MountainRise

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Table of Contents

Comments from *MountainRise's* Managing Editor, John Habel

> When the White Rabbit was presenting the evidence in the Knave's trial, he asked the King for directions. Gravely, the King replied: "Begin at the beginning, and go on till you come to the end; then stop."

This is excellent advice for storytellers, but it is bad counsel for teachers. Suppose you wanted to get to know a tract of country. The worst way to do it would be to jump into a car, drive straight from one end to the other, then turn your back on it and walk away. Yet that is what many teachers do with complex subjects, and that is why their students seem lost. Actually, the students are bewildered. They don't know where they are going, what they should expect to see, where the difficult hills are and on which side the best views can be found or what they will meet at the other end. All they know is that the car stops every Friday for forty-eight hours rest.

How much better would they learn the country if, before setting out, they were briefed and given maps to study; if they were rested and reoriented once or twice during the trip; and if they were shown photographs of the best spots and taken once more over the map when they reached the end of their journey?

In this passage from his classic book, *The Art of Teaching*, first published in 1950, Gilbert Highet provides sage advice to teachers who would increase the positive effects they have on their students' learning. Highet's thoughts, however, predated much of the activity in educational and cognitive psychology that has become known as the "cognitive revolution." Highet, also, could not have anticipated recent advances in instructional technology. We who teach now have access to a wealth of knowledge about the processes of teaching and learning that is provided by educational and cognitive psychologists. In addition, we are equipped with instructional technologies that permit us to engage students in ways that go far beyond showing them "photographs of the best spots" in a given subject area.

In this inaugural issue of *Mountain Rise* we present the scholarly research, reflection and writing on teaching and learning of our colleagues, who make their reflection and research about teaching and learning public and open to critique. The authors who have contributed to this issue of *Mountain Rise* act on Highet's advice; they brief their students, rest them and reorient them, not by means of maps and photographs alone, but through the use of a variety of interesting and innovative teaching approaches.

In the first article, **Bruce Henderson** explores ways of thinking about the psychological theories held by teachers and how those theories relate to what teachers actually do. In the five articles that follow our colleagues share what they have learned about a variety of teaching strategies, techniques, and resources.

Maurice Phipps and **Cynthia Phipps** describe approaches to establishing cooperative groups in our classes. **Jane Hall, Eliza Dean JoeDavid Hall,** and **Catherine Taylor** provide guidelines for teaching our students to create electronic portfolios as a means of chronicling their knowledge and experiences as student. **Lisen Roberts, Eliza Dean** and **Terry Nienhuis** present a review of literature on using feature film to teach in the social sciences and provide suggestions for how to use this method.

From **Valorie Nybo** we learn about the Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and On-line Teaching (MERLOT), a repository of over 8,000 peer-reviewed on-line resources identified as appropriate for use with college and university students. **James Ullmer** and **April Lewandowsky** report the findings of their study of a classroom learning community and argue that establishing a classroom learning community can be an

effective way of improving student attitudes toward learning.
The next two articles are descriptions of the authors' experience and ideas about teaching and learning. **Al Profitt** reflects on the first time he was able to connect theory (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs) to practice as an educator. **Jane Hall**, **Irene Mueller,** and **Bil Stahl** describe their experiences with the Writing Circle Project Team at WCU, a group that, for them, serves as a sympathetic, supportive, first audience to help the writer see the paper from the reader's viewpoint. Finally, **Irene Mueller** reviews Robert Boice's book of advice for new faculty members and explains how Boice's suggestions have helped her "become more efficient, more effective, and less stressed."

One of the goals of *Mountain Rise* is to stimulate dialogue about the nature, meaning, methods and goals of teaching and learning. Therefore, we invite your critical responses to any of the articles that comprise this first issue. We will include them in "Peak Responses," a section for readers' responses in the second issue of *Mountain Rise*, appearing in the fall. And we encourage WCU faculty and graduate students to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning and to submit that scholarship to *MountainRise*.

Contributors

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Teacher Thinking About Students' Thinking

Bruce Henderson

Abstract

College teachers are frequently told that knowing the details of the cognitive psychological processes of their students will improve their teaching effectiveness. However, investigations of college teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning have yielded conceptions of teaching at a very general level. Most studies have resulted in conceptions that focus more on the teacher and teaching methods than on the learning processes of students. This paper argues for a more differentiated study of teacher thinking about student thinking that explores what teachers tacitly believe about their students' attention, memory, learning strategies and motivation. Potential implications of differences in how teachers may think about their students' cognitions are explored.

Changing Views of Learning

In our teaching careers, we have all heard or thought the judgments, even if we haven't uttered them. "Joannie just doesn't know anything." "Shanette doesn't know how to study." "Brandon isn't motivated." "Students today don't know anything about history." "Many of the students in my class don't have the ability to succeed in college." "Melvin can't seem to make connections." "This class doesn't remember anything we did two weeks ago." "These guys just don't pay attention." "Anne really sees the big picture." "Roberto knows how to apply what he knows in the real world." "My class was really into the topic today."

Teachers make inferences about their students' thinking. They try to figure out what is going on in students' heads. Teachers are implicit psychologists. Using what their students do in and out of the classroom and their personal psychological theories, teachers make judgments about the thinking processes of their students. My aim in this essay is to explore ways of thinking about the psychological theories held by teachers and how those theories relate to what teachers actually do. I will argue that a more detailed analysis of how teachers think about their students' thinking than is currently available in the research literature could help us offer better advice to teachers who want to increase the positive effects they have on their students' learning.

The Cognitive Revolution

The past 40 years of theory and research in psychology has been characterized by some scholars as the "cognitive revolution" (how revolutionary these changes have been is disputed by historians of psychology, but that need not concern us here). A shift has occurred in the emphasis given to explanations of human behavior that include references to processes of attention, memory, and thinking. One outcome of these changes is that educational and cognitive psychologists have told teachers that they could be more effective in planning and executing their instruction if they took into consideration what psychologists have discovered about how learning occurs.

A wide variety of sources of advice about how to use the principles of cognitive learning are now available to teachers at all levels of education (e.g., Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999; Bruning, 1994; Dominowski, 2002; Lambert & McCombs, 1997). The expert authors of these works tell us that novelty and variety are key elicitors of attention. So, teachers should provide novelty and variety in voice inflection, in moving around the classroom, in using media, and in designing the nature of the activities we do during a particular class. The experts tell us that students can hold only so much information in their consciousness at any one time. Thus, teachers should provide information in small allotments and extend the mental capacity of students by supplying handouts and media representations.

The experts tell us that memory is an active, constructive process in which new information is assimilated into existing memory structures that modify the new information in significant ways. Teachers should be sensitive to what students already know about a topic and take into consideration student interests and goals. The experts tell us students are active learners, using a variety of cognitive strategies all designed to make new material more meaningful. So, teachers should capitalize on the nature of these cognitive strategies by designing activities that encourage their use or even that teach cognitive strategies directly.

Finally, the experts tell us that motivation, rather than being a matter of basic physiological drives, is a matter of thoughtful goals and mental attributions for why we behave the way we do. So, teachers should help students set appropriate learning goals and make attributions that enhance learning.

Student Thinking and Thinking about Student Thinking: A Gap

I do not argue with the wisdom of much of the advice about teaching and learning provided by educational and cognitive psychologists. Knowledge of how people learn has informed my own teaching

and that of many teachers I know. But it occurs to me that we do not know very much about how college and university teachers think about their students' thinking and learning *before* they began to take the advice of cognitivists. There is a subtle contradiction here. Cognitive psychologists tell us that we never come to new learning as a blank slate. Before learning about the implications of cognitive concepts, teachers already had knowledge, however tacit, about student thinking. How they understand, interpret, and remember cognitive concepts will be influenced by previous knowledge. What do we know about college and university teachers' thinking about their students' thinking?

Research on Teachers' Conceptions of Learning and Teaching

There is a fairly substantial literature on elementary and secondary school teachers' ideas about learning and teaching (although most of it suffers from significant conceptual and methodological problems that I do not have space here to elucidate). There is a much smaller body of information about college and university teachers' conceptions of teaching and learning. This research was recently reviewed by Kane, Sandretto, and Heath (2002). The results of the studies they reviewed were of three major types (my interpretation, not theirs).

First, there are studies that organize teachers' conceptions of student learning in terms of teaching methods and related goals. For example, based on interviews with instructors from four disciplines, Dall'Alba (1993) described seven qualitatively different conceptions of teaching. Dall'Alba's list includes teaching as presenting information, transmitting information, illustrating applications of theory to practice, developing concepts and principles, developing the capacity to be expert, exploring ways of understanding, and bringing about conceptual change. Similarly, Johnston's (1996) interviews resulted in four views of teaching, including teaching as manipulating the environment to change student attitudes, encouraging students to interact with academic material, providing a range of explanations, and showing students the big picture. Interviews by Bruce and Gerber (1995) of a small group of faculty members about their conceptions of student learning yielded similar results with faculty members talking about learning as preparing for tests, as applying new knowledge, as acquiring thinking skills, as obtaining professional skills, changing attitudes and as what they called participating in pedagogic experience.

A second type of pattern of results in the studies reviewed by Kane and her colleagues reflect teachers' conceptions as general epistemologies. For example, Kember (1997) originally identified two major conceptions of teaching from interviews and questionnaires, knowledge transmission and learning

facilitation. He then expanded his categories to number five, calling them imparting information and transmitting structured knowledge (both teacher-centered, content-oriented), facilitating understanding and conceptual change (both student-centered, learning-oriented), and student-teacher apprenticeship. Similar distinctions were identified by Trigwell and Prosser (1996) in their interviews of teachers.

The third type of pattern of results represents a mixture of teaching method and epistemology. From a series of interview studies, Samuelowicz and Bain (2001), for example, listed seven ways teachers understood teaching: imparting information, transmitting structured knowledge, providing and facilitating understanding, helping students develop expertise, preventing misunderstandings, negotiating meaning, and encouraging knowledge creation.

In many ways the analyses of teachers' beliefs in higher education closely parallel those reported for elementary and secondary teachers. Most studies conclude with conceptions of teaching that are dichotomous or are dimensional with anchors or endpoints similar to the dichotomous representations. Common contrasts are behaviorist versus cognitive, objectivist versus constructivist, transmission versus invention, memorization versus understanding, or information transmission versus facilitation. It is usually explicitly or implicitly assumed that behaviorism underlies the objectivist, transmission, memorization, and information transmission anchors of the dimensions. However, it is unclear how well-known behaviorist theories (e.g., those of Pavlov, Watson or Skinner) would translate into any of those approaches (none of which includes very explicit references to conditioning or reinforcement concepts). The cognitive assumptions behind the constructivist, invention, understanding and facilitation anchors more easily coincide with implications of theorists such as Piaget, Vygotsky, and those of the information processing ilk, but those are not always made explicit either.

A Model of Thinking about Student Thinking

The existing literature on college and university teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning exhibits several problems. First, as Kane et al. (2002) have pointed out, most of the studies of teacher beliefs have been about what teachers say they do, not how they apply their theories to teaching behaviors. Attempts to investigate connections have shown discrepancies between espoused theories and practice. Second, the studies have really been studies of teacher thinking about teaching methods, not teachers' thinking about student learning or learning processes. Thus, there is a distinct teacher-centered bias in this literature. Third, and related to the previous issue, the conceptions of teaching in the

literature have been very general, even vague. To label a teacher a behaviorist or a constructivist tells little about what a teacher believes about the specific processes of learning. This lack of specificity is likely one factor in the common finding of a lack of correspondence between espoused views and what teachers do (Kane et al.'s "other half of the story"). It also makes it difficult to know how teachers' assumptions might influence how they will receive new ideas about teaching.

It turns out to be hard to introspect about what you think about students' thinking. Most teachers have pieced together a philosophy and practice of teaching rather unsystematically from personal experiences and perhaps a little formal instruction or reading. When we do reflect on our teaching, it is likely to be in terms of the methods we employ, not detailed aspects of our students' thinking and how our methods influence their thinking. However, I am convinced that what teachers believe about components of their students' learning such as attention, memory, learning strategies, and motivation do have important influences on how and what teachers teach. In the rest of this paper, I will speculate on how what teachers think about students' attention, memory, learning strategies, and motivation might influence their teaching in terms of three aspects of teaching: teacher assumptions about what their students bring to the teaching-learning situation, the teaching methods a teacher employs, and how a teacher evaluates learning. I will sketch some selected points of difference in possible views of each of the cognitive components and discuss how different beliefs about each could influence teaching and learning. In the last section of the paper, I will sketch out some possible ways we could learn more about how teachers do think about their students' learning.

Teacher Beliefs about Student Cognitions

The cognitive processing of students involves many different aspects of perception, language, remembering, and problem solving. I have chosen only four aspects of thinking to address here: attention, memory, learning strategies and motivation. However, a comprehensive examination of how teachers think about student thinking will require attention to other areas of cognition. I have included motivation here because recent views of motivation have had a strong cognitive flavor and potentially have important implications for how teachers think about many aspects of their students' cognitions.

Teacher Beliefs about Attention

Attention was once thought by some philosophers and early psychologists to be an act of will. Behaviorists theorized that attention was a product of selective reinforcement of attentive behaviors. Students who pay attention are reinforced by good grades or teacher attention. Students should acquire the habit of attention over time. Once acquired, the habit should tend to generalize to a variety of situations. As long as the environment reinforces attentive behavior, other aspects of the physical situation should not matter very much.

Cognitive psychologists distinguish between two forms of attention. Orienting attention is an automatic response to novelty of one kind or another. The novelty may come in the form of change in place, alterations in sound, or in more complex forms such as incongruity (e.g., the juxtaposition of unusual ideas or perceptual elements of shape, size or color). The second form of attention, selective attention, is more complicated. Selective attention is sometimes conscious. We attend to something because it is relevant to a goal we consider important. However, this more willful form of selective attention is often elusive and may be illusory. I may fully intend to attend to the lecturer, but without any conscious decision making, I find myself attending to the person with the beehive hairdo on my left, to the golf course I played on the previous day, or to the outline of the lecture I am giving the next day. Thus, the distinction between selective, controlled attention and involuntary orienting may often blur.

A teacher who sees attention as a conscious act of will could hold students morally responsible to maintain their attention by exerting their will regardless of what is going on in the classroom or in a reading or writing assignment. Teachers who think about attention in a behavioristic fashion might look for ways to reinforce attention, perhaps by making good grades or teacher praise or attention contingent upon student attention. Teachers who hold beliefs about attention closer to the cognitive view of student attention may work at creating novelty and variety in the classroom and at supporting selective attention to important material. Those teachers may move away from a podium or seat, move around the room, avoid monotones, frequently change activities, and otherwise ensure that change is an important part of their teaching.

Teacher Beliefs About Memory

Memory is a very complex topic (for a highly accessible introduction to the modern understanding of memory, see Schacter, 2001; a more technical but interesting summary of current views can be found

in Koriat, Goldsmith & Pansky, 2000) and I will only illustrate a few possible aspects of memory about which teachers might hold different views. Although everyone would agree that memory involves some kind of storage, there are many possible ways to think about how memories are stored. A common view of memory is that it works like a file cabinet or a tape recorder. Information is simply stored in more or less verbatim form after it has been attended to. Variations on this view might be that the tape recorder is susceptible to background noise and does not pick up all the information, or that the tape is unstable and may lose information over time.

An alternative view of memory storage might be that it is not like a tape recorder at all, but is a reconstructive process. Memory is selective and open to biases created by what a student already knows and by a student's own attitudes and beliefs. Individual memories are constructed products based on new material to be learned, what the student already knows about a topic (accurately or not), and the meanings the students attribute to the new material in what cognitive psychologists call "working memory." When working memory is engaged at a high level, new material is deeply processed (see the section on learning strategies, below).

Teachers who hold a tape-recorder version of memory might stress memorization of significant amounts of information that they presume will remain in storage for long periods of time. Teaching involves the conveying of information from the teacher to the student's memory. Evaluations would involve straightforward recall, or recognition of material in memory. A teacher who takes a reconstructive view of memory might be very sensitive to what students already know and believe and to what misconceptions a student might hold about material to be learned. Classroom activities and out-of-class assignments would attempt to engage working memory, trying to get students to make new material meaningful and therefore memorable. Evaluations likely would be designed to test understanding, not memorization.

A related aspect of memory that could be a source of variability in teachers is beliefs about the degree of detail in which memories are stored. Some teachers may expect that good teaching will lead to verbatim memories. Other teachers may believe that only the gist is stored with most memories and to expect detailed verbatim memories would be unreasonable. Teachers differing on the detail versus gist dimension are likely to make different judgments about what students bring to the learning situation, are likely to design different kinds of classroom activities and out-of-class assignments, and are likely to expect different kinds of performance on exams.

Teacher Beliefs about Learning Strategies

Teacher beliefs about the nature of effective learning strategies probably are correlated with their views of memory storage, but they may not be. Some teachers may believe that the strength of a particular memory trace is connected to the number of times it has been repeated (and thus stamped-in). As long as students listen and/or take notes, learning should occur. Other teachers may believe that a more in-depth form of learning strategies is required for learning to occur. Students must be actively engaged when learning new material (likely correlated with a reconstructive view of memory). They may believe that students need to actively organize material, elaborate on it by connecting it to what they already know, and apply it to new situations before they really have learned it. Learning may be equated with understanding.

Beliefs about learning strategies are likely to have a particular influence on the nature of class activities and out-of-class assignments. If the main source of memory is thought to be repetition, reading and re-reading and re-emphasis in lectures and recitations should enhance learning. Activities that lead away from the central material to be learned, including demonstrations, videos, or debates, may be seen as inefficient or distracting. Exams should be straightforward, likely to be objective in form, and should measure directly what was intended to be learned. If active involvement with material from a variety of different perspectives is believed to be effective, cooperative learning activities, case study analysis, and simulations are more likely to be the teaching activities of choice. Exams should engage thinking and understanding and probably should go beyond the material that has been learned directly.

Teacher Beliefs About Motivation

Motivation, too, is complex and I will focus on only two potential contrasts in the thinking of teachers about student motivation. The first contrast concerns whether teachers emphasize extrinsic motivators such as rewards and punishment, or intrinsic forms of motivation such as curiosity and the need to be competent. A teacher who believes in extrinsic forms of motivation may stress reinforcement (high grades, points and praise) and punishments (low grades, demerits, and humiliation) and expect students to respond to external controls in their classroom activities and evaluations. The teacher who believes in intrinsic forms of motivation may stress attempts to elicit curiosity and interest in classroom activities and homework assignments and self-evaluations.

Another possible source of variance concerns teacher beliefs about motivational goals. Carol Dweck (Dweck & Elliott, 1983; Molden & Dweck, 2000) argues that individuals tend to hold different kinds of achievement goals. Some people hold "performance" goals. Those who are motivated by performance goals desire to maximize success while avoiding failure, want to look successful to others, and want to do so with a minimum of effort. Others hold "learning" goals. Those motivated by learning goals seek to acquire more and better knowledge and skills, see failure as an opportunity to get feedback and make efforts to learn more.

According to Dweck, performance and learning goals are generated by different personal theories of intelligence. Performance goals come from entity or trait theories of intelligence. The entity view of intelligence is that you are born with a certain amount of intelligence and you are not going to get any more. If you are not successful at a task, it is because you simply are not smart enough to do it. Effort is fruitless and is going to make you look unintelligent. Requests for assistance from teachers or peers carry a negative stigma. Learning goals come from incremental theories of intelligence. At any point in time you have a degree of intelligence, but you can get smarter by learning new ways to do things. If you do not succeed at a task, you need to try harder or try a different approach. Effort will make smarter. Getting help from teachers and students can help you get smarter.

Teachers who believe in performance goals and entity theories of intelligence may be more concerned with assessing and rewarding student talent whereas teachers who believe in learning goals and incremental theories of intelligence may be more concerned with developing student talent. Performance/entity teachers may minimize both challenge (except in assessing intelligence) and failure in their classroom activities and assignments. An emphasis on independent performance and competition may be seen as a natural part of the teacher's efforts to decide which students have the most ability. In contrast, learning/incremental teachers may build into their activities and assignments explicit challenges that could lead to failure and set up grading systems that allow for failure to occur. Cooperation, teacher guidance, and frequent use of student feedback may be characteristic of their course design.

Summary: Teachers' Beliefs About Their Students' Thinking

The argument I am making is that a more differentiated view of college and university teachers' thinking about their students' thinking is needed. The general characterization of beliefs about teaching and learning in terms of teaching methods, or as behaviorist versus cognitivist, or objectivist versus

constructivist needs to be unpacked for several reasons. First, such characterizations are simply too vague. The distinctions made are too abstract to be useful in getting teachers to talk about or reflect upon for their own purposes. Second, because the characterizations are so abstract, knowing whether someone has, for example, cognitivist versus behaviorist tendencies does not provide a platform for generating improvements in teaching. In fact, being aware of such labels might even polarize teachers' positions so that they become defensive about a particular perspective that they own. Finally, and perhaps most important, from theoretical and practical perspectives, it is unlikely that teachers' beliefs are ever purely cognitive or behavioral or transmissive or facilitative. Teachers' views of their students' thinking are more like mosaics of different beliefs about the various components of cognition. A teacher may well be a behaviorist in views of motivation and a cognitivist in views of memory or a cognitivist in views of evaluation and a behaviorist about classroom activities. Only when we have a more differentiated conception of teachers' thinking about learning and teaching will we be able to find consistent links between theory and practice.

Where Do We Go From Here?

How can we learn more about teachers' beliefs about their students' thinking and learning? A logical first choice might be to ask them. Interviews with teachers in which the questions are carefully designed to elicit teachers' thinking about student attention, memory, strategies and motivation might give us data to judge speculations like those I provided above. However, we may be asking them to say more than they can know and our questions are most likely to produce teaching method - related responses like those picked up in previous research (Samuelowicz & Bain, 2001, suggest that a potential pitfall of the phenomenographic approach that most of the research has taken may preordain the very kinds of categories that have been reported.).

It is hard talk about *why* you teach things the way you do. Interviews probably need to be combined with the examination of a teacher's syllabi, exams, assignments and classroom activities (see Kagan, 1990, for information about methods of research used in the study of teacher cognitions at the elementary and secondary school levels). It may be possible to create scenarios that capture contrasts between different views of students' cognitive processes and motivation. Using all of these methods, comparisons of teachers who have reputations for being particularly effective to those who are reputed to be less so could be made. More experienced teachers could be compared to the less experienced.

Teachers from different disciplines could be compared. My hope would be that research into teachers' thinking would provide us with a better understanding of the relation between espoused theories of teaching and actual practices and give us all better ways to improve on our teaching and student learning.

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Group Norm Setting: A Critical Skill for Effective Classroom Groups

Maurice L. Phipps and Cynthia A. Phipps

Abstract

The authors assert that cooperative learning techniques coupled with effective group norm setting can produce more highly functional classroom groups at the college level. After reviewing the types of educational groups and the elements of cooperative learning, procedures are discussed for establishing positive group norms. Re-visiting these established group norms is stressed as a means of creating optimally functional groups. This information is useful for college teachers.

Introduction

So, you decided to do group work in your classes and you have found that a few groups have done well and some have barely completed the work. Besides that, some students are really angry with you because the group project was a shared grade and some feel that they put in more work than their partners. What happened here? Isn't group work supposed to be a most effective way to teach? Why were some of the groups dysfunctional?

When students groan at the time a significant group project is announced, then they have probably experienced being in a dysfunctional group in the past. It is probably not too much of a stretch to say that everyone has experienced this situation where each individual's norms seem to be different. Johnson, Johnson, and Smith (1998) describe educational groups as follows:

Pseudo Learning Group -- students assigned to work together but who have no interest in doing so.

Traditional Learning Group -- students agree to work together without seeing the benefits of doing so. It is basically individual work with talking.

Cooperative Learning Group -- students placed together to accomplish shared goals and perceive they can reach their goals only if other group members reach their goals.

High-Performing Cooperative Learning Group -- a group that is cooperative and outperforms expectations given its membership.

We all want our student groups to be highly functioning, so how can we get them to this point and beyond? The use of cooperative learning is suggested by Johnson et al (1998) which includes five elements (see figure 1.)

Figure 1. The Five Elements of Cooperative Learning (Johnson, Johnson and Smith,1998)

1. **Positive Interdependence**
   The perception must be that one cannot succeed unless everyone else succeeds. Each person's efforts benefit all.
2. **Individual Accountability and Personal Responsibility**
   Each member must be accountable for contributing a fair share of the work.
3. **Face-to-Face Promotive Interaction**
   Through interpersonal interactions, cognitive learning is increased. This includes things like discussions, testing each other, cooperative note taking, shared work sheets, and jigsaw type procedures.
4. **Interpersonal and Small Group Skills**
   This is the ability to practice effective group skills, including leadership, decision-making, trust building, communication and conflict management.
5. **Group Processing**
   This includes discussing how the group is working. How effective are relationships? Are goals being met and is the task being accomplished? How well? How can the group improve?

For a group to be a high functioning cooperative learning group, all of the above five elements need to be included continually in the group strategy. If the classroom teacher builds in all these elements and provides the motivation to continue group processing, then a higher functioning team will grow with more student learning.

A very important part of cooperative learning is the ability of individuals to function well as a group -- that is, to have effective group skills. Group skills include such things as setting common goals and norms, understanding leadership roles in educational groups and processing progress in these areas while at the same time working through the conflicts that will arise. Of course, a comprehensive understanding of group dynamics and leadership would be optimal, but some basic knowledge can really help the students along.

As a college teacher, you may not have considered that some class time must be devoted to the teaching of group skills and to do group maintenance if you want the groups to be functional rather than dysfunctional. Giving the class a substantial group project (formal cooperative learning) without enabling them to work on group skills can be, in Dewey's (1963) terms, "mis-educational."

Avoiding Dysfunction and Mis-education

We surely do not want to disenchant our students from our subject areas, or from working together so we must include the time needed and give support to group skills and group maintenance. Not only will this help to prevent mis-education, it will allow practice in skills that will likely be required in

the work place. This may mean that either some course content must be cut or done by students as homework instead of “in-class”. What kinds of things can be done to move the group along to the group goal of being high functioning?

This paper will focus on getting started which is probably the most important stage for the teacher to consider in educational group development. To enable the students to begin to function effectively, the setting of group norms and understanding how to monitor these norms is a key factor. The setting of group norms can not only help students to function well in small groups, it can also help develop good behavior for whole class situations. Imagine a three-hour evening class with forty or so seniors who for the most part have “senioritus” where a few at the back are continually chatting through a lecture. Enabling the students to “police” this poor behavior is more effective than the teacher becoming an austere disciplinarian. This kind of behavior modification can best be achieved through good group norm setting.

Group Norm Setting

Norms in a group will evolve even if nothing purposeful is done, but of course these norms might be negative. So it is better to set norms than to allow them to just evolve, especially as changing them is almost always more difficult later. There are different ways to set norms, but it is essential to emphasize two points. First, emphasize that the norms are extremely important and second, make sure that they are not confused with rules. Rules are often “handed down” and, as they are not cooperatively set, they most likely will **not** be monitored by students. To emphasize the importance of norm setting, the students’ own group experiences can be solicited to provide a ray of hope for those who have had negative experiences that their full participation will ensure that this experience will be more positive.

One way to begin is to allow about forty minutes for students to cooperatively set group norms during the first class period. Go through the course outline and spend the remainder of the time doing norm setting. Using a framework the first time helps the students to think more broadly. Paul Petzoldt (1984), who was a mountaineer and “expeditioner” with vast experience of groups in stressful conditions (he climbed to above twenty-six thousand feet on K2 in 1939), referred to norm setting as the setting of expedition behavior. In the classroom we can use the first three of his behavior headings – Individual to Individual Behavior, Individual to Group Behavior, and Group to Individual Behavior. If three columns are drawn on the board, or there is a flip chart with these headings, the class, in small groups can

brainstorm what behaviors they would like to see in the class as a whole and in small groups working in and out of class. An example of the heading format can be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2. Group Norm Headings

Individual to Individual Behavior	**Individual to Group Behavior**	**Group to Individual Behavior**
Examples	Examples	Examples
No put downs	*Be on time to meetings*	*No scapegoats*
Give praise	*Be prepared*	*Bring everyone into the Group*

This exercise can include both positive and negative comments such as "be supportive" and "don't be late to meetings." All the suggestions should be added to the lists in the three columns. Some comments may fit all headings, but need only be written down once. About thirty to forty minutes should be allowed and each heading needs to be covered so care must be taken not to focus on one heading for all the brainstorming time. The teacher can request clarification and amplification of examples so that each norm is well understood by everyone. The teacher can also contribute, as for example, "No chatting while someone is addressing the whole class." The class group norms includes only enough teacher involvement to ensure that it is class norms and not the teacher's rules which are being instituted. Figure 3 shows an example of a set of norms developed by a class.

Figure 3. Example of Group Norm Setting done in an Academic Course at California Polytechnic State University

Individual to Individual	**Group to Individual**	**Individual to Group**
• Be considerate	• Respect "off" days of an individual	• Do your fair share
• Stay in touch during projects	• Don't gang up on anyone	• Support each other
• Respect each other's space	• Give each other a chance to explain themselves	• Don't talk if someone else is speaking to class
• Share assignment loads equally	• Show respect in general	• Don't be defensive
• Keep commitments	• Listen attentively as a group when an individual is talking	• Be able to take constructive criticism
• Be considerate of feelings	• Share helpful ideas	• No put downs
• Communicate no matter what!	• Don't leave if someone is talking	• Don't smoke
• Help classmates who miss class	• Don't pick on anyone (scapegoat) or make fun of anyone	• Be aware that there are more classes with other assignments
• Be supportive	• Be a good listener as well as a speaker	• Leave quietly when existing after a test
• Have patience		
• Be flexible and agreeable to change		
• Be enthusiastic		
• Offer notes if class is missed and collect handouts		
• Be open to others ideas		

- Take all ideas seriously/openly
- Don't interrupt

- Be on time
- No unnecessary noises
- No chewing gum

- Don't pop gum

- Be prepared (bring materials)

- Use positive and creative feedback
- Be responsible for duties, meetings and emergencies and

- Allow everyone to participate
- Call and remind members of study groups
- Make everyone feel comfortable and encourage individual response

- If you can't make it to a meeting, notify others
- Use eye contact
- Don't be absent
- Control negative comments
- Be open & courteous to entire class & instructor
- Meet commitments
- No chit-chatting in cliques
- No cliques

Once the suggested norms are completed, then a consensus must be reached to accept the norms, so a question such as "Does anyone disagree with any of the norms?" A consensus is reached when the whole class agrees, or no-one disagrees. If someone takes issue with something, then this needs to be resolved by removing the statement or modifying it to get everyone's approval. Having a student write a neat copy through the process will enable a master that can then be typed and copies distributed to everyone. Later, if someone wishes to change anything, it is important that the whole group is involved in the change. The consensus making process is important to build in a sense of ownership and leads to empowerment for the next important aspect to address, which is, 'Who is expected to make sure that everyone keeps to the norms?'

Monitoring Group Norms

A first question after consensus is reached then might be "Who is responsible to address situations where norms are broken?" The answer is *everyone*. This leads to the concept of distributed leadership. This concept according to Johnson et al (1998) is the idea that anyone who moves the group forward in either task or relationship is doing a leadership role and that especially in educational

groups, this should be strongly encouraged. These are actually what Jane Warters (1960) classified as positive group roles (see figure 4)

Fig. 4 Waters' Positive Group Roles

Task Roles
Initiating activity: solutions, new ideas, etc.
Seeking opinions: looking for an expression of feeling
Seeking information: clarification of values, suggestions and ideas
Giving information: offering facts, generalizations, relating one's own experience to the group problem.
Giving opinions: concerns, values, rather than facts.
Elaborating: clarifying examples and proposals.
Coordinating: showing relationships among various ideas or suggestions
Summarizing: pulling together related ideas and related suggestions.
Testing feasibility: making applications of suggestions to situations, examining practicality of ideas.

Group- Building Roles
Encouraging: Being friendly, warm, responsive to others, praising others and their ideas.
Gate keeping: trying to make it possible for another member to make a contribution to the group.
*Standard setting: expressing standards for the group to use in choosing its content or procedures or in evaluating its decisions, reminding the group to avoid decisions that conflict with group standards (and norms).
Following: going along with decisions of the group, thoughtfully accepting ideas of others.
Expressing group feeling: summarizing what group feeling is sensed to be, describing reactions of the group to ideas.

Both Group-Building and Maintenance Roles
Evaluating: submitting group decisions or accomplishments to compare with group standards, measuring accomplishments against goals.
Diagnosing: determining sources of difficulties, appropriate steps to take next, analyzing the main blocks to progress.
Testing for consensus: tentatively asking for group opinions in order to find out if the group is reaching consensus.
Mediating: harmonizing, conciliating differences in points of view, making compromise solutions.
Relieving tensions: draining off negative feelings by joking or pouring oil on troubled waters, putting tense situations in a wider context.

* Standard setting and keeping is the key group or distributed leadership role for monitoring group roles

All of these roles help move the group forward both in the task and in relationships, but the key role in relation to group norms is the Standard Setter (and keeper). This role sets and monitors standards in the group. It must be emphasized that everyone in the class can do any of the group roles, especially the standard setter/keeper of the group norms. Skills that a good standard keeper requires would be the ability to give feedback appropriately and to manage conflict – both these skills are "group" skills that need to be understood and practiced.

The actual group norm setting so far may have taken forty minutes. Can we, as teachers, rest easy now that the class has their behavioral expectations? If the students are excellent standard keepers, then yes, you as the teacher/class facilitator may rest easy, but the chances are that the students have had very little practice in these skills or group processing of any kind, so things will

probably go awry. Re-visiting group norms periodically then, is a real a necessity.|

Re-visiting Group Norms

One of the common pitfalls for the teacher using groups, even if doing a good job of facilitating the setting of group norms, is to address a norm violation as if it were a personal affront to themselves rather than ask the class how they wish to address it. As group norms will be broken and as students may not address them, the teacher should check on how things are going. One way is to request that the students write on a piece of scrap paper one thing that they are doing well (in the norms) and one thing that they feel they need to improve on. The class passes comments to the teacher, or a student facilitator, to read out loud. This can just be a reminder to do better.

If things don't improve, then brainstorming reasonable consequences can be done. An example suggested by one class that worked well for tardiness was that the tardy student must answer two questions about homework before they sat down. Again, care must be taken not to reduce the norms to rules and consequences must be agreed upon by the whole class. Of course, both norms and consequences also have to be in sync with the policies of the university and this should be stated. Students must and generally do realize that you as the professor are not handing over the teacher responsibilities, albeit you are allowing them to monitor their own behavior. Most students welcome this opportunity and are pleased to be learning the skills to make their groups and the class work effectively. However, occasionally group norm setting and monitoring might not work with an individual.

The Non-conforming Student

For a non-conforming student, an individual meeting that confronts the questionable behavior may be necessary when the behavior affects the whole class. For students working in small groups, they should confront the behavior and, if unsuccessful, can request that the teacher mediate the conflict. If this too is unsuccessful, then it is better that the student be removed from the group by the teacher. The whole "group" project would then be completed individually. If any points were being awarded for group process, they would, of course, be sacrificed by that individual.

Summary

Many college teachers may have given up on student group work if dysfunctional groups have resulted in complaints and general negative behavior. Setting appropriate behaviors through purposeful group norm setting puts students "on the same page" so guesswork about what the class would like to see with regard to behaviors is removed. The fact that the behaviors are cooperatively set means that they are more likely to be upheld by class members. The teacher, however, must support students in this endeavor by teaching group skills and giving time for group processing to find out what needs to be fixed so that the class and its project groups can become high functioning. The complexities of group skills, concepts, and processing for college students are addressed in *The Group Book: Effective Skills for Cooperative Groups* (Phipps and Phipps, 2000)

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Electronic Portfolios: Making the Known Visual through Interactive Design

Jane S. Hall, Eliza L. Dean, JoeDavid M. Hall, and Catherine M. Taylor

Abstract
Electronic portfolios are a way for students to chronicle a history of knowledge and experiences gained during their program of study at Western Carolina University. This article focuses on the content and process involved for Birth to Kindergarten majors to complete an electronic portfolio in their senior capstone course, Computer Applications for Early Childhood Professionals. Both student and faculty perspectives give insight to the benefits, challenges, personal and professional growth gained through reviewing coursework, selecting exceptional assignments to include in the portfolio through various interactive media such as video, sound, text, animation and visual graphics

Imagine two student technology products on your desk for review; one is a large four inch technology binder notebook full of papers and the other an electronic portfolio where selected best assignments were burned to a CD-ROM. If you think you would select the CD-ROM with its visual cover and compact size for review first, then read further to see how Birth to Kindergarten (BK) majors at Western Carolina University made this transition in the fall of 2001.

Helping BK students learn about interactive design in order to display their best work electronically provided a rewarding and challenging opportunity. The term “electronic portfolio” implies that the delivery mode will be digital in nature and presented on a computer as described at the “Using Technology to Support Alternative Assessment and Electronic Portfolios” web site (http://transition.alaska.edu/www/portfolios.html). The push to go beyond the paper/pencil portfolio notebook as the norm for representing student’s technology skills was two-fold. First, prospective employers would be able to review a student’s work through multimedia, giving a profile of the student through words and actions such as video clips (see Figure II) of student participation and leadership in addition to text, sound, animation, and other graphics. Such methods of assessment are not limited to multiple-choice and standardized tests but include projects with outcomes that are authentic and performance based (Meyer, 1992).

Secondly, developing the portfolio is an opportunity for students to look back and identify benchmark performance in each major course that might be included in their portfolios starting with their

first course in the program to this culminating capstone experience. Furthermore, identifying the projects that characterized their philosophy about teaching and learning with young children provided a deeper critical thinking activity where students analyzed their learning history, examined their values and beliefs in creating a personal and professional profile of themselves (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer,1991). By pulling together all their important and significant assignments, students discovered an overall pattern of what they believed and where they stood on important issues. They made connections between their various assignments. They reviewed and reflected on all their course work to gain a better understanding of who they were as an early childhood professional.

Course Organization

Choosing the software for creating the portfolios was the first step. After reviewing several authoring programs such as Authorware, Roger Wagner Publishing's HyperStudio, Macromedia Director 8 was chosen because of the program's robust ability to integrate multiple media formats. A reviewer does not need a special program on their computer to view the student's work--just clicking on the CD opens the projector files. In contrast, all the Xtras in the Authorware program have to be installed on the computer of origin and included as part of the distributed CD content.

The course, **BK 463: Computer Applications for Early Child Professionals**, was developed with the syllabus being the roadmap for transitioning to a very active learning process (see Appendix). Two textbooks were used; *Director 8 and Lingo Authorized* by Phil Gross (2000) contained a CD with lessons to complete for each text chapter. *Interactivity by Design* by Roy Kristof and Amy Satran (1995) gave students a practical and effective way to conceptualize multimedia presentation. For example, chapters at the beginning of the book prompt students to answer questions such as, "What is interactivity? What is included in the interactive process? How do you develop a presentation design?"

When considering the design process, the analogy of a book layout was helpful. In the first part of the portfolio is an introduction to the reviewer about the student, how the navigation buttons are used to proceed through the portfolio and the student's personal website link for additional examples and information. Then a list of headings, much like a table of contents in a book follows. This page is often referred to as the main menu. The aspects common to all portfolios were 1) the inclusion of the four domains from the state BK program of study (knowledge, pedagogy, diversity, professionalism) as the

portfolio major headings, 2) a philosophy statement and 3) a resume. With those givens, students decided which of their course projects to include under each of the headings and what type of interactive media would be most appropriate. This format allows the reviewer to click on a heading and consider all the linked materials, then use the navigation buttons to proceed forward, backward, return to the main menu or exit the program at any time. The ability to navigate wherever the reviewer chooses -- to start at the beginning or in the middle of the portfolio -- allows for the flexibility to select any portfolio component at any time.

Having a metaphor, such as a book, helped students relate to a concrete example so they were able to stay focused and organized. In addition, a rubric was designed that included a timeline when portions of the portfolio had to be completed. This was important because it required students to "jump right in" allowing them to see progress even in the beginning. The class was conducted in the electronic classroom where students displayed their portfolio progress weekly. Someone would notice something from another student's presentation and comment, "How did you do that?" Thus peer collaboration became a cornerstone of the course. I often saw students in pairs or triads working together in the computer lab after class sessions. I was available for individual assistance, but nudged students to seek help from each other, knowing one of the best ways to learn something is to teach the process to someone else.

Faculty Perspective

Looking back, we had no idea the immense learning curve faculty and students would be undertaking. Director 8 is no lightweight computer program. One of the faculty participated in a three day Introduction to Director 8 workshop at Georgia Tech the summer before teaching the course for the first time. This was invaluable in helping see how to teach oneself through the textbook lessons. Thus, as we all began to master the program basics, a sense of great accomplishment permeated the classroom atmosphere. The motivation and confidence emerging as each new level was achieved was remarkable. One of the most exciting aspects occurred when students could see all the navigation segments of their portfolio working accurately for the first time. Students would be working at their computers and all of a sudden you'd here someone shout, "Hallelujah!"

Once students completed the portfolio content, they designed their CD label and jewel case cover (see Figure1). Students made two CDs for their use and another copy to keep on file in the BK departmental office. Students can update their work or make other copies for employment purposes if necessary. Once again, their creativity and sense of detail was reflected in their desire to visually design the CD cover as a personal statement of themselves — unique and highly qualified early childhood professionals.

Student Perspective

Students felt a great sense of accomplishment and pride in their finished product. One student said, "The greatest benefit from creating my portfolio electronically was the process of learning something new and challenging. Technology is advancing so quickly and it was nice to participate in a project where my personal boundaries were expanded. Being able to display work of this magnitude brought great satisfaction. The Director 8 program could easily be compared with something a CIS major would undertake, and being in a program where people think you just play with children proves Birth to Kindergarten students can do both. When we worked on the assignment in class, students were encouraged to work and talk with each other. This did two things: first, it created laughter and secondly, the opportunity for students to learn from their peers, making class a joy to attend. I also recall the long hours of work trying to get the blankety-blankety-blank computer program to work. Now I can look at my Director 8 project and feel proud of the accomplishment."

Another student commented, "The greatest challenge for me was overcoming my personal fear of computers. You hear horror stories all through school of people who lose wor or the computer crashes and they lose everything. I was really afraid this would happen to me. But knowledge is power and the more I learned the less scared I became. Now, I don't have to tell a potential employer that I have a strong technological background, I can show them."

The course conclusion was a public presentation where parents, BK faculty and majors, and other selected individuals attended as students shared their portfolios. Fall semester, 2002, forty parents and grandparents were among the guests viewing their chidlren's accomplishments. It was a celebration for everyone!

Today, too many early childhood classrooms use inappropriate practice. Teachers are not using new and innovative teaching strategies; instead, they continue to teach with worksheets and use authoritarian guidance strategies. In our BK classes, we are teaching students to implement developmentally appropriate practice when they become lead classroom teachers in the public schools. The electronic portfolio helps our students develop their philosophy of teaching because they have to tie everything together. Therefore, when they go into their first teaching jobs, they have a better understanding of what they believe about teaching and learning, allowing them to feel confident in making any necessary changes in the classroom.

Completing the electronic portfolio showed that our BK students have the disposition to try something new. They were not afraid to take risks and to undergo a challenge. When they become classroom teachers, they will pass on this disposition of trying new things to their young students.

Furthermore, student electronic portfolios have become a major BK recruitment tool. When the portfolios are demonstrated, there is generally a crowd surrounding the computer in awe of the unique and creative ways students have designed their CDs. Making the transition to electronic technology and content portfolios has brought regional and state recognition to the Birth to Kindergarten program at Western Carolina University, in addition to the camaraderie among students and faculty who collaborated together to walk a new path.

Summary

Electronic portfolios are quickly winning favor as a form of authentic assessment at all levels of education. This learning innovation not only offers a demonstration of accomplishments, but also allows students to take responsibility for the work they have done. Electronic portfolios can be as simple or as complex as one would like to make them. Much depends on faculty goals and abilities, the skills of students and the availability of technology.

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Appendix

Syllabus: BK 463 Computer Applications for Early Childhood Professionals

The advancement of basic technology and multimedia for developing an electronic content/technology portfolio.

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Textbook(s) and other required materials: *Director 8 and Lingo* Authorized by Macromedia by Phil Gross; State BK Program Standards/Indicators; State Technology Competencies

Course Topics or Outline:
Director Basics
Animated Bullet Lists
Reversing Animations
Transitions, Sounds, and Video
Adding Interactivity
Keyframes and Layers
Built in Behaviors
Sprite Properties and Palettes
Markers and Navigation
Fonts and Menus

Course Objectives:
Using Director 8 software, Birth-Kindergarten (BK) majors will develop an electronic portfolio exhibiting their program content/technology knowledge representative of an information design format. Student's philosophy statement concerning the way they belief children learn and grow best and their role in this process will serve as the framework for their portfolio. Samples of their coursework (including a variety of media, i.e., PowerPoint, video clips, text, graphics) will be intergraded throughout their philosophy to give documentation to their content and technology knowledge base.

Course Requirements:
Completion of a content/technology electronic portfolio
Completion of a CD cover and label

ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO OUTLINE

Objective: Information design is the process of clarifying your communication goals and arranging your content into a design that serves those goals. It's selling, teaching, storytelling, or just plain informing—in the most effective way you can. (*Interactivity by Design)*

Timeframe	Process		Materials/Tasks
Week 1	8/21-8/23	Introduction to Information Design Introduction to Director 8 software; experiment using basics elements—Stage, Cast, Scripts	*Interactivity by Design* Director 8 Textbook—Lesson 1 **Assg for August 23:** Read: The Introduction and Lesson 1 in the text, Director 8. Write down three of the most challenging ideas about which you would like clarification and discussion.
Weeks 2, 3, & 4	8/28-9/13	Defining goals; Intended Audience; Outlining and organizing the portfolio content/goals into a flowchart Identifying a navigation format Experiment using basics Director elements—Stage, Cast, Scripts	Refine your teaching philosophy statement Begin gathering projects from courses, lab experiences, video clips of presentations which support your teaching philosophy statements Director 8 Textbook—Lesson 1
Week 5	9/18-9/20	Picture of yourself with recorded narration re: (a) a brief describe of yourself, (b) an explanation of how to use the CD, (c) summarization of the importance of your work.	Develop the stage background and cast members for first scripts (picture, narration, philosophy statement) Director 8 Textbook—Lesson 2
Week 6, 7, 8, & 9	9/25-10/18	Introduction to Behaviors/Animation Integrating selection of Projects for Portfolio Inclusion	Director 8 Textbook—Lesson 4 Director 8 Textbook—Lesson 5 Director 8 Textbook—Lesson 8 Director 8 Textbook—Lesson 9
Week 10, 11	10/23-11/1	Testing out the processes	
Week 12, 13	11/6-11/15	Burning the CD's Designing the CD label and cover	
Week 14	11/20-11-29	Semester Review of Work	

Week 15	12/4-12-11	Presentation of Portfolios	

Conceptual Framework Statement: The professional education program at Western Carolina University fulfills its mission by creating and nourishing a community of learners guided by knowledge, values, and experiences. The guiding principles of this community include: (1) the belief that the best educational decisions are made after adequate reflection and with careful consideration of the interests, experiences, and welfare of the persons affected by the decisions; (2) appreciation of and respect for diversity; (3) and the fostering of the responsible use of technology.

This course focuses on the application of advanced technology skills in designing an electronic portfolio. Students in previous courses gain competence in the basis technology/multimedia skills. This capstone course allows them to combine their technology/multimedia knowledge as they reflect on their BK program course of study in identifying their "best work" for inclusion in their portfolio.

Diversity Statement: Student composition relates to diversity regarding differences in ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status and geographic region in which they live. This diversity enhances student learning which in turn helps students engage all children with and without disabilities in the application of their coursework—whether in a field experience or classroom setting. The Belk electronic classroom computer stations are cluster designs promoting a great deal of peer interaction. Thus, students with greater technology competence often rotate their chairs to help students who may be challenged regarding a certain computer component. WebCT assignments also enhance cross-learning among students as they reflect on and respond to the writings of their peers.

Technology Requirements: All of the advanced technology components are addressed in this course which is taught in the electronic classroom.

Clinical or Field Experience Component: None

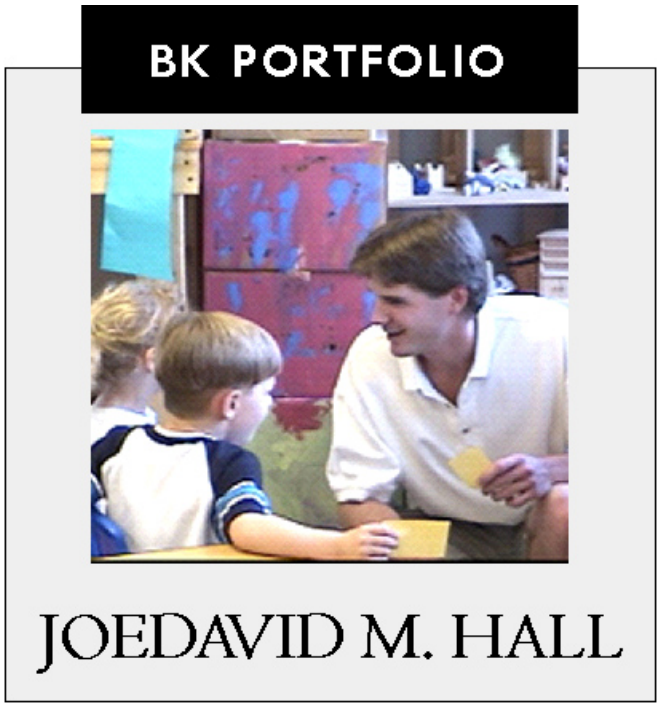
Evaluation Procedures: Rubric design outlining criteria to earn either an A, B, C, D, or F for the course.

A	B	C	D	F
High level of philosophy statement development; integration of a variety of media representation; Clear relationship to state BK standards and state technology competencies; High energy and participation in the course process components; Exemplary electronic portfolio	**High level of philosophy statement development; integration of a variety of media representation; Clear relationship to state BK standards and state technology competencies; High energy and participation in the course process components; Commendable electronic portfolio**	**Medium level of philosophy statement development; integration of a variety of media representation; Clear relationship to state BK standards and state technology competencies; Medium energy and participation in the course process components; Acceptable electronic portfolio**	**Fair level of philosophy statement development; integration of a variety of media representation; Clear relationship to state BK standards and state technology competencies; Fair energy and participation in the course process components; Acceptable electronic portfolio**	**Unacceptable level of work in all components.**

CD Cover Designs for Electronic Portfolios

Figure1. JPEG image of CD covers designed by JoeDavid Hall and Catherine Taylor.

Figure Caption



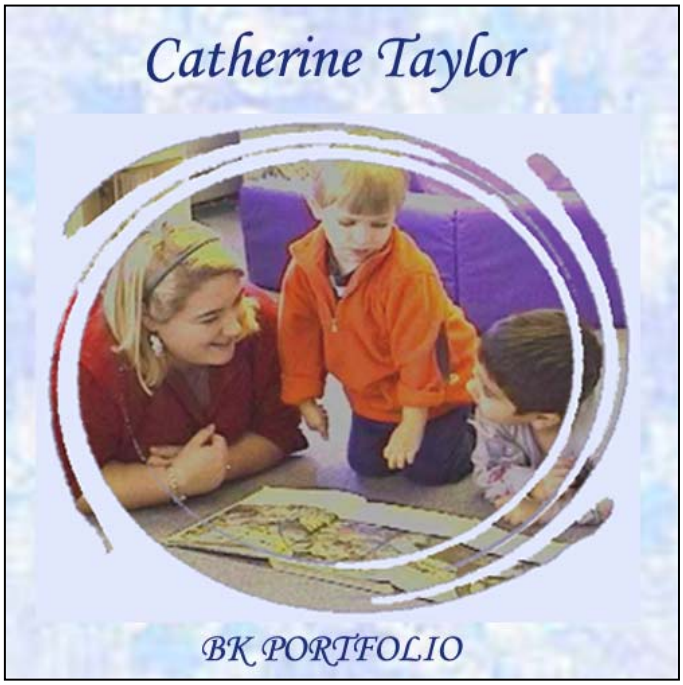


Figure II. Student interactive video clips.

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Lights, Camera, Action:
Teaching with Feature Film in the Social Sciences

Lisen C. Roberts, Eliza Dean, and Terry Nienhuis

Abstract
This paper presents a review of literature on using feature film to teach in the social sciences, including benefits and limitations as well as suggestions for how to use this method. Also included is an annotated videography of 25 films recommended for the presentation of specific social science issues.

Students watch movies. Film is "where" students naturally are. Recognizing this, we explored the educational use of feature film in higher education. Specifically, we reviewed the literature on teaching with feature film in the social sciences. In this paper, we share what we learned about first, why, and then how to teach with feature film. We present an extensive annotated videography of some of our favorite films that present social science issues, as well as one specific example of a feature film based assignment given here at Western Carolina University.

Why teach with film?

A review of the teaching-with-film literature revealed numerous references in the social sciences. For example, numerous publications exist on the educational use of film in Counselor Education (Higgins & Dermer, 2001; Toman & Rak, 2000; Tyler & Reynolds, 1998), Family Science (Imig, 1981; Smith, 2001), Human Communication (Adler, 1995; Baker, 1997; Baker & Lawrence, 1994; Johnson & Iacobucci, 1995; Mackey-Kallis & Kirk-Elfenbein, 1997; Proctor, 1990, 1991; Proctor & Rock, 1995), Psychology (Anderson, 1992; Boyatzis, 1994; Desforges, 1994; Fleming, Piedmont, & Hiam, 1990; Hemenover, Caster, & Mizumoto, 1999; Kirsh, 1998; Paddock, Terranova, & Giles, 2001), and Sociology (Burton, 1988; Fails, 1988; Groce, 1992; Loewen, 1991; Manley, 1994; Papademas, 1993; Smith, 1982; Tipton & Tiemann, 1993; Tolich, 1992; Valdez & Haley, 1999). All social science professionals can draw on this abundance of information on the educational use of feature film.

Benefits

Feature film may present a more holistic and realistic view of relevant course concepts than textbooks (Bluestone, 2000; Johnson & Iacobucci, 1995). Film is a potentially powerful educational tool because it can provide a common experience base for all students, even of otherwise unfamiliar issues (Anderson, 1992; Gregg et al., 1995; Higgins & Dermer, 2001; Mackey-Kallis & Kirk-Elfenbein, 1997; Manley, 1994; Proctor, 1990; Proctor & Rock, 1995; Tyler & Reynolds, 1998).

At its best, film can reach the emotions of students, thus potentially increasing the likelihood of students connecting personally to the content presented (Bluestone, 2000; Proctor, 1990). Film can liven up the classroom and bring energy to the course. Students may identify with a character, even one of different background or experience than their own (Bluestone, 2000; Burton, 1988). Film can also illustrate course concepts and enable students to see theory in action (Adler, 1995; Anderson, 1992; Gregg et al., 1995; Mackey-Kallis & Kirk-Elfenbein, 1997; Tolich, 1992; Valdez & Haley, 1999). For example, Desforges (1994) used feature film to illustrate various theoretical concepts related to adolescent development. Higgins and Dermer (2001) used film to depict marriage and family therapy theories and both Fails (1988) and Tipton and Tiemann (1992) used film to illustrate sociological theories. Loewen (1991) and Manley (1994) used feature film as stimulus to teach race relations.

Bloom (1956) created a taxonomy to illustrate various levels of learning. His taxonomy is a visual hierarchy with knowledge at the bottom, comprehension, application, analysis, and synthesis in the middle in ascending order and finally evaluation at the top. He reported that too much emphasis is put on the lower levels of learning and not enough at the top. Used effectively, film can take students to the higher levels of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation as they apply theories to life on the screen, analyze characters, create new scenarios or endings to films, and evaluate the quality of a film's presentation of relevant concepts.

There is ample anecdotal evidence of the effectiveness of using film to teach course concepts in the social sciences. Kirsh (1998) and Tipton and Tiemann (1993) reported a high quality of student work and investment in film-based assignments. Likewise, Baker and Lawrence (1994) reported student homework assignments to be more insightful in a media-based interpersonal communication course than in a traditional section of the same course. Students themselves report to instructors that assignments

involving the educational application of film are particularly rewarding (Anderson, 1992; Baker & Lawrence, 1994; Bluestone, 2000; Desforges, 1994; Fails, 1988; Kirsh, 1998; Tipton & Tiemann, 1993).

Empirical evidence of the effectiveness of teaching with film exists as well. Imig (1981) compared student exam grades across four classroom designs: traditional lecture followed by traditional exam; traditional lecture followed by exam using film clips; traditional lecture, followed by practice exam with film clips, followed by actual exam with film clips; and lecture using film clips followed by exam using film clips. The highest exam scores occurred with the last design, involving film clips in both lecture and exam. Baker and Lawrence (1994) and Smith (1982) reported similar studies involving interpersonal communication and introductory sociology courses taught with traditional lecture and discussion compared to other sections of the same course in which lecture and discussion were supplemented with film and television depictions of course concepts. On all course assessments, the "media" section students performed as well as or better than the traditionally taught students. Smith (1982) also found those students who experienced the course with film incorporated into the classroom experience to be significantly more likely to report an interest in the larger discipline of sociology and in taking more sociology courses. Students have also been found to rate their own understanding of course material significantly higher after illustrative film clips and discussion than before (Paddock et al., 2001).

Burton (1988) stated that more thorough development of characterization and issues can be obtained through a full-length film than isolated film clips. We have found that students often have this "anti-clip" mentality. They often prefer immersion into the full film. We agree with Burton that, through the educational application of full-length film, each student "may learn something of what it feels like to stand in the shoes of a person of… some situation vastly dissimilar to his or her own" (Burton, 1988, p. 264). Yet we also remain open to using film clips in our own courses. We believe film clips can focus students' attention to a single issue.

Limitations

We have heard colleagues argue that showing film means the instructor is not really teaching. The argument is that instead of lecturing or engaging in discussion, the instructor is simply turning on the television and letting the film deliver the material. It is our contention that instructors must be aware of

this potential abuse of class time and structure learning activities that promote critical thinking concerning the film. We advocate an active, not passive, use of film.

One potential limitation of using feature films to teach course concepts is the amount of class time necessary to view the film. Some instructors assign film viewing for students to do on their own time outside of class (Boyatzis, 1994; Gregg et al., 1995; Proctor, 1990). Others show the assigned film at a scheduled time other than the regular class meeting time, perhaps offering several time slots to allow students to view the film according to their own schedules and/or for students to have the opportunity to view the film more than once (Gregg et al., 1995; Groce, 1992; Tipton & Tiemann, 1993). Other instructors show film during regularly scheduled class time and see the time spent as worthwhile (Baker & Lawrence, 1994; Bluestone, 2000; Gregg et al., 1995). However, if class meets in a less than 3-hour time frame, the necessary starting and stopping of film viewing and discussion may be problematic for continuity (Valdez & Halley, 1999). Instructors might keep in mind that the use of film clips rather than entire feature-length films can solve this time issue.

Additional limitations remain. For example, films are entertaining and therefore may lose educational value (Baker & Lawrence, 1994; Proctor, 1990). Likewise, students may not view the film critically enough if they accept a character's view or experience without question (Anderson, 1992). To remedy these potential limitations, it is necessary for the instructor to structure the film activity educationally.

Instructors do not know what will be too disturbing in a particular film for individual students. Instructors can address this by preparing students ahead of time if a film contains violence, explicit language, or sexual scenes and, if appropriate, providing an alternative assignment (Adler, 1995; Anderson, 1992; Baker, 1997; Gregg et al., 1995; Proctor, 1991).

A final (initial, really) limitation of teaching with film is the amount of time necessary for instructors to find the right illustrative films (Gregg et al., 1995). The appendix following this paper provides an annotated videography of 25 feature films appropriate for depicting various social science curricula. This videography can save Western Carolina University instructors valuable time in finding appropriate films.

Choosing Films

While some author-instructors such as Boyatzis (1994) prefer foreign films to American ones, our experience is that undergraduate students generally respond best to American or other English-language films. Maintaining attention while reading subtitles is often too difficult for undergraduate students and can take away from the intended impact of the film. However, there are at least two foreign-language films that we have found appropriate for our own classes. *My Life as a Dog*, a Swedish film depicting the experience of childhood for a twelve-year-old boy, is an excellent film to depict child development and puberty issues. Likewise, *The Wedding Banquet*, a film that alternately uses English dialogue and Chinese dialogue with English subtitles, presents a captivating look at Chinese-American culture as well as sexual orientation. Similar to the issue of the language of film is the issue of film production date. Like Baker and Lawrence (1994) and Proctor (1990), we find that students tend to prefer contemporary over classic films and can better identify with characters in movies they see as relatively current. Again, there are exceptions. *Ordinary People* and *Kramer vs. Kramer*, for example, both over 20 years old, present in our opinion—and our students'—timeless views of troubled families.

Another area of potential concern in choosing a relevant film is its aesthetic value. We ourselves have wrestled with this issue and concluded that focus in this area is not relevant to our purpose of showing film to illustrate social concepts. We choose to leave film aesthetics to the English, Art, and Film departments. Still, there are some issues of quality in choosing an appropriate film to depict social issues. We are, for example, aware of commercial film's tendency toward falsification, simplicity, fantasy, and sentimentality. When previewing a potential film for education use, we ask, *Is this film true to the issue?* Yet we are aware that sometimes what a film doesn't include may be as relevant for highlighting course concepts as what it does include (Hemenover et al., 1999; Loewen, 1991; Valdez & Halley, 1999). Other relevant questions we ask are, *Is the human condition portrayed realistically?*, *Will students relate to the characters?*, *Will this film enable students to see theory in action?* and *Will my presentation of this film facilitate students' learning of the issue(s)?* We also consider the necessity of any violence, sexuality, or explicit language depicted in a film as we assess its appropriateness for our own courses.

It is imperative, of course, that instructors view any film under consideration ahead of time to assess its appropriateness for use in a particular course and with a particular class of students (Adler, 1995; Baker, 1997; Gregg et al., 1995; Proctor, 1990, 1991). Instructors can obtain relevant films from

university or public libraries, their own collections, or local video rental stores (Baker & Lawrence, 1994).

Showing Films

Showing a feature film in class falls under the "fair use" copyright code (Title 17, Section 110(1) of U.S. Code) (Baker & Lawrence, 1994; Proctor, 1990). It is legal to show film for educational purposes in face-to-face educational settings. It is not legal or ethical to show unlawfully obtained films, such as those videotaped directly from television. It is also not appropriate to show film in television-based distance education courses without proper permission. As elsewhere, here at Western Carolina University, it is legal to show lawfully-obtained films in face-to-face courses (D. Paulson [Hunter Library], personal communication, February 20, 2003; G. Young [Office of Legal Counsel], personal communication, February 21, 2003).

Instructors may choose to show clips of various feature films, an entire feature-length film, or two or more films to illustrate course concepts (Bluestone, 2000; Gregg et al., 1995; Tipton & Tiemann, 1993; Tolich, 1992). Film may be shown before introducing relevant concepts and used as a reference point for clarification or shown after introducing concepts to illustrate the issues (Adler, 1995; Bluestone, 2000; Johnson & Iacobucci, 1995). Likewise, film may be used at the beginning of a course or relevant unit to introduce overarching concepts, or at the end of a course or unit to integrate the learned material (Adler, 1995; Anderson, 1992; Johnson & Iacobucci, 1995; Tipton & Tiemann, 1993; Tyler & Reynolds, 1998). Film may be shown continuously, or with the instructor stopping the action at relevant points to initiate class discussion (Bluestone, 2000; Manley, 1994).

Assignments stemming from film most often include at least class discussion of relevant concepts (Baker, 1997; Burton, 1988; Desforges, 1994; Gregg et al., 1995; Manley, 1994; Proctor & Rock, 1995; Toman & Rak, 2000; Tyler & Reynolds, 1998; Valdez & Halley, 1999). Class discussion may be free and open, and/or guided by instructor-provided questions. In addition to whole group discussions, instructors might have students work in small groups, each with its own copy of the film. Each group could be assigned a particular problem to explore, which later it would present to the whole class. This activity might allow students to become more involved with the film than they would watching and discussing the

film solely as a whole class. Students could be creative with their presentations – for example, they could perform a role-play or skit to express their ideas.

Film may also serve as the stimulus for application/analysis papers, oral presentations, journal entries, case studies, or examinations. Through any of these formats, students may analyze the film's depiction of course concepts and/or give examples of scenes that illustrate relevant theory (Boyatzis, 1994; Fleming et al., 1990; Higgins & Dermer, 2001; Johnson & Iacobucci, 1995; Tipton & Tiemann, 1993).

Students might watch a particular film from one assigned character's point of view and apply developmental models to the character's experience (Higgins & Dermer, 2001). They might speculate what comes next for the characters and defend their opinions with course concepts and theories (Proctor, 1991). They may connect course readings with the film (Gregg et al., 1995; Fleming et al., 1990; Proctor & Rock, 1995; Valdez & Halley, 1999).

Instructors should adequately "set the stage" for students' viewing of film. A handout given prior to showing a film can provide students with a description of the general plot and list of main characters (Baker, 1997; Desforges, 1994). Additionally, the instructor might give students specific concepts or scenes to watch for, and/or questions to answer (Baker, 1997; Boyatzis, 1994; Tyler & Reynolds, 1998; Valdez & Halley, 1999). Or, questions might be given out only after viewing the entire film so that students remain open to any thought or idea during the film, without the instructor leading them in a particular direction.

Specific example

We are confident that here at Western Carolina University, there are many creative uses for using feature film to teach in the social sciences. We wish to share one. In COUN 310: Family Systems, students complete a cumulative take-home final exam in which they connect course concepts and a family depicted in feature film.

Specifically, students are given a list of about five films from which to choose. They independently obtain, view, and analyze their chosen film. They are asked to choose any ten concepts from the course that are presented in the film. For each concept, they write a summary of the research obtained from

course readings and class sessions and then present example(s) of scene(s) in the film that illustrate the concept.

This assignment began as an Honors project in a similar course taught by the instructor. After overwhelming success in terms of both the quality of papers and students' own reactions to the assignment, the instructor changed the project from an Honors experience to an optional final exam for all students (i.e., students individually chose either a traditional final exam or this film application/analysis paper). Immediately 95% of the students chose the film-based exam paper and eventually the instructor dropped the option and now requires this film paper as the final exam. Both the overall quality of students' work and students' reactions to the final assignment remain high. Though this final piece of evidence is anecdotal, it is no less compelling, we think, than our survey of the professional literature.

Conclusion

Feature film can be used in higher education social science courses to illustrate course concepts and increase students' understanding of material. Film can provide a common experience for all students, even of otherwise unfamiliar issues. Film can allow students to connect personally to course content. While recognizing some limitations, we advocate the educational application of feature film.

Students learn best when they are excited, a generalization which seems borne out both by professional research and our own experiences. Nearly all of our students come to our classrooms with a long history of watching movies, and we are suggesting that teachers take advantage of this natural enthusiasm, transferring its energy to our academic subjects. For example, our textbook's description of poverty can be naturally supplemented when we focus our students' attention to a film such as *Hidden in America*. Theoretical concepts from the textbook or lecture will thus become embodied in a compelling movie and students will discuss with enthusiasm the ways in which these fictional "case histories" exemplify or modify their growing awareness of crucial topics in the social science curriculum.

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Appendix

Annotated Videography

Avalon (1990)
Levinson, B. (Director) and Johnson, M., & Levinson, B. (Producers)
Tri-Star Pictures
126 Minutes
Rated PG

In 1914, Sam Krichinsky comes to the United States from Russia, joining his four brothers already here. In the 1940s, the large extended Krichinsky family continues close and interdependent ties. Sam continuously tells the grandchildren stories of the old days: “If you stop remembering, you forget.” Into the 1950s though, times and values change. Money and privacy become new goals and the families move from their connected urban apartments to the suburbs.
Actors include: Elizabeth Perkins, Joan Plowright, Kevin Pollack, Aidan Quinn
Issues include: 1940s-1950s history, ethnic minority (Jewish), extended family, gender roles, immigration, late adulthood, marriage, family, developmental stress, intergenerational ties, parent-child issues

Baby Girl Scott (1987)
Korty, J. (Director) and Lombardo, N. (Producer)
ITC Entertainment Group
97 minutes
Not Rated

Neil and Wendy Scott are joyously expecting their first child. When Wendy suddenly goes into premature labor at 6 months of pregnancy, the couple is thrown into crisis. Katy Michelle is born at 1 pound, 4 ounces. Stressors pile up with conflicting doctor reports, family and friends’ reactions, the lack of any response from Katy, medical costs, and couple communication difficulties. Eventually Neil and Wendy must decide: continue the “medical torture” of life support and seemingly endless surgeries for their baby who, if she survives, will nearly inevitably face “multiple devastations,” or end medical interventions. As difficult as the decision is, it is made harder by disagreement with doctors.
Actors include: Mary Beth Hurt, John Lithgow
Issues include: marriage, medical ethics, pregnancy/birth, premature baby, social policy, unpredictable stress

Bastard Out of Carolina (1996)
Huston, A. (Director) and DiGiulio, A. (Producer)
BMG Independent Films
108 minutes
Rated R

Based on the book by Dorothy Allison, this is the story of Ruth Ann, known as Bone. Bone was born in the aftermath of a car accident and her birth certificate was immediately stamped "ILLEGITIMATE." This was the beginning of her difficult childhood with the worst moments being with her abusive stepfather. The best moments are occasions with her loving mother and aunts. There is serious physical and sexual abuse in this film, which is addressed responsibly, yet viewers need to be prepared.
Actors include: Ron Eldard, Glenne Headly, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Lyle Lovett, Jena Malone, Diana Scarwind
Issues include: child abuse, child development, extended family, parenting, poverty, rural living

Boyz N the Hood (1991)
Singleton, J. (Director) and Nicolaides, S. (Producer)
Columbia Pictures
112 minutes
Rated R

In South Central Los Angeles, Tre Stiles is a bright underachiever whose mother senses trouble. She sends him to live with his disciplinarian father. In his teenage years, Tre must choose his own path—college-bound or loyalty to the local gang.
Actors include: Angela Bassett, Ice Cube, Laurence Fishburne, Cuba Gooding Jr.
Issues include: adolescence, coming-of-age, death, ethnic minority (African American), neighborhood violence, parenting, racial issues, single parenting by father, urban living

Chantilly Lace (1993)
Yellen, L. (Director) and Yellen, L., & Ehrlich, R. (Producers)
Columbia Tristar
102 minutes
Rated R

Seven women are reunited over the course of a year for weekend retreats to honor a birthday, a marriage, and a death. They have known each other for their entire lives and during these weekends are able to express to one another their truest emotions. Each has her own individual issues (religion, divorce, sexual orientation, marriage, pregnancy) that are brought to life through laughter, tears, and the threads of their friendship.
Actors include: Lindsay Crouse, Jill Eikenberry, Martha Plimpton, Ally Sheedy, Talia Shire, Helen Slater, Jo Beth Williams
Issues include: death, divorce, illness, lesbian issues, marriage, middle age, pregnancy, religion, unpredictable stress, women's issues

Do the Right Thing (1989)
Lee, S. (Director) and Kilik, J., & Ross, M. (Producers)
Universal
120 minutes
Rated R

Racial tensions and eventually violence flare in Brooklyn, where Italian-Americans own Sal's Pizzeria in a largely African-American community.
Actors include: Danny Aiello, Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, Giancarlo Esposito, Spike Lee, John Turturro
Issues include: community, ethnic minority (African American and Italian-American), neighborhood violence, racial issues, urban living

Fools Rush In (1997)
Tennant, A. (Director) and Draizin, D. (Producer)
Columbia TriStar
109 minutes
Rated PG-13

Isabel Fuentes and Alex Whitman meet, make love, become pregnant, and get married-- in that order. What follows is their adjustment to marriage, pregnancy, and to each other's families-- Alex's uptight, distant European-American parents and Isabel's large, cohesive Mexican-American extended family.
Actors include: Salma Hayek, Matthew Perry
Issues include: courting, extended family, ethnic minority (Mexican American), in-laws, marriage, pregnancy/birth, racial issues (interracial couple)

Get on the Bus (1996)
Lee, S. (Director) and Borden, B., Cannon, R., & Rosenbush, B. (Producers)
Columbia Pictures
121 minutes
Rated R

Twenty men from South Central Los Angeles board a bus bound for Louis Farrakhan's 1995 Million Man March. Together on the long trip to Washington, DC, they discuss and discover numerous issues, including racism, sexism, homophobia, politics, careers, shades of skin color, gangs, parenting, infidelity, adolescence, and father abandonment. It is about the journey, not the destination and as their elder prayed when they departed, perhaps each is indeed a better man.
Actors include: DeAundre Bonds, Thomas Jefferson Byrd, Gabriel Casseus, Ossie Davis, Charles S. Dutton, Hill Harper, Roger Guvenveur Smith
Issues include: ethnic minority (African American), men's issues, racial issues

Girls Town (1996)
McKay, J. (Director) and Zalaznick, L. (Producer)
Evergreen Entertainment
90 minutes
Rated R

"This ain't no 90210," says Patti of the lives she and her friends lead. It's the last few weeks of high school and four urban young women face the challenges of being female and eighteen years old. Numerous issues are experienced and discussed by these friends including adolescent pregnancy and parenthood, suicide, rape, partner violence, crime, and parent-teen conflict. What will happen to them after the summer when some leave for college and some don't?
Actors include: Aunjanue Ellis, Anna Grace, Bruklin Harris, Asia Minor, Lili Taylor
Issues include: adolescence, women's issues, urban living

Hidden in America (1996)
Bell, M. (Director) and Ginsburg, D. R., & Berner, F. (Producers)
Evergreen Entertainment & Showtime Networks, Inc.
96 minutes
Rated PG-13

Seven months after the death of his wife, Bill Jenuson is an unemployed former assembly line worker, struggling to make a decent life for his two children, Willa and Robbie. Seeing medical problems due to poor nutrition, a doctor, the father of Willa's best friend, offers to help, but Bill insists, "no one will ever catch me taking a handout." The struggle and Willa's health worsen and Bill finally, reluctantly, applies for food stamps and visits a food bank. Robbie is angered by what he perceives as his father's lack of manhood. Tragedy occurs, yet in the end there is hope. This film is sponsored by the End Hunger Network, who offer a 10-second advertisement before the closing credits.
Actors include: Beau Bridges, Shelton Dane, Bruce Davidson, Alice Krige, Jena Malone, Frances McDormand
Issues include: child development, community, gender issues, parenting, single fatherhood, poverty, social policy

The Joy Luck Club (1993)
Wang, W. (Director and Producer) and Tan, A. Bass, R., & Marley, P. (Producers)
Oliver Stone
139 minutes
Rated R

A young woman embarks on a trip to China to meet the twin sisters she does not know she has until her mother dies. Through the eyes of her mother's three best friends, the stories of generations of Chinese women are told.
Actors include: Tsai Chin, Kleu Chinh, Lisa Lu, France Nuyln
Issues include: cultural differences, death, ethnic minority (Chinese-American), extended family, parent-adult child issues

King of the Hill (1993)
Soderberg, S. (Director) and Maltby, B., Berger, A., & Yerxa, R. (Producers)
MCA Universal
102 minutes
Rated PG-13

Twelve-year-old Aaron is a bright boy coming-of-age in St. Louis during the Great Depression. His financially troubled family includes his out-of-work father, chronically ill mother, and a younger brother who is sent away to live with relatives. Eventually his father obtains work as a traveling salesman and leaves Aaron to fend for himself and protect the family's belongings despite the rent not being paid.
Actors include: Karen Allen, Jesse Bradford, Lisa Eichhorn, Spalding Gray, Jeroen Krabbe
Issues include: 1930s history, child development, coming-of-age, community, poverty, social policy

Kramer vs. Kramer (1979)
Benton, R. (Director) and Jaffe, S. (Producer)
Columbia Pictures
105 minutes
Rated PG

Ted and Joanna Kramer have been married eight years and have a six-year-old son. Ted is a workaholic and Joanna is a stay-at-home mom. Ted comes home one evening to Joanna and a suitcase--she is leaving. Ted suddenly becomes a full-time father to Billy. A year and a half later, Joanna returns for her son.
Actors include: Dustin Hoffman, Meryl Streep
Issues include: child development, divorce, gender roles, parenting, single fatherhood, unpredictable stress

Mi Vida Loca/My Crazy Life (1993)
Anders, A. (director) and Hassid, D. & Colpaert, C. J. (Producers)
Cineville & HBO Home Video
92 minutes
Rated R

Lives are intertwined in a Los Angeles Echo Park gang. "Sad Girl" and "Mousie," best friends in childhood, become enemies when they both mother children from Ernesto. When Ernesto is killed, the girls come together again. "Whisper," though injured in the same shooting, shares in taking over Ernesto's drug business. "Giggles" is released from a four-year prison term and refuses to be dependent on "Big Sleepy" or anyone. Ernesto's truck becomes the financial goal for both the homeboys (locos) and homegirls in the gang. Sad Girl's sister, a college student and not a gang member, falls in love with a prisoner who is killed shortly after his release. Sad Girl says, "By the time our boys are 21, most of them will be disabled, in prison, or dead." Yet she believes, "By the time my daughter grows up, she'll own this neighborhood and she can be whatever she wants to be."
Actors include: Angel Aviles, Jesse Borrego, Gabriel Gonzales, Nelida Lopez, Seidy Lopez, Marlo Marron, Julian Reyes, Jacob Vargas
Issues include: adolescence, early adulthood, ethnic minority (Latino), gangs, gender issues, neighborhood violence, urban living

Mr. and Mrs. Loving (1996)
Friedenberg, R. (director) and Paulson, D. (Producer)
Hallmark Hall of Fame; Showtime
95 minutes
Not Rated

This is a true story of Richard and Mildred "Bean" Loving who were married in 1960. From a racially integrated community in Virginia, Richard, a white man and Bean, a black woman, fell in love and married. On their wedding night they were arrested and taken to jail for violating the state law against interracial marriage. Banished from Virginia, they unhappily moved to a Washington, D. C. ghetto. In 1963, an American Civil Liberties Union lawyer took their case and finally, in 1967, the United States Supreme Court, in "Loving versus the Commonwealth of Virginia," found laws against interracial marriage unconstitutional.
Actors include: Ruby Dee, Timothy Hutton, Bill Nunn, Corey Parker, Lela Rochon, Isaiah Washington
Issues include: 1960s history, community, marriage, racial issues (interracial marriage), social policy

My Family, Mi Familia (1995)
Nava, G. (director) and Thomas, A. (Producer)
New Line Cinema
126 minutes
Rated R

Paco, the eldest child of Jose and Maria Sanchez, tells the story of his family and each generation's struggle to reach the "American dream." Jose and Maria began their lives together in the 1920s in east Los Angeles, after Jose traveled a long, hard journey from central Mexico. "Dignity and work" characterize the lives of these devoted parents. In the late 1950s, their son Chucho, tragically rebels while the rest of the now large family pulls together. In the 1980s, Jose asks Maria, "what happened to our children; what did we do wrong?" as they reflect on unmarried Paco, angry ex-con Jimmy, and former nun Antonia. Jimmy and El Salvadorian refugee, Isabella, find one another and start the next generation of Sanchez children, although tragedy ensues and the extended family must raise Carlitos until Jimmy returns. As they sit alone in their house in east L.A., Jose and Maria agree that despite the losses and downfalls, "we've had a very good life."
Actors include: Jenny Gago, Constance Marie, Esai Morales, Edward James Olmos, Eduardo Lopez Rojas, Jimmy Smits.
Issues include: ethnic minority (Mexican American), family, history, intergenerational ties, parent-adult child relationships, parenting, spirituality

My Life as a Dog (1985)
Hallstrom, L. (Director) and Bergendahl, W. (Producer)
Skouras Pictures/Paramount Home Entertainment
101 minutes
Rated PG-13

Twelve-year-old Ingemar is growing up in Sweden in the 1950s. After his single mother falls ill, he is sent to live with relatives. Like Laika, the dog who was sent into space and left to die by the Soviet Union, Ingemar feels abandoned. As he moves into puberty, he struggles to understand females and to make sense of his life.
Actors include: Anton Glanzelius, Melinda Kinnaman, Anki Liden
Issues include: abandonment, child development, coming-of-age, puberty, Swedish culture,
Note: This film is in Swedish with English subtitles.

Ordinary People (1980)
Redford, R. (Director) and Schwary, R. L. (Producer)
Paramount Pictures
124 minutes
Rated R

After the accidental death of a teenage son, a family struggles to regain balance. Conrad, the younger son, works through therapy to recover from a suicide attempt and the guilt he feels over his brother's death. Beth, the emotionally distant mother/wife, cannot deal with the unpredicted stress. Calvin tries to mediate between his son and wife but struggles as well.
Actors include: Judd Hirsch, Timothy Hutton, Mary Tyler Moore, Donald Sutherland
Issues include: adolescence, death, family, marriage, parenting, therapy, unpredictable stress

Parenthood (1990)
Howard, R. (Director) and Grazer, B. (Producer)
Imagine Productions/MCA Home Video
124 minutes
Rated PG-13

Gil, Helen, Susan, and Larry are adult siblings working at their roles as parents. Gil and his wife Karen try to balance the demands of marriage, employment, and three young children, one of whom has recently been diagnosed with emotional problems. Susan and her husband Nathan are determined to raise their only child to be gifted in every way. Helen struggles with being a divorced single mother to her adolescent children, one rebellious and one withdrawn. Larry largely ignores and ultimately abandons his young son. This is a comedic presentation of the serious job of parenthood.
Actors include: Steve Martin, Rick Moranis, Jason Robards, Mary Steenburgen, Dianne Wiest
Issues include: adolescence, adult siblings, child development, developmental stress, extended family, marriage, middle age, parenting, single parenthood

See You in the Morning (1988)
Pakula, A. J. (Director) and Pakula, A. J., & Solt, S. (Producers)
Lorimar Films
119 minutes
Rated PG-13

The movie opens with glimpses of Larry's and Beth's first marriages, and then presents the developing relationship between the divorced man and widowed woman. When they marry, there are numerous issues arise relating to their new marriage and the blended family it creates. As stressors pile up, Larry talks of frustration with playing "musical families" while his daughter wishes to simply "play family."
Actors include: Drew Barrymore, Jeff Bridges, Farrah Fawcett, Lukas Haas, Alice Krige, Linda Lavin, Frances Sternhagen
Issues include: blended (step) families, divorce, middle age, remarriage, unpredictable stress

Strangers in Good Company (1991)
Scott, C. (Director) and Wilson, D. (Producer)
Touchstone Pictures
101 minutes
Rated PG

Eight aging women are stranded after their bus breaks down in a remote country setting. They are able to find shelter in an old farmhouse and must sleep on the floor and gather food to survive while one woman tries to fix the bus and then attempts the long walk to find help. During their wait, they share memories and dreams of their lives (dancing, singing, first loves, lesbianism, working, parenting, war, religion, heritage, and traditions). Many complex issues are revealed and supported in the company of these women who have lived on different paths but now share a common bond of friendship.
Actors include: Alice Diablo, Winifred Holden, Cissy Meddings, Mary Meigs
Issues include: late adulthood, women's issues

Taken Away (1993)
Patterson, J. (Director) and Myers, K. (Producer)
MCA Universal Home Video
94 minutes
Not Rated

Stephanie Munroe is a single mother, waitress, and student. She works hard to make ends meet and is striving for a better life for herself and her eight-year-old daughter Abby. One evening, as Stephanie runs off to take a midterm exam, she leaves Abby alone in their run-down apartment. When Abby falls, she calls 911 and the police come and take her into custody, assuming neglect and abuse. Stephanie fights social services to get her daughter back. Her lawyer sums up Stephanie's situation, "Poverty-- that's your problem."
Actors include: Valerie Bertinelli
Issues include: parenting, poverty, single parenthood, social policy, unpredictable stress

Twilight of the Golds (1996)
Marks, R. (Director) and Colichman, P., Davimos, J., & Harris, M. R. (Producers)
BMG Independents/Showtime
95 minutes
Rated PG-13

A family is close yet in both subtle and obvious ways, disapproving of David, who is gay. Phyllis and Walter are proud that their daughter Suzanne is married to Rob, a geneticist. Everyone is thrilled when Suzanne announces her pregnancy. Rob's supervisor suggests a full genetic battery on the fetus and reluctantly, Suzanne agrees. It is revealed that the fetus carries the gene to make him 90% likely to be "like David"—Rob cannot even utter the word "gay." Suzanne struggles with the decision to abort or not. The discovery serves as a catalyst for the family to face David's gay orientation.
Actors include: Jennifer Beals, Faye Dunaway, Brendan Fraser, Garry Marshall
Issues include: abortion, ethics, ethnic minority (Jewish), extended family, parent-adult child relations, pregnancy, sexual orientation

The Wedding Banquet (1993)
Lee, A. (Director) and Hope, T., Schamus, J., & Lee, A. (Producers)
Samuel Goldwyn
108 minutes
Rated R

Wai-Tung is a naturalized American citizen from Taiwan. His parents hound him to get married and don't know that he is gay. With his partner Simon's support, he decides to marry an illegal Chinese immigrant acquaintance to help her establish residency and to please his parents. Wai-Tung's parents come to New York and insist on a large, formal wedding banquet. They stay longer than expected and the pretending takes its toll on Wai-Tung and Simon's relationship. Eventually new family ties are formed.
Actors include: Winston Chao, May Chin, Ah-Leh Gua, Mitchell Lichtenstein, Sihung Lung
Issues include: ethnic minority (Chinese-American), family, family secrets, immigration, sexual orientation, wedding
Note: This movie is in English and Chinese and English subtitles

Welcome to the Dollhouse (1995)
Solonds, T. (Director and Producer)
Sony Pictures
87 minutes
Rated R

Dawn Wiener, an awkward junior-high student, is tormented by her peers, humiliated by her teacher, and misunderstood by her mother, whose favorite child clearly is Dawn's bratty, ballet-dancing younger sister. Dawn falls in love with the new singer in her older brother's garage band, while alienating her only friend and slowly befriending a tormentor. Her early adolescent fantasies don't pan out.
Actors include: Matthew Faber, Daria Kalinina, Eric Mabius, Heather Matarazzo, Brendan Sexton Jr.
Issues include: coming-of-age, developmental stress, early adolescence, parenting, sibling ties

MERLOT: You Get As Good As You Give

Valorie E. Nybo

Abstract
The Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and On-line Teaching (MERLOT) provides a gateway to peer reviewed on-line resources identified as appropriate for use with college and university students. MERLOT has the characteristics valued for professional publication and more. Not only is it peer reviewed, but MERLOT also indexes and links all of the learning objects listed, provides opportunities for college faculty to contribute lesson plans to use with the indexed learning objects, supports comprehensive search capabilities, allows for reviews by other professionals who have used a resource, and supports a community of college and university educators worldwide. MERLOT also automatically creates an electronic portfolio for contributing educators. With over 8,000 objects currently linked and cataloged in MERLOT, it is arguably the most useful on-line collection for college and university faculty.

There are approximately 1,028,000 college and university faculty in this country alone (National Center for Education Statistics). What if each of us could make just one of our favorite and most effective lessons using on-line educational resources available to our peers? Over one million of the best lessons using on-line educational resources from college or university classes would be readily available to college and university faculty worldwide. That is the potential of MERLOT.

Virtually all universities in the U.S. have intranets - local networks on which their faculty can share resources in a closed gated community protected from hackers and unavailable to the outside world, including faculty from other campuses. MERLO provides the tool to facilitate those resources being available in an open environment where all of us have access to them.

MERLOT also provides a nationwide directory of faculty in your field readily available whenever needed. You can contact members personally about his or her contribution. Learn why and how it was developed, how it was originally used. What were the learning outcomes for students? You could identify his or her particular expertise, consult or request a consult.

MERLOT also has “how to” resources about Assessment and Evaluation, Instructional Material Design, Learner Support, Policies, Scholarship in Teaching and Learning, Selecting Technology, Best Practices in Teaching, and Websites available on-line, most at no cost, from one location.

What is MERLOT?

The Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and On-line Teaching (MERLOT) is an international cooperative for high quality on-line resources to improve learning and teaching within higher education. The cooperative connects systems, consortiums, and institutions of higher education, professional organizations of academic disciplines, and individual members to form a *community* of people who strive to enrich the teaching and learning experience.

The resources in MERLOT include:

* links to thousands of learning materials
* sample assignments, which show how the materials could be used in the classroom
* evaluations of the learning materials by other individual users and panels of faculty
* links to people with common interests in a discipline and in teaching and learning

"MERLOT is a *free* and *open* resource. Information hosted in MERLOT is free to use for educational, non-commercial purposes, and materials linked through MERLOT have a range of agreements from public domain to commercial. The links to the learning are in MERLOT to help users find these web sites." (MERLOT Tasting Room, paragraph 1-3)

In MERLOT's first five years it has grown to include over 8,000 learning objects contributed by faculty world - wide. The resources can be used to enhance traditional classroom activities in conjunction with web-enhanced course software, or as a component of a completely on-line class. MERLOT is arguably the best available tool to facilitate teaching and learning with technology in higher education today and probably for the foreseeable future.

The Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and On-line Teaching, or MERLOT, is an index, a database of hyperlinks to learning objects deemed to be useful for teaching in higher education. What are these "learning objects?" The Learning Technology Standards Committee of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) defines a learning object as "any entity, digital or nondigital, that may be used for learning, education, or training" (2001, Section 1.1). David Wiley of Utah State University defines a learning object as "any digital resource that can be reused to support learning" (2000, p. 7). Regardless of which definition you accept, learning objects listed on MERLOT include simulations,

animations, tutorials, drill and practice activities, lectures, quizzes, tests, collections, case studies and other learning materials.

Learning objects submitted to MERLOT are reviewed by a peer review committee and rated on a five-point scale. The ratings are listed along with the learning object. It is possible, however, to limit your searches only to reviewed objects. The limited number of reviewers leaves many objects as yet unreviewed and the process of recruiting reviewers (http://taste.merlot.org/projects/peer_review/) is ongoing.

Members of MERLOT have the option of commenting on learning objects. This is particularly helpful when a learning object is still unrated. And members are encouraged to attach lesson plans they have developed and used with available learning objects.

While MERLOT does not maintain the computers that store the learning objects, it does make an effort to maintain up-to-date links, unlike other on-line search engines. Should users find broken links they may contact MERLOT that will make every effort to determine the current link and has been known to correct information within hours.

Who is MERLOT?

MERLOT currently has twenty - three Institutional Partners who collaborate with one another to make MERLOT work. Institutional Partners pay $25,000 per year and must commit to supporting six to eight faculty to participate on MERLOT's Editorial Boards. The MERLOT Editorial Boards provide the peer reviews of learning objects submitted in their respective academic communities. The University of North Carolina system is one of the original four Institutional Partners and supports the Teacher Education community. In addition to this formal administrative structure, MERLOT is 9,000 registered faculty and student members who contribute to and/or use its resources.

A Brief History of MERLOT

In 1997 California State University Center for Distributed Learning (CSU-CDL) found itself with a collection of learning objects resident on a computer that was inaccessible to anyone. They initially created MERLOT to make those objects readily available to any educator who could use them. In 1998,

the CSU-CDL was selected by the State Higher Education Executives Organization/American Productivity and Quality Center as one of the six best practices centers in North America. Resulting visits to the CSU-CDL by representatives from other university systems led to a consortium of four institutions: the University of Georgia System, Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education, the University of North Carolina System and California State University System. In 1999, the consortium formalized a peer review process and the ability to add student assignments to the MERLOT database.

In 2000, twelve faculty from each of the four university systems and representing the disciplines of Biology, Physics, Business and Teacher Education developed evaluation standards and a peer review process for reviewing learning objects submitted to MERLOT. By July of 2000, twenty-three university systems and institutions had become Institutional Partners. Each institution contributed additional funds and faculty time. Disciplines in MERLOT expanded to include Chemistry, Engineering, Health Sciences, History, Information Technology, Mathematics, Music, Physics, Psychology, and World Languages (A Brief and Simplified History of MERLOT, 2002).

Alliance Organizations

MERLOT has begun to collaborate with professional organizations that have already begun a database of on-line resources in their discipline. In the future users may be able to search both MERLOT and other databases at the same time. Organizations currently working with MERLOT include:

SMETE – Science, Mathematics, Engineering and Technology Education
NEEDS – A Digital Library for Engineering Education
Merit Network, Inc. and Michigan Teacher Network
HEAL – Health Education Assets Library
The Eisenhower National Clearing house for Science and Mathematics
Project Kaleidoscope
Education.au limited
American Association for Physics Teachers
National University of Rwanda

(MERLOT, p. 7).

What is available on MERLOT and how do I get there?

Your first stop at MERLOT ought to be the Tasting Room. Here you will find a lot of basic information about MERLOT. You will find more information about MERLOT's history. There is a link to the PowerPoint presentations made at the 2002 MERLOT International Conference.

It is not necessary to become a member of MERLOT in order to use it, but membership is available at no cost and does have its privileges. Only members may submit websites for listing in MERLOT. Only members may attach comments to objects or submit assignments for learning objects they have used. Only members can take advantage of MERLOT's portfolio service to track their on-line contributions.

On the MERLOT home page notice the tabbed menu near the top. It says "MERLOT Home." In the upper left hand corner is a search box. You can search the entire database from here or you can narrow your search down with the use of "communities." On the tabbed menu "Communities," clicking on the tab brings you to the list of academic communities organized by disciplines. The menu bar now says "MERLOT Community Websites." Here you find a list of the fourteen disciplines currently included in MERLOT. Click on any one and it takes you to a list of sub-disciplines. As an example, click on "Teacher Education" and it brings you to a list that includes:

Classroom Management
Diversity and Multicultural Ed
Educational Foundations
Educational Psychology
Educational Research
Instructional Technology
Special Education
Student Assessment
Teaching Methods

The search box is still in the upper right hand corner of the page, but at this point it will search only in the Teacher Education section of MERLOT. (Unlike Google, Yahoo and numerous other internet search sites MERLOT does not require that you wade through a list of sometimes millions of unrelated sites found to meet your search criteria.) Included in the fourteen disciplines are over 500 sub-disciplines. As you progress through this hierarchy, the breadth of the search narrows accordingly. You can narrow it even further in the advanced search function which allows you to specify the type of material you are seeking, the primary audience, technical format, whether there is a cost for use and other criteria for your search.

If you would like to view some award winning sites, check out MERLOT's Awards Program for Exemplary On-line Learning Resources.

My discipline is not listed in MERLOT. What's in it for me?

Take a look at MERLOT-TWO (Teaching Well On-line.) It is an on-line searchable database that includes tools faculty can use to develop quality on-line resources (ABOUT MERLOT-Teaching Well On-line, 2001). For example:

1. Are you having to put your class on-line? Here you can find sample policies regarding on-line classes, computer use, accessibility issues and promotion and tenure from other universities and government organizations.
2. Want some information about instructional design? Find help with using Flash, multimedia portfolio design, use of learning objects, preparing a class syllabus, teaching well on-line, web based instruction, on-line design and many others.
3. Need more information on cooperative learning, lecture and presentation, or problem-based learning? Find it on Best Practices.
4. Would you like to explore alternative assessment methods including standards-based assessment, conducting student assessments of classroom experiences, evaluation of distance learning, or web based assessment? Check out the Assessment and Evaluation section of MERLOT TWO.

MERLOT at WCU

In December of 2001, Debra Randleman of the Coulter Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning at WCU emailed an invitation to all faculty to attend MERLOT training at the *Teaching and Learning Collaborative* in Greensboro, NC. Six Western faculty accepted. We were impressed enough to return to Western, establish ourselves as a Task Force, and begin telling other faculty about MERLOT. With help and guidance from Dr. Fred Hinson and Dr. Alan Altany, we succeeded in establishing the MERLOT Committee under the auspices of the Coulter Faculty Center.

- We have conducted workshops to familiarize faculty with MERLOT, and will continue to do so.

- We are available to discuss and demonstrate MERLOT with your department's faculty.
- We have created a MERLOT at Western website. You can access that website at http://facctr.wcu.edu/merlot/wcumerlot.html.
- Dr. Tom Franke has agreed to work with us to establish computer space for learning objects created by Western faculty and indexed by MERLOT that would be accessible to those off campus.
- We have begun a dialogue about the role of digital scholarship in the tenure, promotion and review process at Western Carolina University.

MERLOT, the Place to Be

While their review process can not keep up with demand, as Jeffrey R. Young stated in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, "MERLOT is perhaps the most ambitious attempt to create a standard format for reviewing on-line-course components." Young (2002) goes on to say, "The peer-review process is modeled after that of peer review for academic journals." In these efforts MERLOT is working to provide college and university professors with a method to obtain credit for digital scholarship in their respective tenure and promotion processes. Though on-line learning has developed rapidly over the last ten years, many of us are just beginning to examine and incorporate it into our classrooms. MERLOT is working to provide easy access to learning objects suitable for our classrooms and to provide information and tools that will allow maximizing student learning through the use of those tools. The potential for incorporating on-line learning and the effective use of appropriate learning objects is clearly part of the future of pedagogy; and, in that respect, MERLOT is the place to be.

If you wish to contact a committee member about MERLOT, email us.

Chairperson, Valorie Nybo, nybo@wcu.edu
Secretary, Irene Mueller, imueller@wcu.edu

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The Value of Learning Communities in the Economics Classroom

James H. Ullmer and April L. Lewandowski

Abstract

Learning communities represent a novel way to adapt interdisciplinary studies to higher education, to improve student learning, and to positively affect retention rates. This paper reports the findings of a learning community study at Western Carolina University where student attitudes appeared to have been positively influenced by this new paradigm. Attitudes of learning community students were measured against their non-learning community counterparts. The findings of this research suggest that by using an Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound (ELOB) model—a paradigm, that while stressing a theme, also involves fieldwork and community service—learning communities can be an effective way of improving student attitudes toward learning, especially attitudes concerning the importance of excellence in writing and group study as a significant component of success in the field of economics. In addition, this study lays the groundwork for establishing a "best practice" for teaching in learning communities, especially as it applies to the discipline of economics.

In recent years, colleges and universities have begun to institute "learning communities" in an effort to increase retention; to foster coherence in the academic, social, and residential arenas; and to inspire a rigorous pursuit of knowledge. Lenning and Ebbers (1999) have noted that "the two primary challenges in higher education today are to meet the public's demand for maximizing students' learning and being accountable for what students learn" (p. 15). The emergence of learning communities is one attempt to meet these twin challenges.

Several educators have claimed that such environments positively affect student success in regards to achievement, learning, persistence, and retention (Astin, 1993; Kuh, Schuh, & Whitt, 1999; Matthews & Smith, 1996; Tinto, 1987). In addition to these researchers, Parker J. Palmer (2000) has advocated the concept of connection in the academy when he notes that "it is connectedness that allows us [teachers] to best pursue our mission, the mission of knowing, teaching, and learning" (p. 1). Is connectedness, as Palmer has suggested—especially as it pertains to learning communities—a viable framework for structuring the college experience? If connectedness allows university professors to best pursue our mission, then what happens when we strive to make connections among disciplines, among faculty and students, and among students and their community?

Moreover, if connectedness allows university professors to best pursue their mission, then what happens when we strive to make connections between economics and English composition? Our research suggests that learning communities can revolutionize the college classroom and, specifically, the economics and English composition classrooms in the following ways: colleagues share ideas and teaching practices;

students learn the importance of writing in the research process and in the discipline of economics; and fieldwork serves as the primary source of research, service, and learning.

Learning Communities at Western Carolina University

In the academic year 1998-1999, Western Carolina University piloted its own learning community program in an effort to increase retention rates and promote interdisciplinary education. During its four years of existence, from academic year 1998-1999 through academic year 2001-2002—when learning communities became mandatory for all incoming freshmen—the program grew from eight learning communities to fifty-four such groups. At the time of this writing, the learning community program at WCU is in a moratorium. The Liberal Studies Oversight Committee is presently considering whether or not to continue the program and if so in what form.[1] Fred Hinson, Associate Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, thought that although there was not a big increase in grade point average (GPA) from learning community participation, learning communities were beneficial because learning community students were believed to be more social and more connected (Hinson, Personal communication, September 12, 2002).

The learning community paradigm can be adapted to several designs. For example, the paradigm may be focused around freshman interest groups (FIG), general education, gateway courses, developmental and basic studies; and honors programs (Matthews & Smith, 1996, pp. 1-3). Western Carolina University adopted a learning community design that linked courses. The courses that were linked were USI 130, a one-credit class designed to help incoming freshmen acclimate to college life; a three-credit course in English composition; and another academic course—in our case, an introductory survey course, Economics 104. There were two basic variations of the learning community model employed at Western Carolina University. One arrangement was focused around a theme—similar to the FIG model—and the other design had no such theme. It is our contention that those learning communities that are theme-based not only increase intellectual interaction between faculty and students, and thereby enhance learning, but also may, if properly structured, foster connections between the university and the local community.[2]

Regardless of its structure, theme or non-theme related, each learning community consisted of eighteen to twenty students who were housed in the same dormitory, perhaps even the same hall, and who shared two to three academic classes. In the theme-based paradigm, a team of professors and Student Affairs representatives selected a theme for academic study as well as for extra-curricular activities. Meetings were held before each semester to ensure that each learning community teaching team had the time and resources to plan an effective semester. Furthermore, each learning community had access to

funds that the faculty team could spend at their discretion; for instance, funds could be used for the travel that was necessary for extra-curricular activities that complemented the theme. These students also benefited from a peer mentor, an upperclass student assigned to a particular learning community to act as a liaison between faculty and students, as well as a person to guide and counsel students through their transition period from a high school environment to a university milieu.

While the learning community paradigm was a primary component of the freshman curriculum at Western Carolina University, statistics have revealed that students in learning communities did not show significant differences in GPA, or retention rates when compared with their non-learning community counterparts. However, if one examines particular learning communities, specifically those that involve a theme, the evidence, at least in our experience, reveals a different story. For example, all twenty students in our theme-based learning community returned for the spring semester; this is a highly unusual statistic for a university that, as Chancellor Bardo noted, historically loses one-third of its freshmen every winter (Bardo, 2000, p.1). Furthermore, all twenty students passed Composition 101, Economics 104, and USI 130 with a minimum grade of "C." To provide an explanation for these apparent successes, a description of our particular learning community involvement may offer some insight.

The Southern Appalachian Experience: Finding A Sense of Value

During the spring of 2000 each learning community was asked to select a theme that would guide course content, class discussion, and social activities for the upcoming fall semester. The Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound model (ELOB) is a curriculum model used in elementary and high schools that employs interdisciplinary learning, combined classes and, moreover, has elements of fieldwork and community service. We chose to use a variation of that paradigm on the university level. Leah Rugen & Scott Hartl (1994) have presented the idea of a learning expedition. In their article "What are we Learning about Learning Expeditions?" they suggest that at the "organizing center of the expedition is an intriguing and open-minded theme or topic, which defines the territory and also generates questions" (p. 20). Such a theme feeds student curiosity and leads students to answers that can only be found outside the classroom (p. 20). In addition to a theme, learning expeditions are marked by extensive research, such as fieldwork and interviews, and experiences that require students to make use of community resources, people, and places. These activities are integral components of the ELOB model because they immerse students in a topic while leading them to make "meaningful contributions" to the community and they bring the "outside world to the classroom" (p. 20).

The ELOB paradigm is the basic approach that we employed in our learning community. We established the theme "The Southern Appalachian Experience: Finding A Sense of Value." In economics, the question morphed into "How does one determine the value of something when its monetary worth is not decided in a market?" Based on the ELOB model, we sculpted a theme that would motivate our students to inquiry, and during the semester our students were taught the basic economic principles and techniques used to value public goods.

In implementing our design, we scheduled our classes back-to-back, with Composition 101 from 8:00 to 9:15 and Economics 104 from 9:30 to 10:45. During the first portion of the semester, we allocated time in our respective classes for laying the foundation of our proposed study, while outside of class we scheduled group activities that coalesced around our theme. Essentially, we provided experiences for students that would help them to better understand the unique value of this particular locality—the Southern Appalachian region. For instance, we took our students whitewater rafting on the Nantahala River and we hiked a local mountain trail. Also, the class visited the school's Mountain Heritage Museum to learn more about the unique culture of Southern Appalachia.

While serving a social function, these activities also fulfilled an academic purpose; not only did these ventures inform students about our theme, but they also helped break the traditional stereotypes about the unapproachable college professor. It seemed to us that because of these undertakings and our participation in them, learning community students were more apt to respond to class discussions and felt more comfortable in the classroom setting than traditional first semester undergraduates. Also, they engaged more actively in academic group study than is normally the case for new freshmen. During the second half of the semester, we immersed our students in our theme by setting a specific project before them that would combine both writing and economic skills.

The Greenway Project

A central element in economics is the determination of value. In the market for private goods and services, consumers “reveal their preferences” through the prices they pay. Public goods, such as clean air, clean water, a lighthouse, and a greenway, certainly have worth, but they are not produced and exchanged in a market. Consequently, the determination of their benefits creates a challenge to economists, as well as a concomitant problem for those policy-makers who are trying to decide the proper allocation of resources for the production of these goods.

Economists have developed methods for estimating the value of these important resources. One such technique used extensively in the field of environmental economics is the contingent valuation method.[3] This technique uses a survey to estimate the value of public goods. The heart of the questionnaire contains the demand questions in which respondents are asked to "state their preferences" for the good being valued in a hypothetical market. It is this approach that students used to calculate the value of the proposed Jackson County Greenway.

The learning community students developed and refined the interview instrument with our guidance and the invaluable assistance of Professor Susan Kask. The final version of the document contained three distinct sections. The first part of the survey contained the warm-up questions, which were designed to identify respondents' outdoor activities and their potential interest in using the greenway. The second segment of the questionnaire, the portion containing the demand questions, was aimed at estimating people's "willingness-to-pay," that is, their demand for this amenity. The final portion of the document contained the demographic questions. The survey instrument is illustrated in Appendix A.

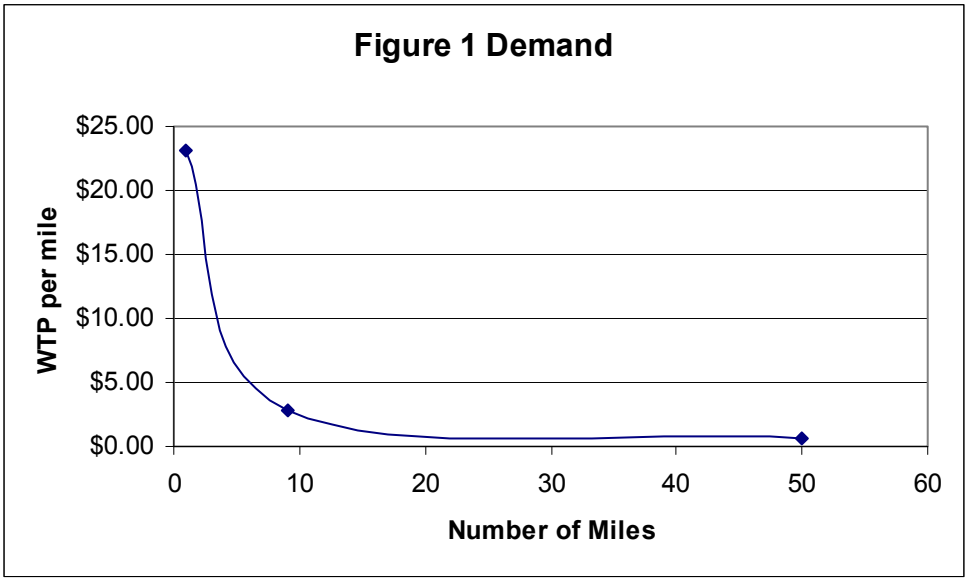
The actual interviews were conducted at Wal-Mart (the proverbial town square of Cullowhee/Sylva) between 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. on a weekday afternoon. Students asked for and received permission from Wal-Mart management before the actual interviews were conducted. Each undergraduate student interviewed approximately ten people during this period of time. Out of the 413 individuals who were approached for an interview, 207 people completed the survey for a response rate of roughly fifty percent.

Once the work in the field was completed, the primary data was entered on a spreadsheet and examined. The crucial analysis involved the willingness-to-pay questions in the demand section of the study. Two problems are common when estimating value using the contingent valuation method. Inconsistent answers can occur because of both the hypothetical nature of the questions and the inexperience of respondents in trying to value a public good. For example, respondents may indicate that they are not willing to pay either $10 or $25 in question 8a or 8b, and then reply that they are willing to donate $100 in 8c. There were ten interviews that contained inconsistent responses and therefore these observations were excluded from the analysis.

The second difficulty concerns "protest zeros" (Mitchell & Carson, 1989, pp. 166-167, 268). In this case, people give a response of zero in 8c, not because they don't value the proposed greenway, but rather because they are protesting concerns about other issues such as high taxes or dissatisfaction with local government. These answers result in too low an approximation of the willingness-to-pay and consequently

must be dropped from the analysis. Twenty-two of these surveys were identified, which left us with a working data set of 175 observations.

The completed surveys were almost equally divided in number between questionnaires that were estimating the willingness-to-pay for greenway distances of one, nine, and fifty miles. These distances (quantities) were chosen because they represent the proposed lengths of the first segment of the greenway, the first entire link of the project, and the entire greenway, respectively. The willingness-to-pay was $23.08 for one mile, $25.59 for nine miles, and $29.59 for fifty miles. The mean willingness-to-pay per mile for each of the three distances is depicted in Figure 1.



While students worked collaboratively to draft the questionnaire, they worked individually to compile their own reports on the project. The fieldwork provided all the necessary empirical information to make a thorough analysis of the value of the proposed greenway in Jackson County. Furthermore, this project served a myriad of purposes. In the English composition classroom, it showed the value of revision. Most students were not ready to hand in the first draft and wanted time to play with words and modify organization in order to have a clear and comprehensible paper. In Economics 104, the undertaking applied key economic principles and fostered collaborative learning. Also, the project connected students to their community by introducing them to residents in the area. Through fieldwork, students learned about the geographic locale and the environmental aesthetics of the Southern Appalachians, and their research provided valuable data that was given to both the Mayor of Sylva and Jackson County Greenway Network, Inc. All in all, the learning expedition model provided a framework for a substantive and meaningful

experience, one which allowed us to fulfill our mission as teachers and one that helped our students discover a sense of connectedness to their new environment.

Student Attitude Analysis

At the end of the semester, a study was undertaken to ascertain whether student attitudes toward economics, English, and education in general differed between learning community participants and non-learning community participants. One sample consisted of students who were enrolled in Professor Ullmer's conventional survey course in economics; the other sample was made up of students who were taught the survey course as part of the learning community. Thirteen non-learning community students and sixteen learning community respondents completed the interview instruments. All students were first semester freshmen at Western Carolina University.

The essential part of the interview instrument was a series of opinion questions that asked students to assess their attitudes on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix B. The raw data generated from each of the questions in the survey is presented in Appendix C. The descriptive statistics are presented below in Table 1 and indicate, through the lower mean scores recorded on each question by learning community students, that learning community participants had a more favorable opinion than their non-learning community counterparts on each measured criterion.

Table 1

Questions	NLC No. of Observations	NLC Mean	NLC Variance	LC No. of Observations	LC Mean	LC Variance
Question 4	13	2.0000	.5000	16	1.8750	.7833
Question 5	13	2.0000	.5000	16	1.7500	.6000
Question 6	13	2.3077	.7308	16	2.1875	.9625
Question 7	13	3.6923	1.2308	16	3.3125	1.8292
Question 8	13	3.3077	.7308	16	2.3125	.4958
Question 9	13	2.1538	.8077	16	1.5625	.7958

A chi-square test was employed to determine whether or not student attitudes were independent of participation in the learning community. The hypotheses for the test of independence were the following:

H_O: Student attitudes are independent of learning community participation
H_a: Student attitudes are not independent of learning community participation

As part of the trial, contingency tables were developed to summarize both the observed and expected frequencies for the two samples on each of the questions in the survey. The tables are displayed in Appendix D. The results of the chi-square test for independence are illustrated below in Table 2.

Table 2

Questions	df	X^2	p-value
Question 4	2	2.636045	.267664
Question 5	2	1.381361	.501235
Question 6	2	1.727187	.421644
Question 7	3	2.267890	.518700
Question 8	1	5.087557	.024098
Question 9	2	4.451577	.102982

Although attitudes among learning community students were consistently more favorable than their non-learning community counterparts, the only question that demonstrated statistical significance at the .05 level of risk was question eight, which dealt with the ability to write well as being important for success in the economics course. Other economic professors have often noted that their students are seldom able to articulate economic principles either orally in class or in written responses on exams or papers. Question nine, concerning the importance of group study to success in the survey course, was almost significant at the .10 level of risk, showing a p-value of approximately .102. This result is not surprising in that these attitudes are most closely related to the central element of the learning community—the research project. The relationship between writing and group effort and success in economics was ostensibly more tangible to students in these two instances.

A second test, a t-test on the difference between sample means, was then conducted. The use of this parametric test involves the assumption of normality, which may or may not be true in this case. However, the test appears fairly robust in that "[s]o long as the sample size is even moderate for each group, quite severe departures from normality seem to make little difference in the conclusions reached" (Hays, 1981, p. 287).

People tend to be "cognitive conservatives" in that they resist changing attitudes that conflict with existing beliefs (Zimbardo & Lippe, 1991, p. 205). Consequently, learning community members may be expected to exhibit more variation in attitude because of the new pedagogy being used. That is, some may adapt to the new paradigm, while others, who are "cognitive conservatives," may not. The computed variances between the two samples seem to bear this out. In questions four through seven learning community students exhibited a higher variance, though in questions eight and nine the non-learning community students had a higher variance. With that in mind, a t-test assuming unequal variances was used. Furthermore, a one-tailed test was conducted because it was assumed that the learning community students would have more favorable attitudes.

The following hypotheses were tested:

H_O: $\mu_1 - \mu_2 \geq 0$
H_a: $\mu_1 - \mu_2 < 0$

where: μ_1 = non-learning community mean.
μ_2 = learning community mean.

The critical t for this one-tail test at a level of risk of .05 is 1.7033. The results are given below in Table 3.Table 3

Question	NLC Mean	NLC Variance	LC Mean	LC Variance	t-Stat	p-value
Question 4	2.0000	.5000	1.8750	.7833	.4228	.3379
Question 5	2.0000	.5000	1.7500	.6000	.9071	.1862
Question 6	2.3077	.7308	2.1875	.9625	.3523	.3637
Question 7	3.6923	1.2308	3.3125	1.8292	.8308	.2067
Question 8	3.3077	.7308	2.3125	.4958	3.3701	.0013
Question 9	2.1538	.8077	1.5625	.7958	1.7680	.0444

The t-tests yielded results that seemed to reinforce the chi-square tests for independence. For example, in questions eight and nine, where student attitudes seemed most dependent on participation in the learning community, statistically significant differences in opinions between the two groups were observed. Specifically, students in the learning community had a more positive attitude than their counterparts concerning the relationship between good writing and success in economics, as well as the importance of working together as a group. The p-value for questions eight and nine, the only questions that displayed statistical significance at an alpha of .05, were .001 and .044, respectively.

Conclusion

In *Best Practice: New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*, Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde (1998) have borrowed the concept of "best practice," as it is meant in the medical and law professions, and applied it to an educational setting. Ultimately, best practice is "a shorthand emblem of serious, thoughtful, informed, responsible, state-of-the-art teaching" (Zemelman, Daniels & Hyde, 1998, p. viii). The writers acknowledge that identifying the best practice in the field of education is not as clear-cut as it is in professions such as law or medicine because quantifying results is more nebulous. However, it is still important that the profession should, to the extent possible, identify successful methods of teaching.

The learning community paradigm as described above—an adaptation of the ELOB model—may be the best practice for reaching freshmen undergraduate students. The interdisciplinary method featured a theme around which extracurricular as well as academic activities revolved and also involved students in

fieldwork and community outreach. Moreover, this theme highlighted a central issue concerning economics—the determination of value. A sophisticated technique was employed to value a proposed greenway for Jackson County. Results from the study were shared with the appropriate public officials, which revealed to students the importance of economic theory in the formulation of public policy. Furthermore, through the process of writing and revising their papers, students came to understand—as evidenced in the student attitude analysis—the importance of good writing skills as a necessary component of being an effective economist.

Feedback from pupils was positive and was reinforced by the return of all members of our learning community for the spring semester. This outcome was especially surprising in the face of retention rates of approximately 67 percent when all first semester freshmen at Western Carolina University are considered. The descriptive statistics revealed that learning community undergraduates had more favorable attitudes than their counterparts regarding English composition, economics, and education in general. Two statistical analyses, a chi-square test and a t-test, were employed to gauge whether empirical evidence indicated that the learning community was influential in a statistically significant way to this positive outcome. While learning community participation did not appear statistically significant in all of the observed student attitudes, the inferential statistics reveal that those aspects of the project that required writing skills and group work were statistically significant factors in determining more positive student attitudes.

Endnotes

[1] When the new Liberal Studies Program at Western Carolina University made learning community participation mandatory, some incoming freshmen, as well as some faculty members, balked at participating in the learning community program. Consequently, wheb the program is brought back in the upcoming Fall, 2003, semester, participation will be voluntary (F. Hinson, personal communication, September 12, 2002).

[2] Vincent Tinto and Anne Goodsell (1993) conducted both a qualitative and quantitative study of the effectiveness and outcomes of freshmen interest groups at the University of Washington. The study involved 442 FIG students and 1818 students in a control group.

[3] For a detailed discussion of the contingent valuation method, refer to *Using Surveys to Value Public Goods: The Contingent Valuation Method* (Mitchell & Carson, 1989).

[4] Cells with a value of zero were not used in calculating the chi-square statistics for the various questions. Also, the test will be weak if the E_{ij} are less than one. Conover's suggestion of combining categories where the E_{ij} were less than one was followed (Conover, 1972, p.152). The actual values used for the chi-square calculations are shown in the respective contingency tables for observed and expected values.

Appendix A

Jackson County Greenway
Western Carolina University
Economics 104

Thank you for participating in our survey. This survey is designed to gather information on what you think about a potential greenway in Jackson County. Greenways are corridors of protected open space managed for conservation and recreational purposes. They are open to the general public and may also serve as modes of transportation connecting commercial, educational, recreational, and employment centers.

PART I: Introduction.
In this section, we would like to ask you about your recreational activities and interests in the outdoors. Second, we want to ask you about your interest in using the greenway as an alternative route to get to work or school.

1) What activities do you enjoy doing outdoors? (Circle all that apply)
   a) Walking/Jogging/Hiking (on foot)
   b) Roller-blading/Bike Riding/Skate Boarding (on wheels)
   c) Swimming/Rafting/Kayaking (in the water)
   d) Hunting/Fishing/Trapping (sportsmanship)
   e) Reading Books/Magazines/Relaxing (non-interactive)
   f) Gardening/Yard-work (in your yard)
   g) Not interested at all in the outdoors

2) How much time do you spend participating in outdoor activities each week?

   a) 1-3 hours
   b) 4-6 hours
   c) 7-10 hours
   d) more than 10 hours
   e) none

3) Would you use a greenway as a place for recreational opportunities?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Don't know

4) How many times a week would you use the greenway for recreational purposes?
   a) 1-2 times per week
   b) 3-5 times per week
   c) more than 5 times per week
   d) once or twice per month
   e) a few times per year
   f) none

5) If the greenway included a biking or walking path would you be willing to use the greenway as an alternative mode of transportation?
   a) Yes
   b) No (go to question 7)
   c) Not sure

6) How many times a week would you be willing to use the greenway as an alternative mode of transportation?
   a) 1-3 days a week
   b) 3-5 days a week

c) 5-7 days a week
d) Don't know

7) What portion of the greenway are you most likely to use for either recreational purposes or travel?
   a) Dillsboro to Webster
   b) Western Carolina University to Sylva
   c) Sylva to Dillsboro
   d) Western Carolina University to Forest Hills
   e) Don't know

PART II: Demand.
In this section, we want to better understand your demand for a potential greenway in Jackson County, **whether or not** you actually plan to use the greenway. ***All questions are hypothetical, and we are not collecting money.**

8) Greenways are corridors of protected open space managed for conservation and recreational purposes. They are open to the general public and also serve as modes of transportation connecting commercial, educational, recreational, and employment centers. At a recent town meeting, the idea of developing a greenway for Jackson County received overwhelming and unanimous support from those in attendance to proceed with the beginnings of a greenway.

   The *Jackson County Greenway Network, Inc.*, a non-profit organization, is developing a greenway linking Dillsboro, Webster, Sylva, WCU, and Forest hills. The project will be funded through grants from the transportation department and donations from the general public. In the questions below we ask you to tell us how much you are willing to support a greenway in Jackson County. The questions refer to a *hypothetical* one-time payment. Please consider your current income and expenses when you answer these questions, and please answer as if you were actually going to pay the amounts given.

a) Would you be willing to make a one-time donation **this year** of $10.00 to the *Jackson County Greenway Network, Inc.* to support **1 mile** of the greenway project?

a) Yes
b) No

b) Would you be willing to make a one-time donation **this year** of $25.00 to the *Jackson County Greenway Network, Inc.* to support **1 mile** of the greenway project?

a) Yes
b) No

c) What is the largest one-time donation you are willing to make this year for **1 mile** of the greenway project? $_____this year

d) **If you answered zero for question c above, please tell us why? (circle one)**

a) The greenway is not beneficial to me.
b) The greenway is important to me, but at this time I don't have the funds to donate.
c) The greenway is important, but I do not support the current local government.
d) The greenway is important, but I am not willing to pay anything for it.
e) The greenway is important, but I don't make donations to anything.
f) Other reason_____

PART III: Demographics.
Finally, we want to ask you some questions about yourself in order to compare your responses with other respondents. This helps us understand and potentially predict respondent values better. Your responses are **completely anonymous** and therefore can never be linked to your name.

9) What is your age? (circle one)
a) 18 – 21
b) 21 – 35
c) 36 – 50
d) 51 – 65
e) over 65

10) What is your gender? (circle one)
a) Male
b) Female

11) a) What is your marital status? (circle one)
a) Single
b) Married

b) Number of Children in Household _____

12) What is your state of residence? _____
If North Carolina resident, what is your county of residence? _____

13) What is the highest level of education that you have completed? (circle one)

a) No formal education
b) Some grade school
c) Completed grade school
d) Some high school
e) Completed high school
f) Some college
g) Completed college
h) Some graduate work
i) A graduate degree
(specify degree: MA, PhD, etc.)_____

14) What is your approximate household income from all sources, before taxes, in 1999? (circle one)
a) Less than $10,000
b) $10,000 to $19,999
c) $20,000 to $29,999
d) $30,000 to $39,999
e) $40,000 to $49,999
f) $50,000 to $59,999
g) $60,000 to $69,999
h) $70,000 or more

15) What is your racial origin?
a) Caucasian
b) African American
c) Hispanic American
d) Native American
e) Asian American
f) Other

Thank you for your participation! ! !

Appendix B

Western Carolina University
Department of Economics, Finance, and International Business
Student Opinion Survey

Student Profile (circle one)

1.	Gender	Male		Female		
2.	Is this class required for your degree?	Yes		No		
3.	Expected grade in this course	A	B	C	D	F

Opinion Questions (circle one)

		Strongly Agree				**Strongly Disagree**
4.	The subject matter covered in Economics is interesting and relevant to my life.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	The subject mattered covered in Economics is relevant to solving real-world issues.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	I would take another course in Economics.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I would consider in majoring in Economics.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	The ability to write well helped me in my Economics course.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Studying with classmates was beneficial to me in this course.	1	2	3	4	5

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10. Write freely about your overall impressions of Economics as a discipline or a profession based on your experience in this course. (Write on back if necessary.)

Appendix C

Student Attitude Survey Results

Question 4						
	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Learning Community	7	4	5	0	0	16
Non-Learning Community	3	7	3	0	0	13
Totals	10	11	8	0	0	29
Question 5						
	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Learning Community	7	6	3	0	0	16
Non-Learning Community	3	7	3	0	0	13
Totals	10	13	6	0	0	29
Question 6						
	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Learning Community	5	4	6	1	0	16
Non-Learning Community	2	6	4	1	0	13
Totals	7	10	10	2	0	29
Question 7						
	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Learning Community	2	2	5	3	4	16
Non-Learning Community	1	0	4	5	3	13
Totals	3	2	9	8	7	29
Question 8						
	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Learning Community	2	7	7	0	0	16
Non-Learning Community	0	2	6	4	1	13
Totals	2	9	13	4	1	29
Question 9						
	1	2	3	4	5	Totals
Learning Community	10	4	1	1	0	16
Non-Learning Community	4	3	6	0	0	13
Totals	14	7	7	1	0	29

Appendix D[4]

Question 4

The subject matter covered in Economics is interesting and relevant to my life.

Student Attitudes

Observed Frequencies						
Learning community	7	4	5	0	0	16
Non-Learning community	3	7	3	0	0	13
Totals	10	11	8	0	0	29

Student Attitudes

Expected Frequencies						
Learning community	5.517241	6.068966	4.413793	0	0	16
Non-Learning community	4.482759	4.931034	3.586207	0	0	13
Totals	10	11	8	0	0	29

Question 5

The subject matter covered in Economics is relevant to solving real-world issues.

Student Attitudes

Observed Frequencies						
Learning community	7	6	3	0	0	16
Non-Learning community	3	7	3	0	0	13
Totals	10	13	6	0	0	29

Student Attitudes

Expected Frequencies						
Learning community	5.517241	7.172414	3.310345	0	0	16
Non-Learning community	4.482759	5.827586	2.689655	0	0	13
Totals	10	13	6	0	0	29

Question 6

I would take another course in Economics.

Student Attitudes

Observed Frequencies						
Learning community	5	4	7	0	0	16
Non-Learning community	2	6	5	0	0	13
Totals	7	10	12	0	0	29

Student Attitudes

Expected Frequencies						
Learning community	3.862069	5.517241	6.62069	0	0	16
Non-Learning community	3.137931	4.482759	5.37931	0	0	13
Totals	7	10	12	0	0	29

Question 7

I would consider majoring in Economics.

Student Attitudes

Observed Frequencies						
Learning community	0	4	5	3	4	16
Non-Learning community	0	1	4	5	3	13
Totals	0	5	9	8	7	29

Student Attitudes

Expected Frequencies						
Learning community	0	2.758621	4.965517	4.413793	3.862069	16
Non-Learning community	0	2.241379	4.034483	3.586207	3.137931	13
Totals	0	5	9	8	7	29

Question 8

The ability to write well helped me in Economics.

Student Attitudes

Observed Frequencies						
Learning community	0	9	7 0	0	16	
Non-Learning community	0	2	11	0	0	13
Totals	0	11	18	0	0	29

Student Attitudes

Expected Frequencies						
Learning community	0	6.068966	9.931034	0	0	16
Non-Learning community	0	4.931034	8.068966	0	0	13
Totals	0	11	18	0	0	29

Question 9

Studying with classmates was beneficial to me in this course.

Student Attitudes

Observed Frequencies						
Learning community	10	4	2	0	0	16
Non-Learning community	4	3	6	0	0	13
Total	14	7	8	0	0	29

Student Attitudes

Expected Frequencies						
Learning community	7.724138	3.862069	4.413793	0	0	16
Non-Learning community	6.275862	3.137931	3.586207	0	0	29
Total	14	7	6	0	0	29

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Maslow's Child

Al Proffit

Abstract

This work is a reflection upon the first time I connected theory to practice as an educator. The theory was Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954, 1970). I believe that there are factors that impact standardized test scores that are beyond a school's ability to control. Politicians continue to insist that our nation is at risk because of the condition of American's public schools (Bennett, 2003). Phrases such as A Nation At Risk (1983), Goals 2000 (1994) and No Child Left Behind (2001) become well established societal buzz phrases that are often synonymous with the idea that our public schools are failing.

Long ago, and far away, I graduated from an excellent teacher education preparation program. I was taught many wonderful things by caring professors. Even as marvelous as the instruction was, it took the students I would encounter over the following years to make the theory I was taught relevant. While I saw many theories come to life as a pubic school teacher, none were more immediately relevant than the work of Abraham Maslow (1954, 1970). Allow me this opportunity to introduce to you a young man (Steve) that I now refer to as Maslow's child. Steve was a sixth grader and his life illustrated the basic premise of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Maslow (1954,1970) offered the proposition that all individuals have specific needs that may be placed in hierarchical order. Different writers explain the particulars of Maslow's work in different ways, but the basic components of his theory are that all individuals have specific needs that are sequential (Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 1998); lower level needs must be at least partially met before the individual may begin to satisfy the needs at higher levels (Daresh, 2001); people may assign differing degrees of importance to their needs (Slavin, 1994); and all humans have differing needs that tend to shape behavior (Hoy and Miskel, 2001).

During my first year teaching, Steve was in my homeroom and first period World History class. Let us face the fact that this is not exactly the kind of subject matter that makes the adolescent heart beat fast with anticipation under the best of conditions. It excited Steve less than most.

One morning I noticed that Steve, who had been in the cafeteria for breakfast, was no longer in sight. Upon closer inspection I found that Steve was indeed still in class but was asleep in the back of the room. To give the reader a more accurate description of what I found, it can be noted that Steve did not simply lay his head down on his desk and subsequently drift off to sleep.

He had actually created a make shift bed by positioning two desks side-by-side and perpendicular to a bookshelf. He had his head in the shelf and was using a couple books and his jacket as a pillow. He was not just napping, he had reached the rapid eye movement stage of sleep.

Nonetheless, as an energetic, enthusiastic, and engaging first year teacher, I was rather taken aback that someone could be so unresponsive to my teaching. So, in true new teacher form I felt that it would be a fine lesson to let Steve sleep until his class left. He would be further behind, have to get the notes, and make up the work he had slept through. Pay me now, or pay me latter I reasoned. I was sure he would come from this incident remorseful, or at least uncomfortable. He would be horrified when he awoke to find that his classmates had moved onto second period.

When it came time to change classes I asked my students to be quiet and not wake Steve. I told them that I was going to teach him a lesson about sleeping in school. I asked the students to tell the next period teacher what I was doing. As my new class came into the room I made sure they did not wake Steve. It was sometime early in fourth period when Steve finally begin to stir. I saw him slowly sit up, yawn, and look about the room. I remembered thinking that it was a good thing that Steve was up and moving. It would have been hard to explain to the superintendent how I let Steve die in the back of my classroom with his head stuffed in a bookshelf.

Given that the class I was now teaching was eighth grade, I was sure that once Steve returned from the Land of Nod he would be frantic to rejoin his class. Rather, undaunted, Steve slowly looked around, raised his hand, and asked what period this was. I, being assured that my teaching strategy was working, announced in a stern teacher voice “Fourth period, Steve.” Steve simply replied, "Good, only got to take one book." He got up, grabbed the book, yawned again, and proceeded to leave the room and shuffle down the hall in search of his classmates. I was so surprised by his response that I didn’t say anything, knowing that he would be returning to my room for noon hour. We would certainly take this matter up then.

Steve returned to my room at lunchtime. However, he didn’t share my need to discuss his rather deep state of unconsciousness in my class. He was not belligerent and was willing to

accept the consequences, but he was not remorseful. When I asked him why he had gone to sleep in my class he replied, "Cause I was sleepy." There is nothing like an honest answer from an adolescent

I was troubled by Steve's nonchalant attitude, as well as the seemingly indifferent attitude of his classmates. I took the matter up with a senior colleague who also taught Steve. I told her I didn't think Steve was lazy, but he always seemed tired and sleepy in my class. Her face became very serious as she told me that before I made any specific judgments on Steve's classroom behavior, or, in this case, lack of it, I needed to see where Steve lived. I made arrangements to make my first home visit. I had not been in Steve's home long before a transformation in my basic teaching philosophy began. Steve, and his family, introduced me to Abraham Maslow.

Steve lived in a small house without running water, and as the oldest of six children, he had been relegated to sleeping on the couch. I later learned that in warm weather he slept in an abandoned car. Given that it was January, Steve had been sleeping in the house on the couch where his dad often watched television until the early morning hours. I felt that this was very insensitive of his father. I asked him why he didn't just go to bed and let Steve sleep. He told me that he had been injured and his pain did not allow him to sleep well. He watched television during those nights that his pain kept him awake.

Understanding that such matters must be taken up with Social Services, I discussed the matter with my principal. He told me that the school had asked the Department of Social Services to look into Steve's situation a couple of years ago. After a hearing, the children had been taken from the parents and placed in individual foster homes. Within six months they all were reunited with their parents because the children were clearly miserable. The children were not unloved, only poor.

As a result of this visit, I begin to ask myself some fundamental questions. Was I meeting Steve's best interest by making him stay awake in World History, or possibly let him sleep so he would be somewhat rested for the Math and Language Arts classes that immediately followed my class? I understand the argument that letting Steve sleep could promote undesirable

behavior. However, the truth of the matter is there were times Steve's need for food and sleep outweighed everything else. Maslow 101.

I can also understand the argument that providing Steve with a place to sleep was not my responsibility. Regardless of the fact this was not in my job description, it was a part of my teaching reality. My decision to let Steve sleep during a good many of my classes forced me to compromise what I had been taught in college. It also potentially compromised my image as a classroom teacher. Thankfully that did not happen and I survived to relate Steve's story and how it demonstrates one of the basic assumptions of Maslow's work.

When we consider Maslow's theory we can expect that behavior may often be driven by needs. It is important to consider that needs are relative and a matter of individual perspective. From Steve's perspective my classroom was a perfect place to sleep. It was warm, safe, and available immediately following breakfast. From my perspective as an educator I reasoned that Steve's morning nap in my class could provide a boost that would allow him an optimal learning situation for the aforementioned Math and the Language Arts classes. In no way do I intend to diminish the importance of the social sciences.

The first step in my attempting to help Steve was to establish some rules. We agreed that he would sleep at night when he could and only use my room to catch up on sleep when he really needed it. He also agreed to not sleep in any other classes and would try harder in all classes, including mine. Finally, in the event that he needed to sleep during my class he would meet with me during our noon break to get the highlights of what he missed earlier in the day. I reasoned that this would be an appropriate motivator as I encouraged Steve to sleep at night when he could.

In the meanwhile, the Department of Social Services agreed to seek solutions to this new slant to an old concern. To this day I do not know what all occurred, or how, but it seems that a television line was run into Steve's Mom and Dad's bedroom. A small television and second recliner was donated from private sources. While I never learned the identity of the sources, I suspect the television came from one of my colleagues.

With time I saw Steve awake during the entire day. I felt a private sense of intrinsic satisfaction. As the year proceeded, I learned the value of working as part of a team attempting

to secure needed services and material goods for families like Steve's. I also came to the understanding that faculty members had long been doing this. They taught with their hearts and minds. They helped me to understand that when you experience poverty such as Steve's, things like a full belly and a smile are as important as understanding the economic ramifications of the ancient fertile crescent. They helped me to understand Maslow.

During my career I have I learned that Maslow's work is applicable to all children in our pubic schools. From an educator's perspective it is at times overwhelming to consider the responsibilities that our pubic schools face as they attempt to equally educate every child. Their needs are as critical and essential as they are diverse and complex. Their situations are complicated in legal and personal terms. Their lives, at times, may hang in the balance of an educator's action, or inaction.

So, as politicians carry the time worn banner of school reform, I will offer from experience that there are many children living in situations that negatively impact their education. Often these are situations are beyond the public schools ability, or responsibility, to control. There can be no question that these societal problems have tremendous impact upon our nation's public schools. Simply put, schools are not designed to meet, on a sustained basis, the most basic of human needs. The reality is that schools cannot possibly provide their students with the kind of core that an immediate family can provide. In most every case, a child in a hostile or non-nurturing family situation will experience some form of difficulty in school. Schools will also experience difficulties as they interact with, and attempt to meet the needs of, these students.

Today schools present "a challenge undreamed of in previous generations of educators" (Intrator, 2003, p. 187). It seems that judging a school's worth by a single set of statistical data collected once a year falls short of fully understanding what our schools actually do on a daily basis. In many cases, student achievement and school success are not fully reflected in standardized "end of year" or "end of course" test scores.

Troy (2003) reports that 14.4 million students of the public school system live in abject poverty; 7.2 million come to school hungry each day; 6.2 million have limited English proficiency, and 2 million speak no English at all; 6 million have disabilities for which public schools must compensate; 2 million are latchkey children; 2 million are abused and neglected at home; 1

million suffer from the effects of lead poisoning; 500,000 are from foster homes and institutionalized care; and 400,000 are crack babies.

These statistics don't even take into account the millions of children who are in desperate need of medical, dental, or optical assistance; those who watch their mothers beaten regularly; those who struggle with issues of addiction; those who are trying to cope with life after rape; those who are pregnant and do not know which way to turn; those who are abandoned by one or both parents; those who are obese; and those who are rejected by society for various reasons.

I think that Maslow's work suggests that Troy's (2003) statistics represent situations that will in all likelihood negatively impact standardized test scores. From my experience I have found that the economic status of children is seemingly directly correlated to test scores. The acquisition of knowledge is difficult for children who struggle daily in an attempt to satisfy their most basic physiological needs.

In a sense of double jeopardy, it may be argued that if standardized test scores become the only significant judge of student achievement, the same children who are struggling to satisfy the most basic of human needs will receive the message that they are just not smart enough to master schoolwork. They may begin to lose the desire to even try. Once this mindset of learned helplessness is in place these students may begin to feel that they have nothing left to lose, including an education. As a result, undesirable behaviors and activities may result, thus creating more problems for the child and the school.

In making this argument I acknowledge that there exist isolated examples that run counter to my basic premise. Some children living in abject poverty do rise above their personal situations. However, I see no evidence that causes me to rethink my belief that these examples are exceptions, and not the norm. I strongly feel that caution must be exercised when basing general assumptions and expectations upon exceptionalities and outlier statistics.

When I was a beginning teacher, Steve helped me to realize that there are many children crying for help in our nation's public schools. Their cries come in many forms. These cries demand considerably more attention than proclaiming from a podium that we will leave none of them behind.

If we are serious about leaving no child behind, we need to do the same for our schools. I strongly advocate that we need to establish and maintain high expectations for our schools. It is good to establish rigorous standards and to hold our schools responsible for meeting these standards. However, I am suggesting that we, as a society, must accept our responsibly of giving all of our nation's schools what they need in terms of support and resources to get this job done.

Often times our school facilities are inadequate, teachers salaries are too low, supplies are limited, technology lags behind the work world, and schools are often forced to cut curriculum in times of economic downturn. These problems are magnified for schools located within areas of widespread poverty. If we as a society are intending to hold all schools accountable for educating Maslow's children, we need to a better job of supplying them with the funds they need. In the end, all of Maslow's children are our own. Educators have long realized this, and have never wanted to leave any child behind. I am glad that our nation's politicians now finally seem to agree.

Epilogue

The last I heard, Steve had earned enough money cutting grass to buy a truck by the time he was sixteen. He used this truck to expand his lawn business. I do not know if this is what he now does for a living, and if it is, I am not sure just how much I helped him, unless of course, he dreamed it up during first period.

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How Does a Writing Circle Help Faculty Members?

Jane Hall, Irene Mueller and Bil Stahl

Abstract
The Writing Circle project at Western Carolina University provides a supportive forum for faculty members to get feedback about their writing. Whether it's a first draft or a manuscript almost ready for publication, the feedback from other group members provides additional viewpoints that help a writer decide where writing time and effort can be most effectively spent.

Writing circles, in some form, have helped individuals become successful writers for many years. Writing circles are groups of people who gather together to help one another write about significant experiences in their lives, or ideas that intrigue them. The Coulter Faculty Center (CFC) at Western Carolina University introduced this process in 1988 and titled the activity *Helping Circles*. The purpose was to provide a supportive forum for faculty to get feedback about their writing in order to develop high quality writing from early drafts. One of the most important parts of knowing how to write well is to feel comfortable doing it. The group serves as a sympathetic, supportive, first audience to help the writer see the paper from the reader's viewpoint.

Jane Hall's Experience

I participated in the first group developed by the Faculty Center. The "publish or perish" tales were topics of conversation passed forward to young faculty. At the first meeting seven faculty were present. The Faculty Center director, Ben Ward, served as the facilitator and assisted the group in developing these norms:

1. Writer distributes copies *without comment.* It is especially important to resist the urge to offer disclaimers or explain the status of the paper. The paper must be allowed to speak for itself, regardless of whether it is a very rough draft or a nearly finished piece.

2. Each group member skims the piece quickly to get a general sense of what it is about. Give the writer a signal (for example, a nod or eye contact) when finished skimming.

3. Writer reads aloud while the group members monitor their natural reactions and mark places where they experience a notable response (either positive or negative).

4. During a brief period of silence (e.g., one minute), each reader re-examines places marked and selects something positive to point out. This could be anything from a striking word or expression to a vivid image or a meaningful concept. Then each group member tells the writer what he/she thinks is one strong feature of the paper.

5. Next, each group member takes a turn at thoroughly describing all of his or her reactions to the paper. Do not evaluate or suggest corrections at this point. Simply describe, as objectively as possible, the spontaneous reactions that were experienced during the reading.

6. Finally, the writer becomes the discussion leader and asks questions to get a full understanding of each reader's reactions. Once the writer sees clearly how the paper came across to different individuals, often he or she will recognize areas that need revision without anyone ever calling direct attention to errors or weaknesses. If the writer is uncertain about how to "strengthen" or revise certain sections, it is appropriate at this time to ask advice from the group. Discussion should continue until the writer sees the paper "through the reader's eyes."

The first group meeting was a lot of fun. Many of us didn't know one another—we were faculty from various disciplines. Developing group norms seemed a good thing because that helped us "own" the process. I went away from the first meeting energized with strong motivation to begin writing a paper I was to present at the Board of Governors' meeting the following month. I had two weeks to write a draft copy. Comments made in the meeting were, "the magic in writing comes from the ideas you have about your teaching," and "write as if you were just talking." However, every time I would try to write I found myself looking at a blank pad.

By the end of the first week I felt panicky—I didn't have the first sentence written. By the next meeting date I had only the introduction written and it sounded terrible to me. When it came my turn to share, I was in trouble from the beginning with group norm 1--not being able to disclaim my writing. I had to read my terrible introduction and was asked to go through the rest of the group norms as well. I dreaded hearing what other faculty would say or "think" about my work. I was amazed at the honest comments framed in a way that helped me begin to consider a different direction for my presentation. That meeting helped move my thinking "out of the box" and to new ideas for a different introduction. But perhaps more importantly, it allowed me see that few people write first drafts really well. In addition, I learned that getting to another level means you have to open yourself and your ideas to others with the

knowledge that the feedback given is about your writing, not about you personally.

My participation in the helping circle was a great benefit both professionally and personally. Today when I work with students and their writing I hear myself conceptualizing the procedure very similarly to those insightful processes learned in the helping circle meetings many years ago.

Recently, at a CFC session to identify activities for faculty development, I described the helping circle project for developing writing skills and wondered about revitalizing the activity. I wanted to bring back a tradition that was so helpful to me and volunteered to be the group facilitator. The title, *Writing Circle*, was designated and the first meeting was held fall semester, 2002. I was disappointed that only a few faculty were present. Never-the-less, in our second session, Irene Mueller framed an entire article structure from the group conversations.

Irene Mueller's Experience

As a new faculty member without any previous experience in writing publications, I was very interested in joining the Writing Circle when I saw it listed on the CFC sponsored activities. I hoped belonging would provide a supportive structure that would help me stay focused in meeting this important goal in my progress to achieving tenured status.

One of the most powerful benefits of belonging to the Writing Circle for me is having a "sounding board" for tentative ideas. The feedback from other faculty members provides additional viewpoints that help a writer decide where writing time and effort can be most effectively spent. Also, just talking with other people who have been through the same process helps build a belief that "I can do this." Another benefit is the timeframe set by the scheduled meetings. Knowing that you will be expected to share some writing (at whatever stage) can provide the impetus to stay on track and write on a regular basis instead of constantly postponing this task because of the many other responsibilities of non-tenure track faculty members.

Summary

The Writing Circle is a safe and enjoyable way to get assistance with the difficult task of putting ideas on paper. Members of the Writing Circle are all facing the same challenges and are genuinely interested in each other's success. Beyond just helping faculty to be better writers, the Writing Circle

helps participants hone their ability to look at their ideas from the “outside.” This ability is critical not only for writing, but for teaching and critical thinking. And Writing Circles are a great way to meet faculty colleagues and get to know better the ones you already know!

Book Review

Boice, R. (2000). ***Advice for new faculty members*: *Nihil Nimus***. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Review by: Irene Mueller, Ed.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Health Sciences, Health Information Management Program

"The [person] who works so moderately as to be able to work constantly, not only preserves his [her] health the longest, but in the course of the year, executes the greatest quantity of work." _Adam Smith, 1776

As a new tenure-track faculty member here at WCU, I discovered a great book in the Coulter Faculty Center's library last spring. I just wish I had found it at the beginning of my first year. During my first semester at WCU I knew WHAT I needed to do in my first years here – teach effectively and gain tenure, but I did not truly know the HOW of accomplishing these goals. Although the new faculty orientation and mentoring programs I participated in were very useful, I was still on my own when it came to actually carrying out the work necessary to *survive and thrive* at WCU.

In this paperback, Boice provides "useful advice beginning with general ways of working in the professoriate with constancy and moderation" (p. 6). Boice also provides an appendix containing 10 abstracts of additional sources referred to in the text and also recommended by the new faculty members participating in his research projects as being "unusually interesting and useful" (p. 279).

His research at comprehensive and research universities has identified "quick starters" – the exemplary 3-5% of new faculty members who "begin with ease and acceptance" and "worked without rushing and busyness" (pp. 11-12). They personify the principles of *nihil nimus* (nothing in excess) for novice faculty. Boice's study of quick and poor starters among new faculty members is the basis of the advice and the 10 *nihil nimus* rules he provides in this book, which is organized into three sections – Teaching, Writing, and Socialization.

Each section begins with a rationale for the *nihil nimus* approach, provides an overall plan, discusses relevant research findings, describes which of the 10 rules apply to the section's topic, and concludes with a section summary. The body of each section has a chapter for each principle or rule that provides many specific explanations, examples, and exercises. The rules are discussed in order, from the simplest to implement to the more complex. Boice also recommends

that the rules be applied to a faculty member's Teaching duties first, then to Writing-related tasks, and then to the Socialization process that all new faculty members experience. Each chapter also discusses why new faculty members often do not apply these rules.

Since my first reading of Boice's advice and rules (and I recommend multiple readings of this book), I have applied the *Wait actively*, *Begin early* and *Work in brief regular sessions* rules as they relate to my teaching duties. As a result, I do feel much less stress this semester and believe that I am teaching more effectively. My next goal is to apply these rules to the writing process. If you are interested in research-based, tested, and useful guidelines and suggestions on HOW to become more efficient, more effective, and less stressed in your faculty position, I strongly recommend this book's rules and advice.