

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

A Publication of the Empire State College Mentoring Institute



EMPIRE STATE
COLLEGE

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Issue 14 • Summer 1998



Issue 14, Summer 1998

Table of Contents

- Editorial (Mandell, Alan)
- Correct Belief—The High Theology of Empire State College (Carey, Bob)
- Learn from Birches (Cockcroft, James)
- Invitation to Preview New Web Site (Brunschwig, Fernand)
- Critical Thinking (Bloom, Mayra)
- Thinking About Technology
- Eta's Story – (An Excerpt) (Ariker, Shirley)
- Mentorspace: An Experiment in Information Management for Mentors (Mendelsohn, Frieda)
- Reflections on a Golden Year (Starr-Glass, David)
- A Conversation about Mentoring
- Grading Students: Thoughts in Progress (Coulter, Xenia)
- Book Review - Citizenship and Community at Stake (Seidel, Robert N.)
- Finding the Mind and the Heart: Religious Studies at ESC (Kurs, Katherine)
- CIRCLE News
- MI News

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

From the Editor

Alan Mandell, Metropolitan Center

...we make virtues not intellectually but through practice – one of the virtues we have to create in ourselves as progressive educators is the virtue of humility.

– Paulo Freire

Although it would be impossible to miss the transformations that have occurred in this institution over the last two and a half decades, the changes of the last few months seem especially striking. By the close of this summer, four senior administrators will have recently left ESC, and our institutional self-study will have brought into sharper focus some of the differences and tensions among us about the College's direction. As many have argued, the kind of reassessment that necessarily follows such a change in personnel and systematic reflection as a community can only be healthy. It offers all of us an opportunity both to question and to reaffirm our commitments and practices. It also encourages us to really see the College as a whole and acknowledge the diversity of mentoring activities about which many of us are unaware. At the same time, as others have noted, such changes can be demoralizing. They can lend credence to a variety of notions: that we are without solid institutional moorings; that key people have lost faith in the vibrancy of the institution; that the authority of the pragmatic has already distorted our educational priorities; and that in the current environment, further conversation about community, mission and first principles is less valuable than are the private efforts that individuals make to understand and find intellectual peace in what they do.

It is not so easy, however, to fit our arguments or our feelings into such simple categories – such either/or dichotomies. Most of us experience more subtle shadings (that can shift within a single day!) between the possibilities inherent in reflection and constructive change, and the discouragement of lost opportunities and a problematic institutional trajectory that seems to have a life of its own. Perhaps what we are left with is the challenge of creating and recreating a mentoring culture: an environment that can support our work with students, however diverse the shape of that work may be, and that can also help us appreciate our complex array of understandings of and responses to the important work that we all do.

The power of mentoring as a concept and as a practice remains. In fact, so many others have latched onto the term that it often seems to have lost any meaningful core, any significantly *critical* edge. But to either give up on mentoring because we believe its real difference from other teaching practices has been diluted, or to enshrine it as a shibboleth that we know carries more nostalgia than practical weight, is to lose our vitality and our mission. We will always need to engage in serious debate about the word itself, and about the range of practices that attends to its promise. And, we will inevitably find ourselves in new and demanding teaching and learning situations that will push us to ask how what we most cherish as mentors can be extended into yet another domain without losing some essential understanding that can guide us as professionals.

What is most important for us to acknowledge is that even the best results of our self-study and the most successful outcome of upcoming personnel searches cannot close us off from the demands of our own intellectual claims. Such demands will not be so simply resolved, especially if we stay faithful to the virtue of incompleteness that is at the heart of mentoring as a distinctive and complex form of educational practice about which we need to continue to learn. This

incompleteness is central to its virtue – to mentoring’s wonderful yet rigorous humility.

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

Correct Belief—The High Theology of Empire State College **Bob Carey, Metropolitan Center**

Editor's Note: The following piece is another follow-up to "Footless" by Gary Goss and to the responses that have followed in AAM 12 and 13. We continue to welcome further discussion on issues of what we do and how we judge it.

I have followed the discussion which started with the issuing of the Distance Learning Task Force Report with some interest. The pieces in the November issue of *All About Mentoring* and Bob Seidel's response to them reacquainted me with the centrality of belief in our discussions about teaching and learning at Empire State College.

Discussions about "criteria" for evaluating which programs to support, about "core" values, "individualization," "modes of mentoring," "generic" contracts, contracts of other stripes, about "community" and whether we are one or not, all seem to be preoccupied with defining what the College really is and what its essence is. Essentialist thinking, with its tendency to ontologize a term and then take it for a reality, gets cloudy very quickly. People and what they do disappear behind definitions and the formulation of definitions. We rapidly approach the credal level of discussion, and trailing in its wake to lend urgency to matters, the politics of motive and purity. How did this come to pass and what might we do about it?

We have to look at the College's founding and its "manufactured vocabulary" (Barzun, 1961) to find one of the major reasons for this state of affairs. The College was, after all, going to reform things. Its vocabulary of contract learning and degree program planning and its reading of Bloom's taxonomy, for example, carried a heavy moral charge. We were not doing something as unexciting as making a college available to adult learners. We were something larger, better, newer. The rhetoric of the College had a dramatic structure that located good and bad rather easily. We were good; curriculum, requirements, classroom-based instruction were bad.

The term mentor, likewise, had an expansiveness that was attractive. Mentors weren't just teachers who corrected papers or checked for grammar; they were something more. But it also was clear, early on, that not all mentors were the same: some were good (center mentors tended to be that); some were not (unit mentors tended to be that). Unit mentors were brokers, facilitators, pleasant perhaps, but definitely below the salt.

There were other misgivings as well. Were we really better than the thing we were supposed to reform? Was being a mentor a good professional move, or did it mean living on the professional margins? Here is where graduate school socialization and a sense of our "fields" came head to head with the teaching requirements of the school. They were different, and mentors early on began to differentiate between "my work" and the workload of being a mentor. "My work" was all those things one was supposed to do after leaving graduate school. Graduate school had promised a future of research, publication, grants and seminars in which the fruits of one's labors would be shared. However wrong this picture, however hazy the details, there was the sense that one's work would be shaped by research; teaching would somehow follow from it. Teaching there would be, to be sure, but it would be teaching what one had mastered. Graduate school did not address the question of teaching except in passing.

The teaching requirements of Empire State College were different. The idea was to have students inquire, develop

resources, shape answers. Even at the modest level of suggesting a bibliography or an approach to a paper, the mentor was less the lecturer speaking out of his/her knowledge to a student's ignorance, and more the editor, the evaluator, the tester of answers. Was the paper well written? How should it be corrected? How many rewrites were required? All the questions that never got raised or answered in graduate school now walked into the office every day. What are the requirements of teaching in an institution that was confused about whether entering students were to become independent learners or were already independent learners? And what did that term "independent learner" even mean? It changed with each student. Mentoring was too much like being a parent all over again, and endlessly. The term itself, another instance of announcing difference, did nothing to clarify the nature of the work of the faculty.

While we have come to appreciate the fact that we are a college for adult learners, two examples of our official language and the debates it has inspired illustrate how difficult it is to see and discuss the day to day practicalities of working with an adult population.

The first term is "individualization." The term and the debates were creedal in intensity because the sheer elasticity of the term meant that it explained everything and thus explained nothing. Were contracts individualized? Were degree programs individualized? Was individualization a procedure, a process, a result, a series of describable acts? If an individual student and an individual mentor were working on an individual student's individual degree program, would the inclusion of a "class" somehow injure the individualized quality of what these individuals were doing? The hovering quality of the term seemed to say that we were doing more, but the where and the how of it remained elusive. At the end of the day, an education is an individual education: a student reads or does not read, struggles with writing, or walks away. The "more" and the "better" proved hard to define, though not for lack of trying.

"Individualization" might have been retired as a term; "breadth" still has some life in it. We value breadth; we worry about narrowness. What are these "Ur" terms? "Breadth" with respect to what? How is that to be measured? The deep model, the Platonic idea of the breadth discussion, is distribution requirements. Do you have this and that? If so, you have somehow addressed the issue of breadth. Does the term help us understand what a 45 year old woman who wants to go on for an M.S.W. and who is a skilled artist but who has not done a research paper in 15 years (the last time she was in college) and is not much of a reader, needs to do? Is it, somehow, a clutch of studies that are broadening, by definition? Which ones are those?

We should look at our language to see if it really describes what we do and what students will be expected to do. This language should describe the act/acts of being a student and of working with a mentor. It should say a lot about working with ideas and about reading and writing. That is, one might say, the law and the prophets.

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

Learn from Birches
James Cockcroft, Center for Distance Learning

Driving to and from Montreal,
I see a lot of birch trees.

After an ice storm,
they bend and kiss the ground:
white on white.

In early spring
they are most visible,
as if risen before
others have thawed.

At mid-summer,
they are less visible,
their gleaming souls
hidden by green finery

In autumn, they
are truly humbled
by brighter oranges and reds.

Perhaps that is true
of us too and we can
learn from birches.



Issue 14, Summer 1998

Invitation to Preview New Web Site Fernand Brunschwig, Long Island Center

Consumer's Guide to Educational Planning in Technology, Science and Business

<http://sln1.esc.edu/personal/faculty/fbrunsch>

User ID: Ed Planning

Password: degree

I am happy to invite the ESC community (including students) to a “preview” of my new web site. The site contains the complete text of my new book, *Consumer's Guide to Educational Planning in Technology, Science and Business*. The book will soon be available from the ESC Bookstore. During the this preview period, the site will be accessible only via the above password.

The purpose of the *Consumer's Guide* is to document and explain the real process of educational planning in a way that will be helpful to students, both at ESC and elsewhere. The core of the book is a series of cases, each of which explores a selected ESC graduate's degree program and career. Some of the graduates worked with me directly; others were recommended by their mentors. All of the cases have some relationship with technology or science, though some of the concentrations are in business or other areas.

The book and site are also attempting to transmit a more powerful, yet harder to communicate, message – the idea that ESC's “method” – formulating and building upon your own goals, crafting an individualized degree program (DP), studying independently with a mentor – really works in a practical, personal way, that the abstract theory of ESC is, in fact, built on genuine success achieved by real people. The book and site lay out a tapestry in which new students will, hopefully, be able to find both inspiration and practical help.

The book and site's many personal “stories” should help new students get a sense of the real history (and herstory) of ESC. New students can begin to understand ESC's tradition of mentoring, of finding that special match between DP and goal or that natural affinity between a student's long-dormant interest and a mentor's suggestion. The book and site also offer a way for new students to find out about, to share, and, hopefully, to build upon the career and academic successes of ESC graduates, as well as their gains in self-confidence and self-esteem.

The web site contains the degree program, rationale and contract evaluations for each graduate, plus their responses to a questionnaire. I have also written comments for many of the cases, highlighting the issues that arose during the educational planning process, explaining how problems were solved and bringing out the implications for other students. The introductory sections of the book explain the mechanics of educational planning in a concise way that supplements the more thorough approach of the *ESC Student Planning Guide for Degree Programs and Portfolios*.

To reach the site, start your web browser, and type in the address (sln1.esc.edu/personal/faculty/fbrunsch); a box should pop up requesting your user ID and password. The user ID (Ed Planning) can be entered either in caps or lower case, but

the password (degree) must be entirely in lower case letters. You should soon see the title and table of contents of my site. You can access any document with a “click,” and you can get back to where you started by using the “back” button of your browser.

I hope you’ll visit the site soon. I am looking forward to hearing from you and getting your feedback.

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

Critical Thinking

Mayra Bloom, Hudson Valley Center

One of the purposes of the APLPC Faculty Development Retreat on Critical Thinking and Writing Skills, held in Latham in the fall was to help mentors think about two questions:

1. What do we mean by the term “critical thinking” anyway?
2. What is the relevance of “critical thinking” in a discipline such as mathematics, in which process is important, but correct answers are required?

The guest presenter was Paul Donnelly, director of the Institute for Thinking and Writing at Bard College, who opened the retreat with a series of experiential exercises, one of which addressed the persistent pedagogical question, “How can we teach students to deal with difficult texts?”

To help us identify with the student’s dilemma, Paul handed out a dense passage from Lev Vygotsky’s essay, “The Development of Scientific Concepts” and gave us a very short time in which to read it. After touching very briefly on the content of the article, we discussed strategies for helping students approach comparable assignments.

Later, I reread the essay and realized that although Vygotsky was talking about scientific concepts rather than “critical thinking” per se, his analysis could be applied to both.

According to Vygotsky, there are two different kinds of concepts. The first, “spontaneous” concepts, arises as a result of sensory, cultural, verbal and other experience. Thus, a young child knows what a “brother” is (though not perhaps what “siblings” are) without ever having received a lecture on kinship relations. Spontaneous concepts form the basis for the robust, practical but often incorrect theories through which we explain the world to ourselves. Other concepts are “schematic;” that is, they are associated with formal learning situations. Thus, a child who never lived through the Civil War can answer questions about Gettysburg.

For Vygotsky, conceptual development consists of a “growing together” of the spontaneous and the schematic, a process, as one mentor put it, “like stalagmites and stalactites in a cave.” But precisely what is happening as the two kinds of concepts converge? On the one hand, to use Robert Kegan’s term (1982), we become “disembedded” from our spontaneous concepts and are then free to develop, analyze or even change them – *i.e.*, to look at them critically.

At the same time, as we live in the world, our schematic concepts become grounded – connected to what we experience and have already learned. As ESC Mentor Wendy Goulston put it, “When we examine our own experience in an effort to understand a [schematic] concept, we see what the concept can and can’t explain; in other words, we take a critical stance toward the concept itself.”

This process is “critical” because without it, development is compromised. On the one hand, spontaneous concepts would be left intact to harbor stereotypes, prejudices, inaccuracies, projections, hearsay and distortions. It is equally dangerous to

leave schematic concepts ungrounded in experience, because what results, among other ills, are unethical science and misguided policy.

The second question also considers the nature of critical thinking, by asking about its relevance in disciplines such as mathematics, in which process is important, but correct answers are required.

Unpacking the question reveals an assumption that “correct answers” do, in fact, exist. The question is couched to imply, at least faintly, that by privileging process over product, “critical thinking” can lead to sloppy work and a willingness to accept incorrect solutions. Obviously it matters if a child attains a flawless grasp of long division, but then gets every problem wrong. In this sense, “critical thinking” is akin to what Peter Elbow calls “the doubting game,” *i.e.*, the dominant assumption that the best (if not only) way to arrive at the truth is by rejecting anything which cannot be proven. Betty Lawrence’s experiential session on Mathematics and Critical Thinking addressed this question directly, but in a very different way when she asked each participant to write a “mathematical autobiography.”

For me, the exercise sparked instant recall of a moment in third or fourth grade, when I was taught the multiplication of fractions. Up until then, my largely “spontaneous” concept of multiplication rested upon the conviction that it makes numbers bigger. Suddenly, I was being told to multiply when a problem specified half of something – a perverse and senseless thing to do. As usual, however, I suppressed my academic/moral outrage, made up a mnemonic, and got it right from then on, which stood me in excellent stead for the remainder of my school career. Unfortunately, it also convinced me that (a) I would never be good in math and (b) it didn’t matter, because mathematics was clearly not a reasonable discipline.

I am sure that my teacher would have been shocked to think that by learning to multiply fractions, I had actually lost mathematical competence; or that an opportunity for critical thinking had ever existed, much less been wasted. Since she had not been exposed to the Vygotsky’s Marxist theories, she failed to notice the conflict between my “spontaneous” and “schematic” concepts and the “teachable moment” which that conflict produced.

Because she had been trained to look at my answers (rather than my questions) as evidence of comprehension, she corrected my homework; explained how to do it again; and was genuinely pleased when I got an A on the test.

In one sense then, “critical thinking” does appear to encourage students to entertain (if not to accept) wrong answers. But as Piaget often pointed out, patterns of wrong answers illuminate underlying conceptual development. Critical thinking does not, however, permit the correctness of an answer to mask misunderstanding, cognitive dissonance, intellectual outrage or withdrawal. Without critical thinking, mathematics education produces math-avoidant mentors, less-than-educated consumers, and bamboozled citizens – results that are critical indeed.

References

Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing Without Teachers*. NY: Oxford University Press.

Kegan, R. (1982). *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Piaget, J. (1952). “Logic and Psychology” in Gruber, H. & Voneches, J. *The Essential Piaget*. NY: Basic Books.

Vygotsky, L. (1978). “Interaction Between Learning and Development.” In *Mind and Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

Thinking About Technology

Our ESC discussion about technology might be considered one piece of a broader societal-wide conversation. Recently, I saw a reference to a book that offers provocative discussion about our practices, ideas and assumptions about technology. Turning Away from Technology (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books), edited by Stephanie Mills, is made up of discussions from the 1993 and 1994 Megatechnology Conferences that included people such as Wendell Berry, Chet Bowers, Fritjof Capra, Gustavo Esteva, Susan Griffin, Jerry Mander, Ralph Metzner, John Mohawk, Godfrey Reggio, Richard Sclove, Charlene Spretnak and Langdon Winner. The book also includes a fascinating list of “78 Reasonable Questions to Ask About Any Technology” that are included here:

Ecological

- What are its effects on the health of the planet and of the person?
- Does it preserve or destroy biodiversity?
- Does it preserve or reduce ecosystem integrity?
- What are its effects on the land?
- What are its effects on wildlife?
- How much and what kind of waste does it generate?
- Does it incorporate the principles of ecological design?
- Does it break the bond of renewal between humans and nature?
- Does it preserve or reduce cultural diversity?
- What is the totality of its effects, its “ecology”?

Social

- Does it serve community?
- Does it empower community members?
- How does it affect our perception of our needs?
- Is it consistent with the creation of a communal, human economy?
- What are its effects on relationships?
- Does it undermine conviviality?
- Does it undermine traditional forms of community?
- How does it affect our way of seeing and experiencing the world?
- Does it foster a diversity of forms of knowledge?
- Does it build on, or contribute to, the renewal of traditional forms of knowledge?
- Does it serve to commodify knowledge or relationships?
- To what extent does it redefine reality?
- Does it erase a sense of time and history?
- What is its potential to become addictive?

Practical

- What does it make?
- Whom does it benefit?
- What is its purpose?
- Where was it produced?
- Where is it used?
- Where must it go when it's broken or obsolete?
- How expensive is it?
- Can it be repaired? By an ordinary person?
- What is the entirety of its cost, the full cost accounting?

Moral

- What values does it foster?
- What is gained by its use?
- What are its effects beyond its utility to the individual?
- What is lost in using it?
- What are its effects on the least person in the society?

Ethical

- How complicated is it?
- What does it allow us to ignore?
- To what extent does it distance agent from effect?
- Can we assume personal, or communal, responsibility for its effects?
- Can its effects be directly apprehended?
- What ancillary technologies does it require?
- What behavior might it make possible in the future?
- What other technologies might it make possible?
- Does it alter our sense of time and relationships in ways conducive to nihilism?

Vocational

- What is its impact on craft?
- Does it reduce, deaden, or enhance human creativity?
- Is it the least imposing technology for the task?
- Does it replace, or does it aid, human hands and human beings?
- Can it be responsive to organic circumstance?
- Does it depress or enhance the quality of goods?
- Does it depress or enhance the meaning of work?

Metaphysical

- What aspect of the inner self does it reflect?
- Does it express love?
- Does it express rage?
- What aspect of our past does it reflect?
- Does it reflect cyclical or linear thinking?

Political

- What is its mystique?
- Does it concentrate or equalize power?

- Does it require, or institute, a knowledge elite?
- Is it totalitarian?
- Does it require a bureaucracy for its perpetuation?
- What legal empowerments does it require?
- Does it undermine traditional moral authority?
- Does it require military defense?
- Does it enhance, or serve, military purposes?
- How does it affect warfare?
- Does it foster mass thinking or behavior?
- Is it consistent with the creation of a global economy?
- Does it empower transnational corporations?
- What kind of capital does it require?

Aesthetic

- Is it ugly?
- Does it cause ugliness?
- What noise does it make?
- What pace does it set?
- How does it affect quality of life (as distinct from standard of living?)

The self in a self-directed learning project is not an autonomous, innocent self, contentedly floating free from cultural influences. It has not sprung fully formed out of a political vacuum. It is, rather, an embedded self, a self whose instincts, values, needs and beliefs have been shaped by the surrounding culture. As such, it is a self that reflects the constraints and contradictions, as well as the liberatory possibilities, of that culture. The most critically sophisticated and reflective adults cannot escape their own biographies... (A)n important aspect of a fully adult self-directed learning project should be a reflective awareness of how one's desires and needs have been culturally formed.

Robin Usher

“Disciplining Adults: Re-examining the Place of Disciplines in Adult Education.”

Studies in Continuing Education

1993, p. 236

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

***Eta's Story* – (An Excerpt)** **Shirley Ariker, Metropolitan Center**

*The following excerpt is from a completed novel. (I'm now working on the third revision.) It begins with the marriage of the main character's parents. The main character is a woman who yearns to be more than both her culture and time allows. She is modeled on several women (an aunt, a mother-in-law and a few others) who were clearly frustrated by the narrowness of their lives. They were competent people and I often wondered why they hadn't broken free to do something more fulfilling. This novel is about what I imagine limited their choices. The novel begins with a brief history and portrait of the family, particularly the parents of the main character. The background is a retelling and reinvention of my family stories. The novel is tentatively titled *Eta's Story*, after the main character (who will be renamed).*

They lived in a shtetl, a small town in the northern Ukraine called Kolke that was sometimes a small town in Poland, depending upon who had won the latest war. The wars between the Ukrainians and Poles affected them only because they excited virulent anti-Semitism on both sides – the one thing the Poles and Ukrainians seemed to share with equal fervor. Between wars the town remained relatively untouched by the outside. It was a place where everyone knew and sometimes accommodated each other during the quiet times, but it did suffer from periodic and violent *pogroms* that left many Jews dead. The Jews and the Gentiles, despite how uneasy and mistrustful they felt about each other, lived side by side.

In many ways the town was like hundreds of towns across the Ukraine in the 1890s. The most important building was the stucco train station because, it was the link to Russia. All the other buildings in the shtetl were clapboard, but not the station. The stucco had been painted a now-faded but once bright pink. It stood out in every way from the drab and poor buildings of the town. The shape of the station was oval – made so by the two half-circle porticos at either end. The Doric columns supporting the roof added to the effect that this was a building from another place and time. One of the tsars hoped to bring renaissance enlightenment to the wilds of Russia and so built these stations everywhere. There wasn't a town large enough to have a train station that did not have one of these columned stucco stations painted in pastels, often the only bright spot amidst abject and demoralizing poverty.

The people loved their train stations though they resented the other symbols of the remote tsars. They gathered there and turned it into the social center of the town. It was an unusual event when someone came or left, but the anticipation lent some excitement to their drab lives. As soon as the harsh winter weather eased, they sat outside the station and watched the trains rush through. They commented on the restlessness they thought they saw in the faces looking out at them. Look at those people rush from here to there. What's wrong with them? What was good enough for my father is surely good enough for me. So they commented and tried to hide their own yearning from themselves as well as others, for some of them did secretly yearn to join the travelers and be the ones looking out.

The most exciting event, however, was when the train, puffing steam and smoke and clanging as if it were going to break apart, occasionally stopped to pick up or drop off goods or, far more rarely, a person or two. Each year, some time after the winter had completely vanished, the train stopped to let off members of the family who owned the one large estate of the town and all the land surrounding it that the peasants worked. They owned almost everything in the town as well as the land surrounding it, but they did not linger in the place that depended upon them for its fate. They came for a month or

two and left long before there was a hint of the cold. The train once again stopped, now to retrieve the visitors.

Almost everyone in the town turned out for these two stops – but not the Jews. They did not work on the estate and had never been serfs, so they felt no obligation to the noblemen who came and went. To them, these aristocrats were no better or worse than any other Gentile – none were to be trusted.

All the streets of the town were oriented to the station, which was at the north end of town, the end abutting the rest of the country. There was one wide street parallel to the tracks, and all the smaller streets, nothing more than rutted dirt pathways wide enough for one cart, stretched down from the tracks like the fringes some of the Orthodox Jews wore trailing from their trousers.

Across from the station was one general store, a mill to grind grain into flour, and a tiny municipal building. This was where the man who was the tsar's emissary to the town held office and made judgments when he wasn't too drunk on vodka. He was almost always too drunk to settle any disputes in a way that satisfied anyone. Still, the building, however small and unimposing, had some sway over the town because it reminded them they were being watched, if not watched over, and that somewhere there was a tsar who was indifferent to their fate.

Next to the municipal building there was the church where the people went for prayer, for solace, and for forgetfulness. Occasionally they went for help with the disputes they couldn't settle themselves but which were too explosive to leave to the blundering or capriciousness of the drunk. They were resigned to some injustice when they went to the priest because he inevitably counseled compliance with the tsar's laws.

The people lived constricted lives. Most of the houses were small, one-story wooden structures usually left unpainted. The clapboard was left to weather. The eaves, designs cut out of wood, were one of the few notes of cheer. Often the interior was one dark room in which all of indoor life was conducted. Sometimes there were two rooms, one the all-purpose room, the other a small space where the parents and younger children slept. Despite the visible poverty, there was something pleasing about these houses. They seemed timeless and rooted in the earth, as if they had grown up out of it like the bushes and grasses around them.

Here and there a two-story house stood above the other buildings, different in size, and different because often these were painted houses. They were a sign of some prosperity in a sea of despair born out of knowing nothing could ever change or improve. Nothing was grand, though. Even the dacha of the local aristocrat was not an imposing or particularly large home. It was larger than any building in the town, but still a rather modest wooden structure, also only two stories high. It was surrounded by outbuildings that had the signs of long neglect. The dacha was the only house built according to a plan so there was some architectural harmony. Because it was outside of town and remotely placed near the woods of the estate, few from the town saw it. What they saw every day year after year was the town itself, grim and homely, a daily reminder of who they were.

The weather in Kolke was as extreme as it was in most of Russia. In the winter everything was covered with feet of snow, so much snow that it wasn't unusual for a drunken peasant to wander into a snow bank and get covered by a new snowfall, to be found only when the spring thaw came. The main roads were made passable by putting logs horizontally across the surface to create a corduroy passage with huge banks of snow forming on either side as the road was flattened by the traffic. The side streets were left untouched so people made their way along them as best as they could, sometimes sinking into the snow, sometimes using snow shoes.

In the spring the roads and every piece of exposed land turned into a quagmire of mud, more like a living substance determined to suck everyone into its depths. The logs were ineffectual and people crossed streets at their own peril, often sinking to their thighs in the sticky, black mud. Summer was a series of plagues: first heat, then desert-like dryness, then wind storms that wantonly blew the topsoil away, and always insects of every variety. The roads turned into swirling dust.

But there was autumn. Crops were harvested in the glow of a late sun. Everyone went from field to field, helping each other gather the crops. Women joined the men. Their task was to throw the wheat into the air to separate it from the chaff. The setting sun shown through the tossed wheat and everything was burnished. Above all, there were the birches, the tall and glimmering birches. The most beautiful part of the town was the birch grove. The trees had been left alone to grow

and multiply by decree of the aristocrat who owned them, instead of being harvested for their wood or as fuel for the tiled stoves that heated the houses in winter. They stood above everything else, white on white snow in winter and flickering white through the green leaves in summer. The new leaves, barely visible, were the first sign that winter really would come to an end once again. In autumn, the one tolerable season, the leaves cast golden light over everything below them. The people observed the birch trees, often with a note of bitterness. During the bitter winters, when fuel was in short supply, the tall birches seemed to mock their plight.

Like many towns in this part of the world, Kolke had a small population of Jews. Their synagogue and school, cheder, were at the end of one of the narrow roads shadowed by the birches. Most of the Jews lived clustered together on the street of the synagogue and on the ones near to it, in a miniature ghetto. They felt a bit safer gathered together, even though they were too few to provide real resistance to any attack. They withdrew to feel safe, but the more they retreated, the more unlike everyone else they seemed. The more they were resented and mistrusted, the more they mistrusted. Over time, they had learned to disabuse themselves of the idea that they could be a part of the world that surrounded them or change the way others viewed them. They created a world within the world in which they found themselves and lived apart from their surroundings like an embattled people. They took pride in their difference, especially from the downtrodden peasants who seemed little better than brutal and mute animals.

The Jews knew they could never defend themselves against an outburst of violence with matching physical strength; instead, they retreated into their intellect and into a passivity borne out of resignation. Their escape was to study and so they valued it above any other pursuit as if they had freely chosen this path over others. Their cheder was their most revered place. The rabbi and the teacher were the two people they turned to for advice, for counsel when in need, for solace when in pain. There was no one they respected more than these two men – the rabbi and the teacher – and no one had more authority or status, including the tsar, the town's nobleman or any of the tsar's men.

This was the town where Solomon was the teacher in the cheder, where he lived with his wife Sarah, where they had their family.

Solomon moved to Kolke because it was where Sarah lived. Sarah was the only daughter in her family. She had two older brothers, the only children who had survived the many miscarriages and the many diseases that felled children. Both her parents had wanted a daughter, but years had passed without a successful pregnancy. When her parents were in their 40s, sure there would be no more children and at an age when their two sons were thinking about marrying and having children, Sarah was born.

They knew Sarah was their last child, their only daughter. Sons were prized, but a daughter stayed close to home after she married and was a companion for her mother, and for both parents in their old age. Their sons were sent to cheder to study when they were very young, and once they married they went to their wives' homes to be supported while they continued studying to be teachers like their father. Sarah went to school in the mornings, until she was 12, then she stayed home to help. The grist mill was to be her dowry to support an appropriate husband, someone who would take her father's place in the cheder.

Sarah was a special child, an answer to her parents' many prayers. They were overjoyed to be given this gift, but they were fearful and so both vigilant and indulgent. This was their child to be treasured and kept safe after losing so many children. Sarah was placid and seemingly good-tempered. Giving her what she wanted was easy, especially when she so willingly rewarded them with her sweet smile once she was given what she asked for. Her brothers, about to be married themselves, thought of her as a precious doll who would give their parents comfort once they left. For the short while they were at home in her early childhood, they played with her, indulged her, spent their pennies on foolish toys to amuse her. One or the other of them carried her around on his shoulders while she laughed in delight. The people in the small neighborhood were amused by the family and by this delighted and beautiful child. She responded to all the attention she got from them too with her engaging smile.

Sarah was beautiful and very different from her large and burly brothers who were as dark as she was fair. She was small and slim, graceful from almost her first steps. She had reddish-blond hair, and a round face with large, light blue eyes and a full mouth. Everyone, even the Gentiles, gave her attention and admired her beauty. She learned to expect these responses from people without any effort on her part. She only had to be.

Sarah smiled readily at people, yet somehow seemed strangely detached. When she was a baby she would go to anyone who came to comfort her or give her what she wanted. She had no preference for anyone in the family, and even relative strangers could pick her up or play with her without her seeming to notice that she was with someone she hardly knew. Her family thought this was a further proof of her unusually good temper.

There were occasions when she could not have what she asked for. Then another side of Sarah emerged. She rarely had a tantrum, but would go off to a corner and refuse to speak with anyone. Hours could go by while she sat quietly, unresponsive to any urging. She seemed almost catatonic. If it were at all possible to give her what she had first been denied, her parents would give in, fearful that she would get brain fever or some other dread disease. When it wasn't possible to give her what she wanted, as if she were a goddess to be appeased, other offerings were made until she finally relented, accepted a substitute, and gave them one of her captivating smiles. Her adoring parents and brothers readily forgave her for her bad moments.

“She's a little bit willful sometimes, but she'll outgrow it,” was the way they comforted each other after one of these confrontations. It was worth giving into her. After all, most of the time she was amazingly placid and friendly.

By the time she was 15, Sarah was exceptionally beautiful and had an outward stillness that intrigued people. In her small and isolated community, she was a bit like a goddess, and, like a goddess, she had become accustomed to admiration and indulgence as her due. It was rare that she was thwarted and, as she got older, she either withdrew until she got what she wanted or eliminated the moment from her consciousness, as if it hadn't happened. She knew if she shared her beauty, and maintained a cheerful temperament and outward placidity people wanted to oblige her. She gave most people pleasure and they gave her what she wanted willingly, which was their admiration.

Her beauty had that effect on almost everyone. The years of being able to get what she wanted from her family gave her another characteristic: she did everything without visible doubt. She moved through the world as if it were there for her. However people responded to her, she only took in their appreciation. She was single-minded about what she wanted, not because of being totally absorbed by something or someone, but because she didn't allow much into her consciousness that might upset her. She ignored what did not fit, which made her seem detached.

Sarah's inner life was less placid. She could see she was different in many ways from the rest of her family. Her parents and brothers seemed almost strange to her. They expressed love in a way that was incomprehensible. She couldn't see why they had such strong preferences for one person over another or why they had great angers over things that seemed so unimportant to her. She didn't understand why they couldn't distract themselves from what made them unhappy. She realized she was the one who was different from them and occasionally wondered about herself, but not so frequently that she distressed herself by her questions. She comforted herself with the admiration she got from others and became more immersed in her way.

She also felt some things they didn't seem to. At night, when she was alone, her mind abandoned her to her struggle with her body. She was flooded with sensations she couldn't name and they frightened her. Everyone else seemed so unaware of their bodies, while she felt as if some dybbuk had overtaken her the way she heard about in stories. No matter what she did to distract herself at night, she soon was obsessed with these recurring strange sensations. By day she became even more outwardly calm so no one would see that she was possessed. She was sheltered, as were all girls in her town, so she never was alone with boys and never associated these feelings with anything but a private torment.

Sarah's parents were pious people, like all the other Jews in their town, and they expected to arrange Sarah's marriage, as they had arranged their sons', but they weren't entirely untouched by modern ideas. It was important to them that their children know and care for the people they were to share their lives with. They wanted their children to have propitious marriages, but also marriages that were harmonious. While some girls married almost as soon as they were developed, Sarah's parents wanted to keep her at home for several more years, so their invitation to Solomon, the nephew of a well known rabbi from Lutsk, was only to introduce him to Sarah. He was a promising choice, appropriately educated and from a good family. Their hope was that Sarah would eventually marry Solomon, but not for several more years.

Solomon came for a week-long visit. Because it was autumn when Solomon came to Kolke, there was no cheder. The

holidays came one after the other and school was interrupted so there was much idle time when the family took long walks on the outskirts of the town, along with most of the other Jews. Sarah was constantly with Solomon for the week he was there. They usually walked together, sat next to each other at meals, and spent the evenings sitting side by side listening to the family talk.

She had only to see Solomon look at her when he thought no one else would notice to feel what she had been feeling at night and to see her agitation reflected in his eyes. Solomon's presence aroused her but, at the same time, it eased her fear that there was something wrong with her. She didn't feel possessed and frightened when she was around him.

Her nights intruded into her days when he was next to her. Her days made her nights more intense. She felt more longing to be with Solomon than she had ever experienced about anything or anyone. It was a strange feeling, this sense of wanting and needing to be around another person. Perhaps this was what she had watched other people feel for each other. Whatever it was, when Solomon left she felt bereft. She missed him in a way she had never missed anyone. She was truly changed by his visit. At night she wasn't afraid of her old dybbuk, because he now had Solomon's face, Solomon's expression when they caught each other's eye.

When her mother asked her if she would some day want to marry Solomon, she answered with a startling intensity, "Yes, Mama. Right away. I have to be with him. He'll save me."

"Save you? What are you talking about? You're too young now, but in a few years we'll have the wedding. Solomon will wait for you to grow up a little. His parents say he likes you, too. But there's time. Your father and I don't want to rush you."

"I want him now. I don't want to wait, Mama. Now."

"This is foolishness. We don't have to hurry. You can wait."

Sarah's parents refused to discuss an early marriage and, for the first time in years, Sarah sank into a prolonged silence, something more severe than her previous retreats. She spent hours doing and saying nothing. Sometimes, to her own surprise, tears seemed to come from nowhere. She felt sad, had felt sad and thwarted before, but never with this sense of emptiness, of being a shadow. There was something between Solomon and her that had awakened what she had thought existed as an evil thing in her alone. When she was around him she sensed that this tormenting thing that had plagued her nights wasn't bad, even as she wasn't sure what it was. His absence seemed a little death, as if she could never return to her former peace. She sat in the dark front room, not deliberately withdrawing to get her way as she had in the past, but in a state of mourning for a piece of herself that Solomon held with him in Lutsk. She seemed barely to hear when they spoke to her. No matter how they coaxed her, she said the same few words: "Let me be. I'm too sad to talk."

Her parents knew there was one way – Sarah's way – to recapture their beautiful daughter unless they were willing to endure her displeasure. They had wanted to prolong her childhood at home, but Sarah's unhappiness frightened them in its profundity. They began the preparations for her wedding.

When Sarah was 16, Solomon moved to Kolke and they were married.

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

Mentorspace: An Experiment in Information Management for Mentors **Frieda Mendelsohn, Niagara Frontier Center**

Do you know that mentors and students have had access to Books in Print online for over two years? Do you know how to find and use it? Do you know that the full set of current Area of Study Guidelines (including the concentration guidelines) are online on the VAX? Would you like an easy way to find them? Do you know what your colleagues have developed for their students? Would you like to share them with your students? Do you have materials which you have developed for your students which you would be willing to share if you could do so easily?

How do we learn about new resources available to us (on paper or electronically)? What are the ways in which mentors can effectively use the resources that we have? Is there a way that mentors, working together, can learn more about what we do and how we do it? If we find out what works, how do we share it?

The Educational Technology Committee (ETC) has been discussing these questions for some time and we've concluded that these questions are all information management problems. We hope to solve at least some of these problems with Mentorspace.

Mentorspace is a web site where we have collected resources, links to resources, and instructions for accessing resources which we have found useful in mentoring. The hypothesis underlying Mentorspace is that mentors will all find it easiest to learn something new if we can look in only one place to find it.

Assumptions

Our first assumption was that we, as mentors, cannot predict what resources we will need with a particular student since individualized learning is just that – individual! This generally means that we have a student in the office, a contract to write, and a need to find a resource within a short period of time.

Our second assumption was that it would be easier to find mentoring resources if one had a Table of Contents to all resources (whether on the VAX, on paper or the Web) in one location.

Third, we assumed that a Table of Contents would require a structure which met the needs of mentors.

Finally, we assumed that mentors at all ESC locations would soon have graphical access to the World-Wide Web (we're working on this!).

Building Mentorspace

In conversations with our colleagues, the two most requested resources were Books in Print and the Area of Study Guidelines (with concentrations). We knew from conversations with those at the Center for Learning and Technology (CLT) that Books in Print was included in FirstSearch and that we could access FirstSearch through the VAX or the web.

We also knew that the guidelines were on the VAX because Marjorie Lavin mentioned that in a Networked Learning Team meeting. It was time to stop thinking about it and to start searching for these elusive treasures. I was awarded that task.

In the past, I had always thought of looking for Books in Print when I had a student in the office and a task at hand. Since I couldn't find what I needed quickly enough to satisfy my immediate problem, I stopped looking for Books in Print and used another resource (generally the card catalog at SUNYAB which I already knew how to use). Now I would spend some time investigating the resources without an immediate problem to solve.

I put on my trusty deerstalker (I always wear the right hat for the job), picked up my mouse (can you see Sherlock Holmes with a mouse?), and dialed up the VAX. First mistake – the mouse doesn't work with the VAX. <sigh> OK, I'll try the web instead. I went to the ESC Virtual Library (<http://www.esc.edu/library>) and followed the directions to FirstSearch. Not one of the choices said Books in Print! Now what? After some wandering around, I was reduced to reading the directions. Finally, I found what I wanted. But it took some work and time and patience – none of which I want to spend on exploring computer resources when I have a student in the office! And, I'm sure, neither do you! So I carefully wrote out the directions and tested them and had others test them so that you will be able to use Books in Print when you need it. Just go to Mentor-space, read Find Books: Instructions and you'll be ready to find and use Books in Print!

Finding the guidelines was more of a challenge. All I knew was that they were in the Assessment Resources section of the VAX. As I delved deeper and deeper into the VAX, I made several wrong turns. This was definitely not something to attempt with a student in the office. Again, I made careful note of the steps required so that I could give it to students. Still, faculty would want something faster and easier to print. An email to Marjorie Lavin quickly resulted in Josephine Lau sending the entire set of guidelines to me via e-mail and I added them to the web site. What a nice surprise to find that this resulted in a clear Table of Contents to the guidelines, with separate listings for each of the concentration titles. There were guidelines for concentrations that I didn't know about. Oops! The complete set of guidelines is now available through Mentorspace – just click on the words Area of Study Guidelines.

I now had instructions for finding Books in Print from FirstSearch and instructions for finding the guidelines on the VAX. What else did I know how to find and use that might be interesting to my colleagues? The following is what I have collected and made available through Mentorspace so far; other ideas and materials are enthusiastically welcome.

Creating Studies for Students (finding books [includes Books in Print], finding articles, finding syllabi and courses on the WWW); Educational Planning (Area of Study Guidelines, Occupational Outlook Handbook, Reading College Catalogs by Lou Wood, How to Write a CBE Claim for Experiential Learning by Keith Elkins, Other Career Resources from the ESC Virtual Library, Associations on the Net from the Internet Public Library), Educational Planning in Science, Technology and Business by Fernand Brunschwig, New York State Department of Education for Teacher Certification and CPA requirements); Finding Studies for Students (ESC residencies, ESC online contracts and group studies, CDL online course list, sample CDL web course, SLN course list); Scholarly Activity (dated announcements of conferences, calls for papers or proposals, grant opportunities, etc.); Citing and Evaluating Internet Materials (also includes the Writer's Complex "codeword"); Mentor to Mentor (general discussion area); Technology Resources (Lotus Notes 3.0 self-study guide, learning about Netscape, getting connected to the Internet); Links to Share; Governance (currently empty – minutes from standing committees could go here if they so choose); Stuff (currently contains links to various lyrics sites on the WWW.)

As you can see, some of these categories are more fully developed than others. And some of these resources will most likely move to another web site within the College's site as web development continues; for example, the logical place for many of the Educational Planning sites might be an Assessment Center which could be accessed by students. Once such a site is built, some resources will be moved and we will link to their new home. In the meantime, we've included instructions which you can print and give to your students so that they can access these resources from home.

What is not included in Mentorspace? The Educational Technology Committee has not attempted to include resources which are specific to particular disciplines. For example, although I know of a great econometric model for students which they can access online (free!), I'm really not qualified to evaluate online chemistry labs. In fact, I found a health economics web site which is sufficiently outside my expertise that I would prefer to have someone look at it who knows more about health economics than I do. It is ETC's understanding that the Networked Learning Teams will address

disciplinary resources for mentors and students.

Testing

Where do we go from here? That depends on you. We're now at the testing phase of our experiment. We need you to do two things: (1) use Mentorspace and tell us what works, what doesn't work, what could be improved, etc; and (2) contribute resources which others might find useful. Do you have handouts which you want to share with your colleagues and/or their students? If so, please send them to me! Do you know of general Internet resources which others might find useful? Send them along. Do you have ideas which you wish someone else would follow up on? Send them, too – it's worth a try!

Evaluation

How will we know if our experiment has been successful? You'll tell us. We will know that it's successful if you contribute materials, we will know that it's successful if you ask for more resources, we will know that it's successful if you use the discussion area, and we will know that it's successful if you complain when it's broken.

Use Netscape or Microsoft Internet Explorer to open this "URL": <http://SLN1.ESC.EDU/mentor>

User ID: Mentor Space

Password: mentor [must be lower case]

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

Reflections on a Golden Year

David Starr-Glass, Israel, Center for International Programs

And you shall count seven sabbaths of years, seven years seven times, so that the days of the seven sabbaths years shall be 49 years. And you shall have the horn of a ram blown in the seventh month on the tenth day, which is Yom Kippur, and the horn shall be sounded throughout your land. And you shall sanctify the 50th year and proclaim freedom (d'ror) for the inhabitants in the land. It shall be a Yovel for you and every person shall be returned to his possessions and every person shall be returned to his family. (Leviticus 25:7-10)

Rabbi Yehuda commented: From where is the word freedom (d'ror) derived? From the expression "as someone who dwells (m'dayair) in a dwelling place". That is, one (who is free) dwells wherever he wishes and is not under the authority of another. (Sifra: Rosh Hashana 9)

1998 is a significant year for the Israel Unit. It marks the 20th year of Empire State College's activity in Israel, and it is also the 50th year of the State of Israel. All anniversaries are unique. Those who celebrate these two anniversaries celebrate different things in different ways: there is no obvious commonality between them. However, all anniversaries do have one thing in common: they are punctuations in time, providing an opportunity to review the past and to reflect on the future. For those of us who work with ESC and live in the State of Israel, the confluence of these cycles of measured time does provide the framework for reflections that recognize the commonality between the micro-environment of the College and the macro-environment of the State.

In the first section of this article, I first explore the Hebraic origins of the jubilee year which marked the conclusion of an interwoven agricultural, economic and spiritual cycle. The central feature of the jubilee year was the restoration of purchased land to its original, tribal owner. In the second section, I use the metaphor of exploring territory to describe the process of learning. In the concluding section, I reflect on implications for our teaching and mentoring.

A Jubilee of the Land

Patterns of time are woven through the Jewish experience. Specifically, there is a triple level of time patterns represented by *shabbat*, *sh'mita* and *yovel*. Every seventh day is a *shabbat* – a sabbath day – set aside for physical rest, intellectual renewal and spiritual nourishment. While the six days of the week are filled with creating, changing and expanding, the seventh day recognizes and affirms different dimensions. The seventh day invites, and perhaps even insists, on reflections as to the purpose of the creating, the direction of the change and the relationships impacted by the expansion of the previous six days. The shabbat is "the still point of the turning world;" the quiet moment within the clamor. This shabbat cycle that flows through the Jewish year – bursts of outgoing energy and point of inflowing tranquillity – reflects the creation of the universe, as presented in Genesis. The central involvement of the shabbat is the individual and family.

But this six-and-one pattern is not restricted to the weeks of the year: it also appears in the years themselves. Within the Jewish calendar, every seventh year is called a *sh'mita*, or sabbatical year. For six years the land can be worked and harvested. During that time agricultural results are improved and productivity pushed to its limits. However, on the

sh'mita year, the land is left to lie fallow: it cannot be worked or prepared in any way. During this year landowners have no property rights on what naturally grows on their lands: the landless, the poor and the hungry can eat whatever they find. By rabbinical extension, outstanding debts are canceled in this year. Traditionally, those who worked the land would take advantage of the cessation of work during the sh'mita year, develop intellectual skills and spiritual sensitivities.

In essence, the seventh year is a year of rest and restoration. It is a year of ecological balance and environmental sensitivity. It is also a year for reexamining the assumptions of economic welfare, property rights and social justice. The year is sanctified – pronounced holy, or designated for a higher purpose – and all fruit and produce which come from the land were also regarded as holy. This sanctification of the seventh year mirrors the six-and-one pattern which is found in the week. However, while the shabbat primarily involves the individual and the family, the sh'mita spread beyond personal boundaries to encompass the agricultural community as those who engage in the produce market. The sh'mita year, which only pertains only to land within to the historical boundaries of the Land of Israel, is still observed although the preponderance of opinion holds that today its observance is rabbinical in nature, rather than biblical. The next sabbatical year begins at the end of September, 2000.

At a tertiary level, the Jewish calendar also recognizes a *yovel*. This Hebrew word has entered our English vocabulary as “jubilee”. The yovel marks the conclusion of a cycle of seven sh'mita, or seven-year years, that is the yovel is the 50th year of the cycle. Yovel literally means “ram,” the year being so called because the beginning of the year was announced by the blowing of a ram's horn. The jubilee year centered around restoration and liberty: it was an intensification and an extension of what happens on a sh'mita year. The laws which governed the sh'mita year – cessation of agricultural activity and associated commercial activity – also applied during the jubilee year. Additionally, two unique processes came into play.¹ The first, was that indentured laborers went out from servitude. In the face of crushing poverty, a Jew could sell himself into servitude. This was considered a permissible, but ignominious, option for the very poor or those oppressed by debt. However, with each yovel year, these indentured workers were released from their masters.

The second feature of the jubilee year was that land, which had been sold during the 49 year cycle, reverted to its original, tribal owner. When the Jews originally entered Israel the land was divided among all of the 12 tribes, except for Levi. In turn, each tribe divided these lands among the heads of the families, who were supposed to keep the land allocated to them in perpetuity. It was considered meritorious for families to retain these ancestral lands, resisting economic pressures to sell them to members of other tribes. Due to financial distress, however, lands were sometimes sold to outsiders. Levites – who had no share in the allocated land – were awarded 48 cities which they lived in and expanded. They, too, would occasionally sell houses within the city or within the developed zone which ringed the city. During the yovel, these fields and properties reverted to the original ancestral owners. Thus, within a 50-year cycle, despite the difficulties and hardships that might have beset communities, properties were restored to their original families and tribes.

The jubilee year provided the means to restore dignity and redistribute wealth. The key issue was not one of imposed social justice, but rather of the fundamental recognition of inalienable rights to both personal liberty and ancestral heritage. Indeed, as Rabbi Yehuda noted, both liberty and land seem to entwine and to define one another: freedom is the right to dwell wherever one wants. Within the 50-year cycle individuals could, literally and figuratively, lose their liberty – the ability to express that uniqueness which both defines and proclaims identity. The 49 years gave ample opportunity for the individual to become dispossessed, to be inundated by financial concern, to be displaced from community, to be alienated from the soul. The 49 years of the yovel cycle represented an ongoing zero sum game in which those who gained did so only at the expense of those who lost.

By contrast, the yovel year was an ending of that game and a returning of the chips. It gave individuals the opportunity to reclaim their uniqueness and to restate fundamental aspects of the identity. Individual potentials may have been revealed but the reclaimed status was not guaranteed: the first year of the next 49-year cycle began (according to most opinions) at the end of the yovel year.

The institution of the yovel year addressed the issue of individual, societal and national restitution. Like the sh'mita year, the jubilee year was only applicable within the Land of Israel. Since only a limited number of the original 12 Hebrew tribes returned to Israel after the Babylonian Exile (586 BCE), the yovel year was abandoned. The accepted rabbinical ruling is that it can, and will be, reinstated only in the messianic era.²

A Celebration of the Landscape

Spatial metaphors have been often used to convey the dynamics of the learning process. We say that we entered new territory, defined boundaries, covered the ground, explored new landscapes, confronted obstacles or crossed bridges. In this kind of language we reflect on the process of learning taking place within a space that contains teacher and student. The metaphor is not simply a literary device: the imagery provides an opportunity to examine novel sets of relationships and dimensions. Robert French considers:

all learning is determined by the physical, relational, emotional, intellectual, political and spiritual space in which it occurs. The role of the teacher is... to create and maintain the textural quality of the space of learning.³

The ways in which we occupy, appreciate and explore space suggest ways of perceiving and improving the learning interaction. This is true within the framework of the lecture-based course, but it is more immediate and more acute when student and teacher meet in tutorial or mentoring sessions.

But what are these suggested perspectives? The first, is that space is an independent dimension that does not exist within the imagination of either student or teacher. We certainly require imagination and discernment to elaborate and to communicate the wonder of this landscape, but the exploration that we make has to be “out there”. Secondly, learning landscapes include both teacher and student. Thirdly, there is a difference between “the map and the territory.” And fourthly, learning is a process of sharing landscapes not of possessing, exploiting or colonizing them.

The first perspective suggests that we are not in the business of mind transfer: a student should no more be invited to share my mind than I should be expected to share the student’s. The process of learning is not invasive. The process of learning should not be characterized by dominance or submission to superior minds. In learning we are to meet in a new place, often a place which seems barren, or hostile, or threatening. Part of the tension which accompanies the learning process is that both teacher and student are aware that they have stepped out of themselves, and their inner, intellectual and emotional, security. Teacher and student must both enter a novel, shared landscape in which change can take place.

The second perspective provided by the spatial metaphor of learning is that the learning space must contain enough dimensions to accommodate both the student and the teacher. The learning space needs to be created in such a way that it allows both teacher and students to leave their personal spaces and meet – perhaps for the very first time – in the shared space of learning. The various dimensions that we hope to enter must be agreed upon by both student and teacher, not dictated by either. The student is not making an expedition to those landmarks which are already familiar to me. Rather, she is joining me in an exploration of a landscape which has changed because of her presence. I am neither the object of the learning process nor the leader of the expedition. At best, I am the guide who will comment and provide context. But even so, I will not take the photographs, or have to write the journal, or recount the stories. It is the student who must do that: she must leave the learning space with her own set of images, remembrances and experiences that are different from my own.

The learning experience is always in danger of becoming an aimless walk among the common experiences which we already share. There is, initially at least, an asymmetric distribution of knowledge and experience between teacher and student. Within this there lies the opportunity for the teacher to create an interest in the novelty and unfamiliarity of an unaccustomed landscape. The good teacher, just like the good guide, introduces the unexpected and the unfamiliar. However, opening gambits should not be confused with end games. The learning space may have to be opened for the student but the teacher must be careful not to dominate or predict the resulting dimensions of the space. Those growing dimensions must, sooner rather than later, become a place of common engagement and mutual inclusion; a place where exchange and new growth can take place. The teacher must mediate – not avoid or manipulate – the uncertainty and anxiety which are inherent in the transformation of learning: the teacher must maintain that unique textural quality which characterizes each learning space.

Thirdly, and crucially, it is now regarded as axiomatic that “the map is NOT the territory.” The map is a representation of an external reality; it is not the actual experience of that reality. The map is the symbolic processing of what is “out there,” and has symbolic meaning only for the trained cartographer. Obviously, maps have a validity and an importance, but they

are not the journey. Inevitably, I will show my student a map of where I think we should be going in our study. When we return we may well reexamine the map, adding to its detail or validating its relationships. But the map shows only relationships and possibilities; it does not record the journey taken any more than it captures the difficulty or the majesty of the landscape. The map is a representation of the significant features of the territory, but it cannot capture the experience of moving across the territory.

Often, I keep a journal of the journey taken through what I would normally consider very well known learning landscapes. I suggest the student does the same. Not only are each of my journeys different, but they always differ from the student's. We differ in the intellectual, emotional, relational and spiritual descriptions of where we have arrived at and how we have come there. I am always amazed that landscapes, which I have explored for many years, seem constantly renewed and altered by the experience of learning with another.

Fourthly, the spatial metaphor allows us to make observations about who owns the learning experience. Because of that asymmetry of knowledge which lies between teacher and student there is always a tension about who is setting learning agendas, defining goals and evaluating learning outcomes. The landscape does not belong to the guide. The guide does not have to lay claim to the territory in order to appreciate it, to enjoy it or to communicate its hidden features. The space lies beyond both teacher and student and entering into that space does not appropriate it or confer property rights to either. All that the guide and student can acquire is a map and a rich set of memories. These do become the property of the guide but they only hint at possible excursions or expeditions. The landscape that will be explored is not owned by either student or teacher. Just as neither owns, so neither can colonized or claim exclusive possession.

A Freedom Throughout the Land

It is this final point that is underscored by this year's double anniversaries: ESC's 20th year in Israel and the jubilee year of the State of Israel. There is a tendency for those who set out into familiar educational landscapes to begin to assume that they are the owners of those landscapes. Indeed, they may think that they have legitimately acquired a slice of that space by their effort to gain expertise in subject areas, and their tenacity to refine and to expand that expertise. In this notion of ownership, we come to believe that we have the right to exclusivity over the land, admitting visitors grudgingly and showing them restricted views of what belongs to us. We acknowledge that others too, by dint of superior intellectual exertion, can lay claim to tracts of this great landscape: land is a prize that may be earned. In this notion of ownership, we confuse individual maps with the territory itself; owning personal map with owning landscapes. In this erroneous notion, we forget that our maps and our landscapes are constructs that result from disciplinary, cultural, social and political stance and dominance. As Stewart Clegg acknowledges:

Meaning exists in the difference between relational terms to which current representations defer. However, there is no reason to expect that representations will remain contextually or historically stable and every reason to think that they will shift. Power implicates an attempt to fix or uncouple and change particular representational relations of meaning...⁴

In the State of Israel we see such exclusive ownership, and power dominance, of learning landscapes within the world of higher education. Part of the tension that exists between Israeli higher education and the American (particularly nontraditional) programs that operate here, has to do with the way in which the learning space is understood. The position taken by most Israeli institutions of higher learning is that the institution alone has the ability and authority to define the learning space. Obviously, this is a situation not unique to Israel. Elana Michelson reminds us that there are different cultures of learning, and politics of memory, in South Africa as well.⁵

For ESC, the yovel year is an affirmation that the learning space is entered into, negotiated and possessed jointly. In particular, the landscapes which we visit in learning are beyond ownership even although they are shaped by our cultural, social, political and economic environment. In the yovel, the land was returned to its original ancestral owners: in our tutoring and mentoring we should recognize that we are included in the landscape of learning but that we do not possess that land. That land is, as it were, granted in perpetuity to all of those who define themselves as heirs to the learning process. Perhaps, too, those who monopolize the learning landscapes outside ESC might also reflect on the jubilee year and its fundamental lessons about possession and restitution.

References

1. A comprehensive introduction to the legal implications of the jubilee year can be found in Rambam (Maimonides), *Mishneh Torah*, Volume 7 (Zerayim), *Laws of Sh'mita and Yovel*, Chapter 10.
2. Rambam (Maimonides), *Mishneh Torah*, Volume 14 (Shoftim), *Laws of Kings*, 11:1. Just as there is a sentiment that failure to properly observe shabbat, sh'mita and yovel in the land of Israel contributed to the exile of the Jews, many authorities understand that full restoration of these time pattern observances will only appear in the messianic era.
3. Robert B. French, The Teacher as Container of Anxiety: Psychoanalysis and the Role of Teacher. *Journal of Management Education*, 21:4 (November, 1997), 483-495.
4. Stewart Clegg, Foucault, *Power and Organizations*, in *Foucault, Management and Organization Theory*, A. McKinlay and K. Starkey (editors) (1998), London: Sage.
5. Elana Michelson, Prior Learning Assessment and the Politics of Memory: the Experience of South Africa. *All About Mentoring* Issue 12 (November 1997), 15-17.

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

A Conversation about Mentoring

At this spring's All College Conference, The Mentoring Institute sponsored an open discussion about what it means to be a mentor at Empire State College. There were people from different centers, different programs, and older and newer mentors. We represented different approaches to serving students. What follows is an edited version of the conversation. Alan Mandell opened the session simply by suggesting that we talk about the topic.

Chris Rounds: As a mentor, I deal with the whole person – all dimensions of that student rather than just one aspect.

Ellen Hawkes: What I have carried with me for the last 25 years is respect and humility for the student. This is the antithesis of authoritarianism.

Dick Butler: Organizationally, the point of responsibility is the mentor. Everything about degree planning and outcomes, for examples, flows through the mentor.

Rae Rohfeld: The focus of the mentor is on individual development rather than on just content.

Chris Evans: The mentor is the one who stands behind the student and may have to run after the student. This is quite different from standing in front of the student.

Lear Matthews: To what ideal does the College refer when recruiting a mentor? Fellow mentors have different styles, and this is confusing for a new faculty member.

Peter Perkins: When I first began, I saw the mentor/ student relationship as that between parent and child. Later, I learned that the relationship is more businesslike. Then, as I gained even more experience as a mentor, I reintroduced more nurturing, which brought with it problems of separation. Letting go has been the hardest.

Valerie Bauhofer: Before I became a professional mentor, I looked at why I was mentoring and why I chose people to mentor. I believed in them. I saw a spark in them that I wanted to nurture. I have trouble with some students because I don't believe that I am really a true mentor to them. Of course, I work with them anyway and try to believe that I can learn to see something in everyone. But I don't feel that outside of the institutional context I would have chosen to be their mentor.

Alan Mandell: The question then becomes: What happens when mentoring is professionalized – when it becomes a taken-for-granted role? Does it then become harder to be a “true” mentor?

Peggy Morrison: One of the skills a mentor must have is to know when to step back and get the hell out of the way. This can be very exciting. You need to be secure in yourself and to respect the student.

Mary Folliet: One of the paradoxes of mentoring at Empire State College is that you have to treat each student that walks

through your door the same and yet individualize everything. I see my job as helping each student climb to the point he or she wants to reach.

Chris Rounds: It is important to say that the student has the right to define the dimensions of the relationship. Some students need us more and in different ways. We should not see each student as an opportunity to perform a transformation or to view the student who does not want to be transformed as less than ideal. This is a dangerous position for the mentor to take.

Alan Mandell: We complain about the professionalization, perhaps the institutionalization of our role. We get sustenance and pleasure from it and yet it creates a tension for us. When we have students who want to be expedient, it increases our FTEs and lowers our actual workload, but we miss out on the part we believe is essential – the part we love. This is when we start to wonder if our job is about signing the papers and processing the registrations. This is what causes us to question our worth.

Ellen Hawkes: I try to instill a sense of autonomy at the beginning and respect a student's privacy. I will throw the ball back to them. My goal is to let them be the decision-makers.

Peggy Morrison: That's the point when I start to learn from them.

Bob Seidel: Mentoring is full of psychological and moral elements. For example, we practice tolerance and individualization. We think they are right. But we have students from cultures that resist and even abhor individualization and autonomy. What does it mean for mentors to respect these students? Mentoring is full of these moral issues.

Irene Rivera de Royston: I have begun to view mentoring as a means to an end that has many different faces. And we must give respect to those faces. There is a three-part analysis tool used in social work that includes processing, maintaining and impacting change. I now see that this model works with what we do. We are processing materials, signing forms and developing degree plans. We are also maintaining a supportive learning environment, finding resources and opening dialogue. But it is impacting change that pulls at my heart. I am seeking transformation for my students.

Lee Herman: Doing very little for one student may indeed be doing a great deal. Such a student may be driven by some practical reason. We may operate in an instrumental mode and may be doing a lot of clerical work. It may not seem profound to me, but it may have a profound effect upon the student because in doing this "merely clerical" work, we are in fact giving academic legitimacy to the student's interests. In this case a mentor offers respect for a student's goals and this may be much more transformative that we realize. If I act as a quiet clerk, the transformation might be great.

Chris Rounds: The process of educational planning sends a message that there is a connection between the academic and the "real" life, and this is part of the transformation. Part of the humility is that we cannot anticipate the event or moment of transformation.

Bob Seidel: We enjoy when a student makes a connection between the world of academe and the community of life.

Chris Rounds: The space we share and the stories we tell send the message that we care about the whole person. Robert Coles *The Call of Stories* is a wonderful resource for this sense of sharing and valuing this whole person.

Dick Butler: Interestingly, we don't know much about understanding the things we do to foster independent learning. The conventional quantitative measures miss this. We need to try to understand the most important outcomes of the mentoring process in a qualitative way.

Lee Herman: I listened to an earlier presentation on mentoring in different learning modes: residencies, groups, distance learning, and face-to-face individual tutorials. I am beginning to see that the core qualities of mentoring can be present in any of these modes. We get in trouble institutionally when we think, for example, that sharing authority with students can't happen in any of these modes. We have much to learn in this regard.

Alan Mandell: If we take sharing of authority as an ideal, I think all of us have experienced that it can be present to

greater or lesser degrees in each of the learning contexts within which mentors work at ESC. For example, although some of us may believe that face-to-face individual mentoring carries this collaborative possibility in its very form, the reality of a specific student/mentor relationship may be very different. Authoritarianism may still be present in a different guise.

Jay Gilbert: We have to recognize that a significant number of our students are at a distance, in some way or another. We thus have a base of experience from which to work. Much of the qualitative material is there for us to use and examine. We need to do much more with it. It's here!

Bob Seidel: We can talk about the qualities of mentoring, but they are always three-dimensional and difficult to understand. I will never be able to just tell a newcomer that this pattern or that template exists and should be followed.

Peter Perkins: What is mentoring? What I have learned, I have learned from others. There is no guidebook. But it is not just the students we have to learn to mentor. We have to continue to mentor each other.

Many thanks to Tai Arnold for her efforts in providing a written transcript of the discussion. The conversation was edited for AAM by Lee Herman and Alan Mandell.

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

Grading Students: Thoughts in Progress **Xenia Coulter, Central New York Center**

The Metacognition Conference

About a year ago, I attended a one-day SUNY Conversations-in-the-Disciplines conference in Cortland dealing with “metacognition,” a relatively new area in psychology. About 15 presenters, many from SUNY campuses but a significant number from other states and colleges, briefly described their research to the very small audience (no more than 50 people including the presenters) in an uncomfortably chilly classroom. (The heat had been turned off for the season, and, of course, it was an unseasonably cold day.) Nonetheless, despite the cold room and perhaps because of the small audience, it was an unusually stimulating experience for all of us.

Researchers in metacognition have generally been interested in how we as individuals think about our thinking processes, how our cognitive intentions impact our intellectual performance, and most particularly, how cognitive and memorial strategies and intentions are acquired in the first place. Much of this research has traditionally been focused upon children, no doubt the result of a lingering legacy from the work of Jean Piaget, who assumed that intellectual capacity is fully developed by adolescence. Nonetheless, the papers and discussion made it increasingly clear that this area of psychology has much to offer to the field of adult learning, even though there appears to be no cross-references between the two literatures. (For example, the word “adult” simply did not arise at this conference.) What is “self-directed learning,” I wondered, but an expression of metacognition, and what might we learn if the particularized experimental methods of psychology were used to analyze the thought processes of what is often rather abstractly referred to as “the independent learner?”

One of the papers at the Cortland conference¹ did focus on older subjects, specifically, traditional-aged college students, and it described the results of nearly 100 interviews with students about their study strategies. The major finding, and one that generated considerable discussion, was that college students appear to develop strategies, not for learning, but for obtaining good (or at least passing) grades. The presenter, of course, bemoaned student immaturity and their deplorable lack of intellectual curiosity and interest in learning. (And at that instant I was overwhelmed by a strong feeling of gratitude for being able to work with more mature students who are intellectually curious and interested in learning.) One of the participants, however, asked the conference participants why they were so surprised by that approach to college study. “After all,” she said, “grades are the coin of the realm. As the director of the graduate program in psychology, let me tell you that without good grades, students simply cannot get into graduate school or otherwise advance in this world. So, it’s not fair to criticize them when in fact their strategy makes very good sense.”

Reflections on Prior Experiences

Her comments brought to mind memories of my own college education. Although no one has ever accused me of not being intellectually curious, it is nonetheless true that my primary focus in college was upon learning what I needed to know in order to get an A. When I was a 28-year-old, first-year graduate student, and unhappy with not being able to

“simply learn,” I decided to follow my nose in a course on factor analysis. Instead of attending to the prescribed structure of the course, I spent hours in the library reading a variety of materials on the development of factor analysis, its problems, its applications and so forth. As a consequence, I received my first failing grade on an exam in graduate school. (Only with very serious backpedaling, and major promises to myself that I would never never again try to simply learn something for its own sake in school, did I manage to pass the course.)

William James² refers to one of the first levels of a mystical experience as a deepened sense of the meaning of things (or the “I never understood what that meant before” experience). Such was the impact of the conference upon me. Sure, I have always been deeply concerned about the movement among some ESC faculty toward using grades instead of narrative evaluations, but my thoughts about the negative aspects of grades were, up until this conference, largely focused upon the impact of grades upon the faculty. How, given the immense complexities of student performance, will we faculty be able to put students into only one of five major categories? Are we sufficiently aware of the difficulties (and time!) involved in carefully delineating one letter-grade category from another and the importance of doing so? Will we be adequately prepared to evaluate student work precisely enough to assign an appropriate grade and to defend that choice when students sooner or later raise objections? Will we be able to resist the inevitable pressure toward increasing quantification of student performance in order to make these decisions more easily? And do we know the inadequacies and impoverished nature of such typical quantification solutions as multiple choice and other “objective” test items?

Naturally, these concerns were born of my experiences as a faculty member in the psychology department at Stony Brook where the average class size was around 100 (and where I personally taught 1,000 students in the fall introductory course and 200 in the spring experimental psychology research course). Brett Silverstein (now at Columbia), who taught the spring introductory course, and I were in a never-ceasing search for ways of evaluating students that would offer them more options than just memorizing details from the text. Only those of you who are not math-anxious could appreciate the highly complicated weighting system I developed that required a computer program to calculate. It was an extremely time-consuming, depressing and difficult effort – all done in an attempt to take into account some of the many variables that characterize student learning. For me, when I came to ESC, the narrative evaluation represented liberation!

In the last year I was in APLPC (1997) we talked a lot about the growing interest in grades at the College, which most of the APLPC members deplored. In our discussions there, however, the emphasis, not surprisingly, was mostly upon the positive aspects of the narrative evaluation. We liked not having to compare one student with another; we liked being able to describe fully the unique combination of strengths and weaknesses each student displayed; and we particularly liked being able to track a student’s progress from contract to contract. Although the local SUNY library yielded almost nothing useful about the practice of grading, APLPC member Duncan RyanMann in his research work for the FORUM program sent me some interesting articles. One³ provided a particularly strong defense of narrative evaluations that I thought might someday prove useful if we ever had a College-wide discussion about grades. What I seemed to have missed in reading this article that I only noticed recently, however, is that its underlying assumption was that grades are bad for students.

Thus, although my prior experiences, and even readings, might have led me to focus on students, it was apparently my faculty mindset that led me to think about the value of narrative evaluations and the shortcomings of grades primarily from a philosophical, practical, personal and even institutional perspective. The message that grades might interfere with learning was buried in all these experiences, but it did not take conscious form until the explicit discussion that took place at the Cortland conference. Even then my understanding of the issue was incomplete.

Preparing for a New Teaching Experience

Several months ago, short of money (because of my full-year sabbatical), I offered to teach the introductory psychology course at Tompkins Cortland Community College (TC3). The idea of teaching students in a group interested me, although I was not particularly eager to deal again with the crassness of the traditional-aged student. (A couple of years ago, in preparation for our presentation in Rochester about the possibility of using the mentoring model with students of all ages,⁴ Irene Rivera de Royston and I interviewed faculty who worked with both traditional and nontraditional students. Without exception, those teachers saw the younger students as less satisfying to teach in almost every way.) I wanted to try something different with these TC3 students; instead of exams I decided to require them to prepare portfolios, similar to what I require of my ESC students. These portfolios would consist of text notes, class notes, variety of written exercises

and comments, and four reflective papers.

Before class began, TC3 scheduled a special meeting for the adjunct faculty. In preparation, the academic dean asked us to read some material which described the new TC3 initiative – to become a learning-centered institution. To be truthful, I found the material to be fairly vacuous and confusing. I could not imagine a single teacher whose primary desire was not for students to learn, so it was difficult to understand what exactly was the big deal. Also, I was not able to make a clear distinction between a “learner” and “learning” centered institution, so I figured they must be approximately the same. Given my many years of experience at ESC, I hardly expected to acquire much new information or insights at this meeting.

The adjunct faculty meeting turned out to be another Jamesian “mystical” experience for me. Although I was so focused upon being student-centered that it took awhile for the point to hit home, I finally understood that the term “learning-centered” was invented to serve as a contrast to the usual “teaching-centered” focus of educational institutions. Instead of asking teachers to work at improving their methods of instruction, TC3 wanted to encourage them to think foremost about how to promote active student learning. Yes, indeed, while teachers surely do want their students to learn, in a learning-centered institution, they find ways to make it happen. This discussion brought to mind Patricia Cross’s classroom assessment activities⁵ which illustrate the practical difference this change of focus can make in the classroom, and of course I was also reminded of the Barr and Tagg article⁶ that was recently circulated across the College. I also saw that my plans for the TC3 course, particularly my intention to require portfolios, fit well with this new initiative, although I realized that I had to be more explicit with the students about my learning goals.

It did not occur to me to link this focus on student learning with my new insights on grades. For these two ideas to come together, I had to wait to be taught by further experience.

The Class in Action

I do not want to claim that my psychology class at TC3 was a fantastic success. I made many mistakes, missed many good opportunities, and need to teach this course at least five more times to get it really right. But something significant happened that made this course different from any I’ve taught before. The 30 or so students in the class were plainly astonished by my declaration that there would be no exams and no interim grading in the course. Their final evaluations, I said, would be based upon the thoroughness (50 percent), organization (25 percent), and thoughtfulness (25 percent) of their portfolios. By thorough, I meant that the portfolio should include notes from all chapters and all the homework; by organization, I wanted the material to be in some kind of rational order; and by thoughtful, I wanted evidence in the assignments that they had “engaged” the material. I was not interested in whether they had the “right” answer but only that they had thought about the assignment and found some way to make sense of it, or at least to clarify their uncertainties. In essence, the portfolio would be a document by which they proved to me that they had learned something important and meaningful about psychology.

To help the class keep up, I encouraged them to submit their portfolios throughout the course and required them to submit certain written assignments as they were due. When a latecomer to the class asked me if the first reflective paper was being graded and I said, “No; I only want to provide you with helpful feedback and besides I’m interested in seeing what you think,” he was incredulous and delighted (“that’s really cool”). And the students not only liked receiving feedback without being graded, but enjoyed talking with me about their thoughts and my responses during the break, after class, or during my office hours. These were traditional-aged students, and to me it was miraculous that we talked about substance instead of “how come I got a B?” and “what can I do to make this into an A?”

Indeed, I have never had a livelier class of traditional-aged students. Once they understood that they did not have to learn the material in order to regurgitate it on an exam, they became very interested in how psychology related to their lives, in disputing the book (which I must admit I encouraged), and in carrying on literate (although sometimes also rather opinionated) conversations about what they were learning. When I mentioned a book of interest, students asked not whether it would be on the exam, but whether they could borrow it. In short, these students behaved very much like Empire State College students! And, of course, once that observation sank in, it occurred to me that it may be not be their age that makes ESC students so rewarding to work with, but the focus on learning that the absence of grading makes

possible.

Of course, at the end I did have to submit grades for the course, but they were meaningless in the traditional sense – that is, anyone could receive an A if they submitted a complete and orderly portfolio. Not everyone’s portfolio was complete enough to be worth an A or even a B, but the letter grade was entirely up to the students and not a measure of their intellectual prowess. The quality of their work and the accuracy of their understanding I addressed elsewhere: by written comments on their assignments, by my reactions to the ideas they presented in class, and by discussions in person outside of class. And just as with ESC students, the qualitative differences among the students were vast, incomparable and certainly not quantifiable. I itched to write narrative evaluations in order to summarize what happened to each of them during the course. Sadly, despite our varied interactions, the times we spent together were not long or coherent enough to give me more than small snapshots of their work, and in the end I again did not have enough time to study the portfolios with the kind of care needed to capture their individual strengths and weaknesses.

The portfolios were nonetheless amazing evidence of the uniqueness of each individual in the class. Textbook notes were, of course, the least interesting, but they still varied: Some students mostly copied the text’s outline; others wrote pages of notes including their own reactions. In contrast, class notes were all over the place; sometimes they consisted of coherent sentences, sometimes single words, but seldom, at least at the beginning of the course, were they adequately labeled. Indeed, after I saw a few early portfolios, I made it a practice to present an outline of what we would do for each class, begging the students to use it as a means of identifying the notes they were taking. Even with something as simple as how they organized the many pages of material they amassed during the course, no two portfolios were the same. One student handed in a folder stuffed with papers; another produced a chronological record in a prebound notebook with extra papers inserted here and there; most found some way to organize the material in binders with dividers, with the piece de resistance by one amazing student who submitted a one-pound giant binder organized by type of assignment (*e.g.*, experiments, demonstrations, readings, research reports, reflective papers, textbook notes, classroom notes and so forth) that had each page (of typed notes) inserted into a plastic sleeve.

Of course, I encouraged the diversity I found among the students, particularly in the specific written work I assigned – either explicitly (*e.g.*, “in writing tell me how the material in the text compares to your own experience of being an adolescent?”) or by design. For example, one of their very first assignments was to read and comment on Dennett’s article, “Where Am I”,⁷ in which the author performs one of his famous “mind experiments” where the subject’s brain is removed from his head, placed in a vat, and controls his body in all the usual ways except by radio waves rather than neurons. (If he were to bring this article up-to-date, he would no doubt use satellite communications). Dennett, a philosopher, is very interested in the nature of consciousness and its relationship to the brain, and he uses this situation to play a little joke on psychologists who claim that neuroscience has solved the mind/body problem. I know this article is challenging. Even with prior discussion (*e.g.*, be warned: this article is a joke; look for where the author smoothly disconnects the brain and mind., etc.), the serious point is difficult for even advanced students to fully grasp. But it is funny and can be responded to at a number of different levels, and I like challenging students to think about issues that transcend the litany of facts about neurotransmitters, synapses, cell membranes, and glial cells introduced in their text. Note the variety of responses that the students offered: “The idea of doctors removing someone’s brain while the person is alive alarms me and scares me. Man [sic] should not play God!” “I really had to think about what it means to have a mind, particularly when Dennett created two people at the end.” “Is this true? Can we really do this kind of experiment?” “What a funny situation, particularly when the mind leaps from the body to the vat.” “How can one have a mind in a brain which has no input?”

How could one “grade” such responses? And more to the point, why would one want to? Students are at very different places, intellectually and emotionally. As teachers we need to find ways of engaging them and eliciting their reactions, to help them feel that their thoughts are worthwhile, and to encourage them to move forward from wherever they started. To brand their first intellectual endeavors as if they were grades of beef makes no sense if the purpose of education is to encourage students to learn. Those whose prior educational experiences have taught them that they are unlikely to “make the grade” can hardly welcome such an outcome and will assuredly do what they can to avoid the hurt; perhaps they will “forget” to do the assignment or do such a perfunctory job that they do not need to take a bad grade seriously.¹ Along those lines, I recently read an article⁸ in which the author argues that fear is “the chief toxin for learning.” By that logic alone, situations that promote anxiety over tests and fear of bad grades should make the worst possible learning

environments.

At the end of the course I asked students to assess (anonymously) how much they believed they learned during the class. They were given the list of my learning goals for them (which they also saw at the beginning of the course) and for each of 14 items, they were asked to indicate whether they learned a lot, some or nothing in that area. Half the students said they learned something or a lot about almost all of the items (13 or 14); the average number checked was 11.4. I was pleased to see that level of success despite the fact that when I was evaluated as a teacher, the students indicated that they were clearly disgruntled (and probably with good reason) about the amount of work I required of them. One of my goals was to “enhance confidence in your ability to learn,” and 19 out of the 22 respondents indicated that they had indeed acquired more confidence, which for me was a particularly satisfying outcome.

And in Conclusion...

Thus, starting with research that shows students work for grades rather than knowledge and then reflecting upon my own experiences that seemed to support a similar conclusion, I found that when I minimized the importance of grades with the very traditional students who are not supposed to care about learning, they seemed to change into students who did. In other words, we at ESC appear to have a magic cure for a frequently raised problem of higher education – students’ lack of interest in learning. While other colleges search for new ways of doing higher education, the originators of our College implemented a solution that seems to really work. Instead of labeling students with a grade, we describe who they are as learners, what they have done successfully, and how they might become better. A very important part of how we stimulate learning occurs, as with my TC3 students, in our ongoing interactions with them, when we continuously and reflexively provide feedback, support and suggestions. However, we also have the opportunity, as I did not with my TC3 students, to summarize these incredibly diverse, actually unique, experiences in a final narrative statement. Although the narrative evaluation may play a lesser role in motivating students to learn (although it is important), what surely is critical, if my thoughts-in-progress and experiment-in-teaching have some validity, is that we don’t label those narratives, brand the students, or threaten them with grades.

If this analysis is even half-way correct, we should ask ourselves why we would want to throw this wonderful advantage away. Perhaps it is that we don’t know enough about the strategies students need in order to learn. The metacognition conference certainly made clear that research in this area with older students is as yet quite undeveloped. One very important reason is that it is difficult to obtain data about student learning strategies other than through after-the-fact interviews. At Empire State College we actually have a unique opportunity to discuss these matters with students while learning is ongoing. Perhaps we could borrow some classroom assessment techniques from Patricia Cross⁵ and ask our students formal (and repeatable) questions that we record (in writing or with audio or videotapes) during our meetings. Wouldn’t it be interesting to see if a student learns more readily if after a particular interaction, the mentor gave the student a grade (“Well, Joe, I’d grade this discussion we’ve just concluded with a C”) than if the interaction ended without such an assessment. It seems obvious to me, just imagining such an experiment, that not only receiving the grade but also anticipating it would do nothing but interfere with, or even harm, the student’s desire to learn. But research may nonetheless be useful, not only for helping the College reaffirm the value of what we do now, but for spreading the word to other colleges. When the College community first read Barr and Tagg,⁶ I think most of us said, “Hey, we already do this.” Well, perhaps we already do something to effectively promote student learning that today’s academic world, if TC3 serves as a good example, is now ready and waiting to hear.

References

1. Pressley, M., Van Etten, S., Freebern, G. (1997). Grounded theory studies taping college students’ conceptions of college demands and how to cope with them. Paper presented at Metacognition: Its Many Faces, A Conversation in the Disciplines, Cortland, NY.
2. James, W. (1902). *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1985).
3. Quann, C. J. (1993). Grading by Narrative Evaluation: Present Tense. *College & University*, 69 (1), p. 22-31.

4. Coulter, X., & Rivera de Royston, I. (1997). Mentoring: A Universal Model of Education in the 21st Century? Paper presented at the 25th Anniversary Conference, Educating Adults for the 21st Century, in Rochester, N.Y., March, 1997. Also, *Scholar and Educator*, in press.
5. Cross, K.P. & Angelo, T.A. (1988). *Classroom Assessment Techniques*. Ann Arbor, MI: NCRIPAL.
6. Barr, R.B., & Tagg, J. (1995). From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education. *Change*, 27(6), p. 12-25.
7. Dennett, D. (1988). *Brainstorms*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
8. Johnson, B. (1996). Feeling the Fear. In Boud & Miller (Eds.), *Working With Experience: Animating Learning*. New York: Routledge.

Footnotes

¹ All that we know about human behavior indicates that people do what they are rewarded for doing and avoid what they are not rewarded for doing. Thus, the idea that a poor grade will somehow motivate students to do better has no psychological basis. Indeed, many of ESC's most anxious and at-risk students are casualties of prior negative assessments.

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

Book Review

Citizenship and Community at Stake

Robert N. Seidel, Genesee Valley Center

Rogers M. Civic, *Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997)

No problems of the world evoke a feeling of greater coldness in my heart than the possibility that, considered an outsider, I may be excluded from the benefits of membership in community. No problems, that is to say, except the threat to my individuality, autonomy and personal conception of the good that may be posed by the community's intolerance, demagoguery, coercion and belief that its way is right and that mine isn't. The safer yet paradox-ridden route is, of course, pluralism in a reasonably liberal social and political order. Well, not always safer, it turns out.

This has been a dilemma of the United States since its republican founding in the late eighteenth century. Americans' needs for mutual assistance and their vision of greater possibilities forced them to modify their various forms of particularism and parochialism in behalf of a larger conception of community and citizenship, an idea that incorporated universalistic notions about belonging. There is much evidence that deep tensions exist between universalism and particularism in the American polity, tensions that are not now and may never be reconciled. The evidence for these tensions concerns the original exclusion of men without sufficient property, and of slaves and their freed descendents, women and Native Americans, from various privileges and rights of civic life and participation, and the grudging acceptance of some immigrants and restrictions upon others.

Thus the issues are not just historical relics. They are alive, often burning today in controversies about gender, discrimination, economic and social opportunity, and immigration restriction. And they are not only practical in the sense that they affect how Americans view each other and how they speak about and deal with difficulties of class, race, ethnicity and immigrant status. They are also implicated in theoretical notions of what constitutes the United States as a nation. The more abstract debate, frequently framed in terms of liberal democracy versus democratic republicanism, attempts to refine the terms in which we discuss the rights and responsibilities of citizens and the obligations, and the proper scope and limits of authority of governmental authority. Some fragments of this great debate are occasionally, and stereotypically, mirrored in the often shrill and simplistic rhetoric of politicians, op-ed writers, and media talk shows.

In his brilliant *Civic Ideals: Conflicting Visions of Citizenship in U.S. History*, political scientist Rogers M. Smith courageously takes a crack at these problems of democratic citizenship and community. He begins with a challenge in his thesis. "I show," he announces, "that through most of U.S. history, lawmakers pervasively and unapologetically structured U.S. citizenship in terms of illiberal and undemocratic racial, ethnic and gender hierarchies, for reasons rooted in basic, enduring imperatives of political life."

Smith's opening passage is characteristically forthright and sets his theme in enduring and contemporary conflicts:

Today, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s dream of an integrated nation seems not only remote but undesirable to many black and

white Americans. Proposals for immigration restriction abound, and controversies rage over the lines that should be drawn between aliens and citizens. American cities crackle with explosive tensions among Latinos, Korean-Americans, West Indians, Asian Indians, Jews and many other groups, not just “blacks” and “whites”; and disputes over multiculturalism, hate speech, and so-called femi-Nazis reverberate throughout the land.

Immediately recognizing an additional tension and inadequacy of language, Smith adds: “[I]s it imperialistic to refer to United States nationals as ‘Americans’”? He admits his inability to find a “suitable substitute” (“‘U.S. A. citizen’ is cumbersome, and ‘U.S.’ could equally stand for a number of other nations that also have the words ‘United States’ in their official names”). Smith therefore “reluctantly elect[s] to follow conventional usages . . .” It is clearly hard, indeed impossible, to get language exactly right for this discussion.

Based on voluminous conventional research and thorough argumentation, Smith’s account is a bold challenge to historians, political theorists and all citizens. He has read vast documentation in federal and constitutional law and adjudication, the legislative records and tons of secondary works. Furthermore, he candidly takes to task, with great respect to be sure, those scholars – such as Louis Hartz, John Rawls, Iris Marion Young, Will Kymlicka and Michael Walzer – whom he finds variously wanting in the daunting tasks of narrating, analyzing, and normatively constructing citizenship and nation.

Unabashedly speaking from a radical liberal position and desirous of fulfilling the universalistic promise, Smith argues that the traditional liberal and civic republican strands of American political culture and practice are inadequate either to describe or to explain the problems of American citizenship. (Example: “Analysts lose both explanatory and predictive power when they try to view all . . . disputes [over the formation of the American nation and what sort of nation it should be] as wars between liberalism and democratic republicanism.”) He contends for a “multiple traditions” approach that includes “inegalitarian ascriptive traditions” alongside the liberal and the republican.

This is Smith’s contribution to a truly important debate. It is not entirely original, as one may by now reckon. But Smith makes his case so convincingly that it is likely, I believe, to have a positive impact in historical interpretation, political theory and political discourse. For instance, in reviewing the paradoxical, indeed troubled history of American exceptionalism, he epitomizes the difficulty of our civic mission. American exceptionalism, a sacred cow in many discourses, surely needs such attention. (Exceptionalism was an inflammatory element in the largely conservative 1994-95 attack upon the draft national standards for teaching and learning United States history that were published by the National Center for History in the Schools. Exceptionalism was discernable also in Pat Buchanan’s argument that social studies instructors should insist that the United States is the most admirable and morally best civilization in the world.)

Never, in my view, haughty, Smith’s tome is however immense. His thoroughly documented account, with particular attention to Native Americans, African-Americans, women and immigrants, is over 500 pages long; nearly 140 pages of notes follow, unfortunately, the main text. Yet Smith’s lucid prose is nearly always elegant. A reader may get considerable meat from the introduction (Chapter 1), “The Hidden Lessons of American Citizenship Laws (Chapter 2), and the epilogue, “The Party of America.” This last is a productive effort to reconceptualize the theoretical issues and formulate tasks for citizens and political leaders.

Though his immense labors have yielded a “disturbing story,” Smith is determined that, facing reality (the “complex truths”), we can be hopeful for ourselves and our “endlessly troubled and promising world.” Lamentably, such hopefulness is problematic for many. Nevertheless, this faith is also a foundational element in a vibrant and progressive political life, one that, at its best, maintains (as Iris Marion Young, drawing upon Hannah Arendt, has written) “the vision of human freedom and nobility as participatory public action.” Smith helps us chart a path along the way.

NOTES:

The arena in which Civic Ideals is now an entrant is well-populated with good and accessible work. Among the books I’ve lately found intriguing and helpful in their efforts to deal with race, ethnicity, gender, nationalism and internationalism are also the following:

K. Anthony Appiah and Amy Gutmann, *Color Conscious: The Political Morality of Race* (Princeton: Princeton

University Press, 1996), with a long introduction, “The Context of Race,” by David B. Wilkins. The authors treat traditions, contemporary policies, and social practices with great intelligence and sensitivity.

Elizabeth M. Bounds, *Coming Together/Coming Apart: Religion, Community and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 1999). Bounds, a liberal feminist teacher of religious studies, critically analyzes a large swath of communitarian thinking and seeks a place for all who are marginalized.

Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 1995). Judith Shulevitz describes Elshtain, I believe quite well, as “a political ethicist, a conservative feminist, a hawkish communitarian and a regular contributor to both *Dissent* and *The New Republic* – in short, a public intellectual with a knack for wiggling out of the categories she’s been shoehorned into” (*The New York Times Book Review* [Dec. 15, 1997], p. 18).

Gary Jeffrey Jacobson and Susan Dunn, eds., *Diversity and Citizenship: Rediscovering American Nationhood* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1996). The essays in this multi-disciplinary collection are by Robert A. Dahl, Sanford Levinson, Pauline Maier, Noah M. J. Pincus, Nathan Glazer and Randall Kennedy.

Martha Nussbaum, with Respondents, *For Love of Country: Debating the Limits of Patriotism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996). Nussbaum argues that cosmopolitanism is worthy of the highest loyalty. Her respondents, of various views, include Kwame Anthony Appiah, Benjamin R. Barber, Sissela Bok, Richard Falk, Amy Gutmann, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Hilary Putnam, Amartya Sen, Charles Taylor and Immanuel Wallerstein.

Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). This historically kaleidoscopic account by the noted social philosopher offers a typology of five “regimes of toleration,” discusses difficult cases and practical issues, and reflects on the modern condition and the United States.

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

Finding the Mind and the Heart: Religious Studies at ESC **Katherine Kurs, Metropolitan Center**

When I began to teach religious studies at Empire's Metro Center in the summer of 1994, it was, in many ways, a "homecoming" for me. After completing seven years of independent study and tutorials conducted largely within the CUNY system, I finished the last year of my own undergraduate degree at the Metro Center in 1982 with Professor Robert Carey as my mentor, focusing on rhetorical analysis and criticism of contemporary religious movements within an overall framework of cultural studies. I then went to Harvard and did a three year graduate divinity degree in religion and theology and, following that, went to England for my Ph.D.

So when I meet with my ESC students now, I know what it is like to be a returning student, attempting to balance the demands of college study, a career and a home life while trying to remain attentive to an inner yearning that emanates from, and returns to, the life of the mind and the spirit. Thus, I seek to have my teaching and mentoring – in form, in content, and in pedagogical style – respond empathically to those levels of commitment and engagement. This can, I find, be particularly challenging when focusing on certain topics in religious studies.

While the individual and small group tutorials and larger study groups that I offer at the Metro Center include many of the "standard-issue" courses such as comparative religion or contemporary religious pluralism in America, more and more, the studies that I devise, and that students both request and enthusiastically respond to, focus on themes related to what we might today call spirituality. These include, for example, "Women, Revelation and Desire: The Body, the Self and the Divine;" "Readings in the History, Theory and Practice of Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Direction;" "The Meaning of Myth: Readings in the Symbolic Construction of the Psyche"; and perhaps the two most popular that I have done: "Women's Spirituality and Contemporary Religion;" and "The Spiritual Autobiography." Although these topics are located within the broad spectrum of religious studies, focusing on spirituality in an undergraduate and graduate academic context (I also teach in the MALS program from time to time), largely to returning students, presents a whole constellation of issues related to pedagogy, the boundaries of an intellectual discipline, and to the practice of ESC-style mentoring.

The first issue pertains to what sort of student seeks out this particular kind of study. In our initial session, we have a "go-round" and, as part of building a group dynamic and helping to focus my teaching, I always try to learn the reasons that have led them to select this study group. Some are there, of course, because they are concentrating in religion, psychology or a branch of human services. A few even plan to go on to seminary or divinity school. But then there are a great many others who are what we might call "spiritually searching" and who are naturally attracted to this kind of subject matter. Each "constituency" brings both strengths as well as challenges to our group learning and to my role as teacher/mentor.

As we get to know one another, it is always clear to me that, particularly for older, returning students who have grappled with many of life's existential crises, their intellectual concerns and what we might term their "spiritual concerns" are situated very close to one another. And these interwoven concerns, even if sometimes inchoate, are very close to the surface, waiting to emerge. The material that we read – especially in the "Women's Spirituality. . ." and in "The Spiritual Autobiography" study groups is often highly-charged, provocative, and sometimes disturbing. The issues raised by our

diverse authors hit close to home for many ESC students: holding on to spiritual yearning and the search for an encounter with the Holy in the midst of: marital problems, wrestling with sexual identity, coping with marginality and “outsider” status, confronting sexism or racism or homophobia, facing emotional and psychological distress, recalling or escaping from a destructive childhood or home life, grappling with physical pain or disease, uncovering secrets regarding self- or family identity and heritage, and so on.

Students in these study groups, the majority of whom are women, experience a profound connection with many of the texts we read. Many of these accounts are, in fact, so powerful for us because we can relate to them with such familiarity. Yet, it is precisely here that my first challenge as a mentor arises.

A great deal of this kind of material, though masterfully written, is indeed self-focused, highly personal and experiential, and emotionally and psychologically complex – for the author as well as for the reader. If the authors focus so completely on the self and their experience, why should not we, their awed and dazzled readers? Dealing with such personal material in the text sometimes causes students to want to meet that level of disclosure with their own, often of a religious or spiritual nature, under the guise of relating to the text or to the author’s experience. Concomitantly, I occasionally also find students offering a “critique” based on their own religious truth claims.

I prepare students in our very first meeting, letting them know that we will, in fact, be dealing with material that presents a significant level of disclosure. Then throughout the term, I strive to enable them to make the distinction between critiquing a life and critiquing a text. There is a difference between looking at narrative structure and the trajectory of lived experience and we need to pay attention when we move from one to the other, sensitizing ourselves to the epistemological – and, for me, pedagogical – implications of these shifts in perception.

Personal disclosure pertaining to religious conviction or spiritual practice, confessional statements, testimony of any kind, or judgments based on personal faith, some of which might be appropriate in certain denominational or religious settings or contexts (which, unsurprisingly, is often an articulated “next step” for some of my students), in group therapy, or in a support group is not, of course, appropriate for our academic ESC setting.

As a mentor, I believe it is my role to remind students that no matter how revelatory and intimate our authors might be about their personal and spiritual lives, I will never ask them to engage in personal disclosure or make “confessional” statements, nor is it a practice or a goal of our group learning to do so. In addition, I need to emphasize that it is also not our task to make “truth claims,” or to criticize the beliefs or practices of our authors. It is my responsibility as a mentor to foster an atmosphere of openness and receptivity to in-depth learning, but, because of the nature of some of our reading, I need also to set – and monitor – boundaries of the academic discipline within which I teach. Because of the religiously diverse material with which we work, I, myself, often need to “translate” back and forth between a range of different religious traditions, theologies and symbolic systems. In so doing, I am at the same time “professing” – but not for a cause or a faith tradition, but, as I tell students, for “analysis and criticism” in place of “description and opinion.”

Am I encountering in some of my students a late 20th century ghost of the counter-Enlightenment? Can we not just rely on our feelings and assumptions about the author’s experience, as if the “spiritual” side of religious studies implies somehow that we can abandon our reason? Here again, I caution students not to fuse with our subject (this is an especially popular response when reading early feminist polemic in my Women’s Spirituality course group). Even – and especially – in the “spiritual” side of religious studies we are about learning how to gain clarity by employing different critical lenses, and by learning to ask questions that open up our depth of vision to greater understanding of content and context.

Many of our returning students do bring with them a wealth of life experience and are often capable of reflecting with great insight on the themes raised by our authors. However, I am unable to demonstrate “right answers” to the questions we raise in our groups. As a mentor in religious studies, I try to enable students, when appropriate, to use their experiences as a springboard for a critical, thorough, close reading of the text so that we might intellectually discern the colors, shapes and contours of the text, encountering it together, learning from it and also from one another. For me, as mentor, that use of the mind and heart can itself indeed be a spiritual experience.

ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

CIRCLE News

Members of the CIRCLE Adult Development and Learning Group continue to discuss, share ideas and work on various projects regarding the theory, thought and practice of adult learning. Although much of the conversation (and the connections) goes on through e-mail, through U.S. mail and on the telephone, at the All College Conference this spring, the group met to examine Jack Mezirow's essay, "How Critical Reflection Triggers Transformative Learning," from his book, *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood* (Jossey-Bass, 1990). Specifically, using examples from their mentoring work, the group considered the influence of "meaning perspectives" on their understanding of student learning.

CIRCLE participants have been involved in any number of different projects. For example, Tai Arnold reports that she is "working on two projects. The first is an investigation of how university faculty evaluate prior learning presented in portfolios. The second is an analysis of the National Household Education Survey 1995 data on adult learner's reasons and barriers to participation." Rae Rohfeld recently published a book review of Ronald Barnett's *Higher Education: A Critical Business* (Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 1997) that was included in the June, 1998 issue of *Open Learning*. According to Rae, "the book provides a fascinating discussion of the role of the contemporary university. That role is based on the author's idea of critical being, which involves the integration of critical thinking, self-direction and critical action. It would be a good basis for a discussion on rethinking higher education."

Another CIRCLE member, Ellen Hawkes, is working on student "stories." Ellen reports: "Robert Coles has a profound belief in the 'call of stories' and their usefulness in working with a variety of individuals. While I hadn't actually thought of my students as storytellers, I realized I was hearing their stories all day long and that often I was bringing stories to them. The importance of stories became even more apparent during a conference with one of my students for whom a story elicited strong motivation to delve into the issues presented. Consequently, I am keeping track of the use of stories in mentoring and subsequent outcomes."

Several members are presenting on-going research at the 1998 Alliance Conference in San Diego. Among the presenters are: Judy Gerardi (convener of the CIRCLE group), Irene Rivera de Royston, Xenia Coulter, Chris Rounds, Ellen Hawkes and Janet Ostrov.

Women's Studies Residency

The Metropolitan Center will host the 1998 Women's Studies Residency on October 16-18. This year's theme will be "Women: Age and Image." (Students who register for and complete the residency program can earn two credits. Further independent study can be arranged.)

We hope many students, alumni, faculty and staff will participate. The deadline for workshop proposals has already passed, but we welcome volunteers to help with local arrangements and planning. Contact Shirley Ariker, Marnie Evans, Peggy Tally, Leslie Satin or Lucy Winner for more information, for a sample learning contract, or to sign up to help.

Fall Enrollment in Institutions of Higher Education

(from *Mini-Digest of Education Statistics: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational research and Improvement, 1996*)

Gender/Age	1980	1990	1994
Men and women total (in thousands)	12,097	13,819	14,279
19 years and younger	3,148	2,967	2,918
20 and 21 years old	2,423	2,619	2,538
22 to 24 years old	1,989	2,166	2,483
25 years and older	4,536	6,067	6,339

ALL ABOUT
MENTORING
A Publication of Empire State College

Issue 14, Summer 1998

MI News

Journal Update

In the last two issues of *All About Mentoring* we have provided information on academic/professional journals devoted to adult education and learning. Our goal is to make us more aware of on-going scholarly work in the field and to offer options for the publication of our own research and reflections on mentoring. (If you have any suggestions for journals we should include in this on-going listing, please let us know.)

New Horizons in Adult Education

New Horizons in Adult Education is an electronic journal, founded in 1987, which focuses on current research and ideas in adult education. It is a refereed journal published two or three times each year that includes current research, thought pieces, book reviews, point-counterpoint articles, conceptual analysis, case studies and invitational columns. The journal is transmitted to subscribers around the world at no fee through the Adult Education Network (AEDNET), which is accessible through Internet.

New Horizons accepts manuscripts as electronic mail (horizons@fcae.nova.edu) or as disk/conventional papers to:

Nancy Gadbow, Editor
New Horizons in Adult Education
Nova Southeastern University
Programs for Higher Education
1750 N. E. 167th Street
North Miami Beach, FL 33162-3017.

Recent issues of *New Horizons* have included such titles as “Institutional and Individual Support of Growth Among Adult Learners,” and “Embracing Change: Evolving to the Campus of the Future.” Submissions of book reviews are also welcomed.

A Developing Bibliography

At the recent Workshop for New Mentors held in Albany this spring, we realized that providing each other with good resources regarding adult learning, self-directed learning, mentoring and adult education practices was very important.

Many participants had good suggestions and had turned to particular texts and authors for guidance and ideas over the years. What we didn't have was a solid and accessible list of useful materials that new and more experienced mentors could easily consult.

If you have a particular essay, chapter, book or other resource that could become part of a developing bibliography on adult learning, please send the details of your reference to Alan Mandell. Suggestions will be gathered and made available.

Upcoming Conference News

The Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning will be held on September 28 - October 1, 1999 at Madingley Hall, in Cambridge, England. The theme of the gathering will be "Learning and Teaching with the New Technologies." Keynote speakers will include: Tony Bates, director of distance education and technology, The University of British Columbia; Shona Butterfield, chief executive, Open Polytechnic of New Zealand; and Olu Jegede, head of evaluation, Hong Kong Open University. For an early expression of interest in this conference (that members of the ESC community have attended over many years) please contact: Penny Stuart, conference secretary, Cambridge International Conference, The Open University, East Anglia Region, Cintra House, 12 Hills Road, Cambridge CB2, 1PF, UK.

Submissions to *All About Mentoring*

If you have read a book that interested you; if you have attended a stimulating conference; if you had a valuable, surprising or difficult mentoring experience you would be willing to describe, or if you have a comment on any part of this issue or on topics/concerns relevant to our mentoring community, please consider writing about them for *All About Mentoring*. If you have developed written materials for your students that may be of good use to others, if you have a scholarly paper-in-progress or something you presented, or if you have a short story, poem, drawing or photograph, please consider submitting them as well. Please also let us know if there are specific topics about which we should try to develop a dialogue in these pages.

Please send submissions to Alan Mandell (ESC, 225 Varick Street, NYC 10014-4382), and note that it is most convenient if your submissions were sent via e-mail or on a disk. We very much look forward to your contributions. The next issue of *All About Mentoring* will be published in November 1998. Please send your contributions to Alan Mandell by October 15. Thanks very much.