Henri Fayol, Jurgen Habermas, and Daniel Katz. This roster reflects the interests of the students, a list of notables developed by the faculty, and subjects covered in the course.

Students worked closely with faculty in developing a list of works to consult. Students wrote short intellectual biographies and made oral presentations to the class. Each student read Bendix's *Max Weber, an Intellectual Portrait* (1962) and used it as a model for their shorter, less detailed papers. The students learned a lot about scholarship and cognitive styles of inquiry from the assignment.

Student evaluations of the foundation course split on the idea of adopting a scholar, serving as class expert on that person and works, and writing the paper. Nonetheless, program faculty continue to think it is a good exercise. Over the years, entering class after entering class adopted notables. The activity is an expected part of the program and for a while, the faculty developed a similar exercise for the core seminar on organization theory and behavior. This led to dividing the great scholars between the foundations seminar and the other seminars so that we would reduce duplication and spread the effort to larger numbers of illuminates.
Major Variation and Enhancement

Students contributed a major innovation and improvement to the exercise. They conducted lengthy interviews with their chosen scholars, rightly feeling that personal contact would improve their understanding of the famous persons and their major contributions to the field. Most of the stars live and work in places far distant from central Arizona. Therefore, these students conducted a series of lengthy interviews over the telephone. Now, many students use email. Their papers and reports were markedly better than those written by persons who had not directly conversed with stars. The experiences of these students led faculty to recognize the value of such contact. Of course, personal conversations with dead persons reach beyond the realm of ordinary life, but the lesson is clear. Personal contact has its own rewards.

Schön (1987) suggests that the mentoring experience and environment produce more reflective practitioners. If we see students as seeking exemplars for reflective practice of scholarship, then their personal contacts with the living stars constitutes a special connection with mentors. Star Search gives students affective appreciation of productive scholars and scholarship.

Learning from Star Search

When designing the assignment, faculty expected that it would provide a good opportunity for students to understand more fully the contributions of a particular individual scholar. More important, students could gain appreciation for the process of intellectual development and the development of ideas. It was a way of connecting the content of the field with personal histories of the scholars responsible for shaping of the scholarly study of public administration.

As students began to make personal contact with stars, we saw another dimension we had not anticipated. Those students who conducted personal interviews seemed to feel much more connected with the contributions of the stars. They also demonstrated more enthusiasm for the material they read. We saw a transformation in the students from passive learners to proactive participants in the learning process. Students who interviewed their stars also learned that the intellectual leaders of the field are very real human beings. Understanding the human side of the scholars allowed

students to develop further understanding of how the experiences of individuals shape the way they view the field.

The faculty recognized that the difference in tone and quality of student papers depended on whether they interviewed the stars or not. They decided to encourage all students to incorporate interviews into their reviews of scholars. Eventually, interviews became a requirement; thus, the intellectual histories were limited to living scholars.

The assignment now requires that students consult with the faculty member teaching the course to decide on an appropriate star to study. Students then must research the star's written work to become familiar with the contributions of the individual. Then the student makes contact with the star to ascertain whether he/she will be willing to participate in an interview at a later date. While initial contact with the star can be intimidating to students, we find that email facilitates the process. The technology allows students to make contact without the fear of rejection that personal conversation might bring. Students feel comfortable making initial inquiry through email as opposed to a telephone call. A side effect is that students find that most individuals are flattered to be contacted and are very cooperative. Some stars--ever the professor– have given students assignments on what to review before the interview. We even have had scholars who are aware of the assignment inquire why none of our students have chosen them.

The faculty emphasize to students that they need to read the work of the star carefully before the interview is conducted so that they are conversant with the individual's perspectives and contributions. With many scholars, it would be unrealistic to expect students to read everything the scholar has written. In the initial contact, students are advised to request a vitae from the scholar. For those with lengthy publications' lists, the student consults with the course instructor to strategically select the works that should be read. The stars, themselves, often suggest which publications to focus on as well. Generally, faculty encourage students to read publications from different periods over the career of the scholar. Thus, students gain an appreciation for the changes in perspective of the star and can trace the development of ideas and intellect. For the stars who contribute in different methodologies, different substantive areas, or different cognitive styles, faculty require students to read in the different areas of contribution as well. Students tend to be very conscientious in their reading so as not to be embarrassed in the interview. Students also seem more reflective about the publications they read compared to when they only read the material.

Once the student completes the reading, he/she conducts the interview. Faculty encourage students to design the topics and format of the interview. However, faculty provide some suggested areas to cover. To break the ice, students usually ask how and why the star became interested in public administration or the subfield. Of course, the personal background of the star is often a part of the conversation and helps develop comfort between the student and star. The faculty expect students to ask about the star's perspective on what are his/her major contributions. They also are expected to determine what changes the star perceives in his/her approach to the subject matter and what changes in interest occurred over the career.

Many students report being counter-interviewed. The stars often ask the students about their interpretations of the publications. The conversations help students better understand the scholars' works. Students also are flattered by the interest the star takes in them and their work, resulting in even greater enthusiasm for the subject matter. Another byproduct of the assignment is that some students develop long-term and mentor-protegee relationships with the identified scholars. While not all experiences are positive, the overwhelming majority of contacts are. Positive interactions with the stars leave lasting, vivid impressions on students.

Once the interview is completed, the student writes a paper covering the star's contributions and importance to the field of public administration. The paper focuses on critique of the star's written work, but the interview rounds out a fuller view of the star's contributions.

Lessons and Concerns

While the assignment results in many positive effects for students and their understanding of public administration scholarship, the exercise has limits and constraints. Given the one-semester length of the assignment, especially in the foundations course where many students are new to public administration, it can be difficult for students to do a thorough job. Students new to the field need to get a firm grounding before they can, with any real insight, identify and interview a leading scholar. By the time some new students are comfortable in selecting a scholar, the semester is well under way.

The scholars chosen by the students are busy people and the assignment takes some of their valuable time. Sometimes time constraints limit the availability of scholars for in-depth interviews and students may become frustrated. The experience could result in a negative view of scholars' contributions.

Whether the view is positive or negative, students may develop a distorted view of scholars' contributions. A positive experience with a star could lead to a halo effect and a lack of critical perspective on the work. A negative experience could diminish the importance of the contributions in the student's estimation.

In fact, student experts often become champions of their stars and their work. Of course, students and others often become champions of stars and their contributions without engaging in the star-search exercises. The literature is full of such adoration. We hope, however, that the adoration is well placed and well tempered. Our experience is that students most often turn out to be good judges of stars and their work. Most of the students in the foundations seminar reflect a deep understanding of the human dimension of stars and their magnitudes. In the end, however, we depend on the good sense and prudence of the students and the stars.

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On Buying A "Post Modern" Outfit At Ross Dress-For-Less

Mary Auth

Each year, before the Fall semester begins, I force myself to go shopping for a few new clothes to replenish my work wardrobe. Being a fervent anti -shopper, I can handle only one store per annual trip, and usually that store is the designer discount store "Ross Dress-For-Less." In order to avoid any additional shopping for another year, I buy in quantity-- anywhere from three to six new "outfits" that run the gamut from "desirable in style, color, and price" to "at least it's something different to wear."

This year, for the first time in my memory, one aspect of my yearly shopping trip actually touched on some of my current intellectual pursuits, a sort of "praxis" between my intellectual musings and clothes-shopping activities. As I tore through the racks looking for the real bargains, I spotted a Liz Claiborne skirt/blouse ensemble in my size and in colors that I like. I threw the outfit on top of the other 20 or so garments I would try on in my quest for a few good clothes. When I tried the skirt and blouse on, I liked what I saw! The skirt was relatively short but not too short and the matching blouse was relatively long but not too long. I had found the best of the lot!

Now, for the real test! Before buying anything, I always evaluate the purchase in terms of price (you should be able to get a good outfit for no more than $30), cleaning instructions (it should be machine or hand washable or so "to -die -for" that cleaning costs are worth it), and fabric (no "easily wrinkled" fabrics need apply). Alas, the outfit failed the purchasing test on two counts: it would cost me 40 bucks and it was a "Dry Clean Only." Indecision set in. Was it special enough to go against my own well-established shopping criteria?

On the horns of this decisional dilemma, I turned to the designer's label for more input. Imagine my surprise when I read that this very outfit not only had a "suggested retail value" of $168.00 but also was identified as "Post Modern" by the designer! Now, it just so happened that I had been spending some of my spare time reading some books and articles on postmoderism and had been trying like heck to get a grasp on some of the tenets and concepts associated with it. In typical "modernist" fashion, I thought that maybe this outfit held the key to my intellectual blockage and would serve as a "Cliff's Notes" type shortcut to complete understanding (Farmer in Zanetti, 1997, p.105). I made the purchase, along with four others, and headed for home to analyze my "Holy Grail" for the secrets of postmodernism.

So what, I asked myself, was postmodern about my new outfit? Was it the colors? The style? The contrasting lengths of the skirt and blouse? The technology used to make it? I pondered in vain to find the key. Maybe the manufacturer would be able to provide me with the "answer." I contacted the Liz Claiborne headquarters and, at first, received no response to my question of why they had assigned "Post Modern" to the tag. After a second request, I received a cryptic and vague email response from the Consumer Relations Office, apologizing for the six month delay and explaining that:

> "Liz Claiborne, Inc. uses a process called Brand Lifestyle Concepts. Each season the Vice Presidents of Product Development for Liz create the concepts for the season. Once the concept boards are complete, names are selected that depict the groups. . . . Names are then approved though the Vice President of Corporate Merchandizing, and finally through the Liz Claiborne legal department. Once the legal department approves the list of names, the divisions are free to name their groups accordingly" (Liz Claiborne, Inc., 2000).

What did this message really tell me about the name given to my ensemble? Was "Post Modern" the "concept" or a depictive name for this specific outfit? If a specific name, what was the larger concept to which it was attached? The "answers" to these questions remained a mystery, so I was forced to 'deconstruct" the email message and reconstruct a meaning for myself. Most likely, they had called the outfit "Post Modern" just because that name sounded "hip" and "in." In the era of "late commodity capitalism" (Woods, 1999, p.63), "lifestyle advertising" has become not only the popular psychology of the media (Kroker and Cook in Woods, p.203) but also the preferred marketing strategy to encourage people to buy an image rather than a product (Woods, p. 198). As Woods explains, "There has been a change in the strategy of advertisers over the years, moving from promoting the product directly to adverts which say less about the product and more about the cultural representations of the advertisement itself as opposed to its referential product" (p.196).

So the selected name is the "real" message after all because it constitutes part of the "language game" being played by corporate America. In the marketplace of the postmodern era, the name is the game! By calling something postmodern, one is using "sexy" language to create the desired and desirable image of something on the cutting edge, a good example of how "advertising hyperreality" attempts to go beyond the mere creation of desires to the engendering of "a new commodified reality shaped by a company's logo or slogan" (Appignanesi and Garrat, 1995, p. 138). It didn't matter that the outfit was similar to others in color, style, and fabric. It had "THE NAME" to re-present itself as something different to a consumer culture that values difference! Is this an example of "epiphenomenalism" or how "words, signs, and symbols have become increasingly divorced from 'reality'" (Fox and Miller, 1996, p.46)? Or an example of Baudrillard's notion of a "simulacrum" because "it bears no relation to any reality whatever" (Appignanesi and Garratt, 1995, p.55)? To tell you the truth, I'm not quite sure because the words and concepts of postmodernism are still a bit fuzzy to me. I do know that my ensemble represents an interesting irony, in that the very marketplace culture that postmodernism so aptly critiques has usurped the concept of "postmodern" for its own nefarious ends.

I wear my comfortable, attractive "Post Modern" outfit to school with a smile on my face. Although I'm not the type to embrace a "postmodern logic" of "authentic inauthenticity" that "legitimates and even privileges an ironic cynicism" (Grossberg, 1997, p.281), when someone compliments the outfit, I do think of the game that's being played and the multiple meanings that this sign signifies. In my constituted "little t truth" (Farmer, 1997, p.38) version of reality, however, the outfit is just an above-average thing to wear when I go to do the important business of teaching.

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Lessons from a Life of Quiet Service

Thomas J. Barth

A worthy pursuit these days in the field of public administration is to search out and write about notable individuals who exemplify the spirit of public service. This activity serves many purposes. It provides a needed contrast to all of the negative exemplars in public life who tend to dominate the popular media; it provides an opportunity to broaden our concept of public servant by shedding light on admirable "behind the scenes" individuals who are not typically in the public eye (particularly women); and finally it is simply an ennobling experience for the author. My exemplars writing project serves all of these purposes, but it adds a fourth: we often need look no further than our own families for inspiring stories of public service. I am reminded of advice given by North Carolina writer Clyde Edgerton at a graduation commencement address a few years ago. He reminded us to take the time to speak to elderly people because they have stories that are far richer than anything Disney could ever produce. Here is one such rich story of a person in my life – my mother. I will first describe her life, and then end with a reflection on the most salient values and lessons from her example.

Miriam Barth (maiden name Newcomb) was born on July 17, 1922 in Pittston, Pennsylvania. The daughter of the local Chief of Police, her social conscience began to be formed by witnessing her mother give food to homeless men on her back porch during the Great Depression (her mother referred to them as "knights of the street"), and her father visiting the men he had sent to prison to ensure that they were not becoming discouraged or mistreated. Indeed, a vivid memory for Miriam was the sight of two convicts in handcuffs who had requested special leave from prison to travel to her house to pay respects at her father's wake. For the most part, however, Miriam led a sheltered life in her early years. As the Chief of Police, her father saw how dangerous the world could be for young women, reinforced by the sight of young unwed pregnant women being put on the midnight train to "visit relatives" for nine months, when in reality they were going to Our Lady of Victory Home in Buffalo. N.Y. to have their babies in secret. Not surprisingly, Miriam was sent to St. Ann's Academy for high school, a tightly run, all-girls school the next town over! It was in high school that her parents began to see her potential as a student, and upon her graduation they went against family tradition and sent Miriam to College Misericordia in Dallas, Pennsylvania. She was the first woman in the extended family to attend college. At Misericordia she pursued her love of language, graduating in 1944 with a major in classical languages and a minor in english. Convinced that she wanted to teach, she then attended graduate school at Fordham University, earning a Masters Degree in classical languages and literature in 1946 (an unusual achievement for a woman in the 1940's!).

Teaching, Family, and Illness

Miriam married Ken Barth during her Fordham years, and upon graduation embarked on a teaching career in several institutions as she followed her husband's job opportunities in industrial engineering. Her early teaching experience raised her social conscience in a number of ways. In one of her first teaching jobs in a high school in Glassport, Pennsylvania, she taught students who worked in the steel mills and coal mines after school. She was

struck by the lack of opportunities for these young men, for it was clear that almost all of them were destined for the mines and the mills as soon as they finished mandatory schooling. It was simply expected with little questioning, and Miriam began to realize that life was not fair or equal for everyone. A subsequent high school teaching position in Allentown, Pennsylvania illustrated the intolerance for people who are different, as she witnessed the teasing and cruelty towards a group of immigrant students with heavy German accents. Miriam notes that while she was taught these realities of life as a child, "...you don't really understand until you personally confront it." The final "education" of Miriam in her early teaching years occurred at Duquesne University from 1947-1948, where she taught Roman Literature, History and Civilization, and English Literature to World War II veterans attending school on the GI Bill. Although most of these men were older than her, she never experienced students so eager to learn and with such deep respect for the person imparting knowledge (a sharp contrast to current college students, in the opinion of more than a few college instructors I know!). After surviving a horrific war that represented a true threat to our way of life, these men were grateful for the wonderful educational opportunity they had.

By the late 1940s, the blessings of children began to arrive (as devout Catholics of that era believed, the more the merrier!), and the next seven years produced five children. Despite her love of teaching, Miriam never felt a conflict when she interrupted her career to raise a family. She always believed she could return to teaching, and is convinced that raising her own children made her a better teacher. Looking back on her life, she also views raising her children as the most exciting event she ever witnessed. She notes how important it is to have a parent present during the formative years, and as a teacher she learned that the children with the most stable backgrounds and home life were better adjusted. She also recalls how much she learned about her children in conversations right after school and at the dinner table, where we they often had a need to process the day and simply vent. Since these precious times became more infrequent as the children grew older and became involved in extracurricular activities, these early years of family time were vital in getting to know her children.

Miriam unexpectedly went back into education when the family moved to Buffalo, New York in 1961. The elementary school her children attended needed a substitute teacher for the third grade, and she ended up teaching the class for the entire year. She reflects how classes in those days typically had fifty children (a product of the baby boom), and made it necessary for teachers to teach children with a wide range of abilities. She recalls how one student was a particular problem in class, and upon further investigation she realized it was because he was bored with the level of the class. She assigned him "A Tale of Two Cities" and he improved considerably!

A major event in Miriam's life occurred in 1963 when she was diagnosed with Myasthenia Gravis, a devastating muscular disease often fatal at that time. She was periodically in the hospital for months at a time, and what strikes her in looking back on this time was how a variety of communities came together to assist our family – neighbors, church, doctors and nurses – a situation which she fears is rarely seen in today's society as people have become busier and more mobile, and institutions like church and hospital more impersonal. She can recall her doctors sending her home and then bringing her back the next day to maintain insurance coverage for her hospitalization, and nurses who lived in the neighborhood coming by the house during their off-hours to check on the children. While she was bedridden at home, doctors who knew of her love of teaching would send their young patients over to her for tutoring so they wouldn't fall behind in school (and Miriam would feel needed). She notes that in conversations today with her old doctors, they lament how little of this would be possible in today's healthcare environment. After several years of long hospital stays, months in bed, and numerous brushes with death, she was one of the first people to be treated successfully to the point where the disease went into remission and she was able to resume a reasonably normal life. However, there is no cure for Myasthenia, and constant juggling of medications and dealing with side-effects has been a constant in her life since her late thirties. She has never let the disease defeat her, however, and her spirit has always amazed her many doctors. Indeed, she has been called upon time and again over the years to counsel younger women who are afflicted with the illness and having difficulty coping with life.

Working with the Hearing Impaired

Although Miriam was always oriented towards service through the teaching profession, her illness and the support she received from so many sources reinforced her desire to give back to the community, particularly to the disabled or other needy groups in society. Through her illness she came to understand the frustration of the disabled, so she dropped her pursuit of a doctorate in English (her dream had been to teach at the university level), and pursued an opportunity to work at St. Mary School for the Deaf, a residential facility that enrolled children from all over the northeast. She began as an aide at the school, and sensed that the children were too sheltered and not challenged enough, particularly the marginal students. She noticed that some of the children who struggled would use their deafness as an excuse, and this attitude was fed somewhat by the outside community who would refer to the students as "deaf and dumb" because they had difficulty communicating. In reality, they were every bit as intelligent as hearing students. She started touring hearing schools in the area to compare the facilities, and she saw opportunities for the stimulation of hearing-impaired students through development of a Learning Center and prescriptive student-teacher contracts. She met weekly with teachers to identify students who might benefit from this approach to learning. Cooperation among participating faculty transformed a study hall into a research library equipped with visual electronic learning, carrels and a common area where students could discuss projects. As the Director of the Learning Center, Miriam worked with the teacher and student to agree upon a prescription or contract on a given subject to be completed in the learning center under the guidance of the director. For example, teachers of social studies and literature would team teach with the aid of a television or a particular novel with historical and cultural emphasis. Students and the director of the Learning Center would decorate their space with appropriate visuals. The idea of prescriptive learning in a specific area committed to individual research assisted by a teacher-director and one aide was very successful in broadening both the ability and curiosity of hearing-impaired students. Indeed, the program was featured in a slide presentation at the New York State Teachers of the Deaf Conference as a method of stimulating learning and increasing self-esteem of the hearing-impaired student. Miriam notes how this approach initially could have been very threatening to the classroom teachers, but she wisely avoided tension by offering much-needed assistance with the borderline students – always a challenge for a teacher.

Building a Respect Life Program

Throughout her life Miriam has been a devout Catholic, which no doubt had something to do with one child becoming a priest and another a nun! She always remained very close to the church community, and the church came calling in 1975. She was initially asked to be a consultant to the Catholic Diocese of Buffalo, assisting with the implementation of the Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and their Respect Life Program. One year later she established the Office of Pro-Life Activities in the Diocese of Buffalo and became its first Director. The mission of the office was three-fold: education, pastoral care, and public policy based on a consistent ethic of life. The key to her office's approach was to focus on more than just abortion; being pro-life means concern with all aspects of society where the quality of life is threatened.

Education

This aspect of her role involved networking with education administrators and selected teachers to create lesson plans with a respect life theme in targeted problem areas of society, such as disenfranchisement of persons of color, negative attitudes toward the disabled, flaws in the criminal justice system, abortion, and attitudes toward the elderly and dying. Historical and current figures who lived a consistent ethic of life were featured, such as Abraham Lincoln, Dr. Martin Luther King, Dorothy Day, Nelson Mandella, and Robert Kennedy. She created an advisory board of physicians, legislators, teachers, clergy, health care personnel, lawyers, criminal justice representatives and social workers to focus on current gaps in a comprehensive respect life curriculum. She also established a Speakers Bureau to go into various areas of the diocese and parishes to educate individuals on

current attitudes toward suffering people, such as women exploited by abortion, families of the imprisoned, and the mentally challenged. She also instituted a Respect Life High School Leadership Program each year for students from Senior High that featured workshops on social justice and civil rights.

Pastoral Care

In the direct service area, Miriam networked with the Catholic Health Care System and Catholic Charities social workers to create an outreach program for pregnant teens to offer alternatives to abortion and supportive services for mothers who chose to give birth. She wrote grants to secure state funds for advertising targeted to adolescents who were unaware of the availability of testing and support services. She established a pregnancy hotline staffed by doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers, and volunteers who offered care, counseling, continued education and adoption assistance. This hotline also served married women who were no longer covered by health insurance due to plant closings and layoffs of spouses. She believes her greatest contribution in this area was building coalitions among existing service providers and resources in the community – the pieces were there, but it took a facilitator to bring the groups together.

To address other neglected groups, she worked with the diocesan Office for the Disabled to encourage families of developmentally and mentally challenged children to demand school services. She highlighted the value of the elderly and their gifts to society by establishing volunteer services, which matched the elderly with children in need.

Finally, Miriam and her husband "walked the talk" by taking a pregnant unwed teen into their home and caring for her until the baby was born and adopted (she had been evicted by her own father). It's one thing to preach to young people about alternatives to abortion; it's quite another to practice this message by personal example and sacrifice.

Public Policy

Recognizing that legislation is a key to reform, she advocated for adolescents at state and federal legislatures for increased support in special education and monies for programs to provide health care and supportive education programs for women with unplanned pregnancies. She advocated for Catholic hospitals to maintain maternity units, particularly in communities dependent on these services, which were otherwise unavailable. She also wrote a number of articles focusing on the overcrowding of jails and the inability of courts to schedule hearings due to the backlog of cases, and on building coalitions to offer expanded care to adolescents.

Timeless Lessons

As I reflect upon my mother's life of service, I see numerous lessons both as a son struggling to make his own way at midlife in an incredibly fast paced and materialistic society, and as a public administration academic sorting through what some call the postmodern era, connoting the absence of absolute standards or truths. These lessons that follow aren't prioritized, may not be properly categorized, and certainly aren't new, but it seems to me that they do represent some valuable touchstones in an increasingly chaotic world.

Parenting as a vocation

There is perhaps no stronger conviction as deeply held by my mother as her stance on the importance of raising children. When I asked her about any tension she may have experienced when she had to leave her career to start a family, she was almost nonplussed. For her, nothing was more important than her children, period, and temporarily leaving a career to be with her children was simply not an issue. Besides, she found the experience stimulating and full of wonderment. As relatively affluent dual career couples today struggle with childcare

responsibilities and we hear so much about quality time, my mother's example is a reminder of the importance of simply being present to your children. Indeed, the child psychology experts often mention the absence of parental involvement, not material deprivation, as a partial explanation for the rash of juvenile violence in this country.

Accepting others

My mother is an interesting contrast in this area. Like many deeply religious persons of her era, she has never been reluctant to pass judgment on people's behavior, yet at the same time never turned her back on them. She is a wonderful example of the phrase, "condemn the behavior, not the person." In our polarized age of either intolerance or value relativism, perhaps there is more to this age-old expression than we think. Is it not possible, for example, to love and embrace a gay person suffering from AIDS and at the same time abhor and condemn the sexual practices that may have led to the contraction of the disease? I think my mother would say yes – that this attitude is the essence of compassion.

Striving for excellence

My mother has never done anything in a mediocre fashion. Whether it was reaching out to that one troubled student, learning sign language, or counseling a pregnant teen, she always put her heart and soul into what she was doing. This example is a stark contrast to the sentiment today where the measure of a person is not personal commitment or the quality of what they do, but by how fast they can do it, or how quickly it produces results (often measured in dollars). Our society idolizes the young millionaires produced by the sports world, the Internet, or the stock market, yet overlooks the average persons who day in and day out strive to achieve excellence in their work for years with modest pay or recognition.

Building bridges

As I read the academic literature about the critical skills needed by public administrators in the new millennium, a consistent theme is the ability to work with different groups and build coalitions within a community. It is interesting that a seasoned public servant practicing in the 1970s and 1980s would note that "seeing potential links and bringing people together" was perhaps her greatest gift. Technical skills are necessary but not sufficient in today's interconnected, diverse, and fiscally constrained world; more than ever we need facilitators and catalysts who can overcome narrow self-interests and maximize a community's resources.

Identifying core values and living them

In teaching administrative ethics, one of the goals of the course is to help students identify their moral compass, or those core values, which are always there to guide them through life's dilemmas. As I reflect on core values consistently seen through my mother's life, I am reminded of the words of Father Theodore Hesburgh, the revered past President of the University of Notre Dame, who once told his students to always remember the "three c's" as they journey through life: courage, compassion, and commitment. When I see my mother, I see the courage she has displayed throughout her adult life battling a chronic disease that easily could have defeated a lesser person; I see the compassion she has shown for the disenfranchised in all walks of life, and finally I see the commitment to whatever task she has encountered, particularly with raising her own "less than perfect" children! Perhaps it is no coincidence that among her five children today there is a missionary priest, a campus minister, two nurses, and a college professor!

In ending, is this reflection biased? Yes. Is my mother a saint? No. Is she an inspiration to me? Absolutely, and that's all that really matters in the final analysis. Talk to your aging parents about their lives while you still have the chance and reflect on what they have learned– you may be surprised by the richness you discover!

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Thomas J. Barth is from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

Sketch

The Discourse of Silence: Shhhh

By Sarah L. Bend

S. Speaker

R. Respondent

Setting: The following is a dialogue about silence at a conference.

S. What is the role of silence in discourse theory?

R. "I think the role of silence is an important one."

S. "Where does one go to learn about silence?"

R. "I have heard that a forest is a good place."

S. "O.K. Any particular forest?"

R. "No any forest will do. Preferably one without a Starbucks stand."

Setting: Forest.

S. "So uh now we are in the forest. If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?"

R. "Shhh."

S. "How do I get comfortable with silence?"

R. "The most important skill is navel contemplation."

S. "I can't find my navel. I lost it after the birth of my second child."

R. "Shhhh."

S. "The birds are sure noisy."

R. "Shhh."

S. "I got a mosquito bite on my wherever and it itches. How can I think about silence?"

R. "Shhhhh."

S. "My head is filled with it's own conversations. Will it bother you when I talk to myself and that I will answer back?"

R. "Yes! NOW BE QUIET!!!!"

S. "It sure is hard to get used to being comfortable with silence."

R. "You need to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. Silence is a good teacher."

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Sara L. Bend is from Omaha, NE.

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