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Holly, a 16-year-old female chimpanzee who lives at the Saint Louis Zoo.
( Photo Credit: Saint Louis Zoo)

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Editor’s Notebook
Andrew C. Holman

More than others, the month of November is one that western societies for the past century have filled with rituals of collective memory. November’s gloomy weather and sometimes dour mood contributes to this social function, but the anchor of these reflective practices is Veterans Day, or Remembrance Day, as it is called in much of the rest of the English-speaking world. Veterans Day gets its place in the western calendar because it recognizes the critical moment when, in 1918, after more than four years of intractable fighting among European and American armies, World War I came to its merciful end: 11-11-11, at the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month. This year, 2014, marks the centennial of the onset of that “Great War,” and expectedly, our commemorative efforts ring louder. We remember those whose lives were sacrificed to protect our values and interests, not just in World War I but in all wars in which our countrymen

have fought and died before and since. We remember them in granite and cement memorials, in cenotaphs and columns, in bronze statuary, in film, in songs and sermons, and in poetry, such as John McCrae’s 1915 “In Flanders Fields,” which scores of Canadian schoolchildren of my generation were made to commit to memory and recite. We remember, as the oft-repeated line in Rudyard Kipling’s 1897 poem Recessional instructs us, “lest we forget.”

But we do forget. As a society, we forget often and we forget a lot. November’s collective remembering prompts us to think about how social memory really functions and how the collective acts of remembering and forgetting interact. Collective remembering is a deliberate act, one that is done as a corrective to forgetting, which we assume is a natural, human tendency. If we don’t make the effort to remember, the past—our past—and its lessons will by default be lost and any tutelary benefit they have for us wasted. But can it also work in reverse? That is, can collective forgetting be a deliberate social act, one designed to counteract the human tendency to remember? Some recent scholarship has some interesting things to say on this matter.

For more than a generation, scholars have examined when and why societies choose to remember. It is no surprise that war commemoration is the subject of most of our collective remembering. The stories that war commemorations tell (particularly the ones in which our side won decisively) are a fertile site for teaching broad-scooped civic lessons about the things in which we are supposed to believe—honor, duty, character, democracy, justice and the rule of law. The act of remembering is the attempt to graft useful meanings onto otherwise regrettable events and the chance to prescribe to others how to behave in the wake of such awful loss. Paul Fussell’s pathbreaking 1975 book The Great War and Modern Memory (newly reissued for the centennial by Oxford University Press) examined the subject first and best. In Britain (and elsewhere, as Fussell’s scholarly heirs in the U.S., France, Russia and Canada have detailed), World War I bequeathed an “inherited myth” to a generation of writers and other symbol makers who took on the task of remembering the “truth” about the war and convincing their compatriots of its meaning. Of course, societies remember together things non-martial as well. We remember those great moments of fellow feeling that are triggered by national tragedies (such as a president’s assassination or ethical fall, episodes of ethnic cleansing and acts of mass terrorism) or triumphs (such as the passage of landmark civil rights legislation, unexpected Olympic victories and symbolic athletic feats).

If we don’t make the effort to remember, the past—our past—and its lessons will by default be lost and any tutelary benefit they have for us wasted.
More recently, scholars have begun to explore the circumstances that exist when whole societies willfully disremember past events. Tearing a page from those scholars who see remembering as a contrived, deliberate act, some see social forgetting in the same way: as planned projects that have intended outcomes. As UCLA scholar Russell Jacoby’s 1997 Social Amnesia argues, societies forget on purpose; they “repress remembrance.” Moreover, just like collective remembrance, the way we forget is subject to historical change. Social amnesia has always affected human societies and as technological invention has provided more tools of remembering (i.e. printing press or the camera), collective forgetting has become harder to do. Despite this, as British anthropologist Paul Connerton argues in a recent book (How Modernity Forgets, 2009), the conditions of modernity (the rise of an increasingly integrated capitalist world market since the 1850s) make collective forgetting more socially useful. “Modernity is conditioned by a particular kind of forgetfulness,” he writes, and so the most modern places on earth (Europe and America) produce “structural forgetting” more routinely than anywhere else.

Why do we forget? What do we forget? The answers to those two questions are integrally related, if we are to believe Connerton. Societies can forget because they are coerced to do so by authoritarian governments that wish to whitewash historical black marks—the memories of Armenian extermination in the Ottoman Empire, or famine in the Soviet Ukraine. But forgetting need not be so dark and repressive. Societies can choose to forget to achieve positive outcomes—to self-prescribe new, progressive economic behaviors, to constitute new collective national identities, or to counteract competing versions of a common past (Connerton, “Some Functions of Collective Forgetting,” 2010). “The essence of a nation,” French historian Ernest Renan wrote famously in his 1882 book, What is a Nation? “is that the people have many things in common, but have also forgotten much together… Every French citizen must have forgotten the St. Bartholomew’s Day massacre and the [Albigensian] massacres in the Midi in the 13th century.”

Of course, collective forgetting is not collective forgiving. We have developed other rituals and procedures to serve that function. South Africans could only come to grips with the harm that Apartheid caused through a long and painful national reckoning that its Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) provided, 1996-2000. Japanese Americans interned during World War II were issued public apologies and reparations by the US Government in 1988, and again in 1992. And most recently, in Canada, the victims of that country’s often abusive Indian Residential Schools have found healing in providing testimony to its own six-year TRC. These are acts of collective healing that do the opposite of forgetting: they call attention to these awful chapters of racist segregation and systemic violence, and encourage us to remember.

In all of this remembering, forgetting and forgiving, we are making important choices about who we are today. These three social functions are each, in their own ways, forward-looking, prescriptive acts that build community. When we do them, we are imagining who we want to be. This month, as we begin to commemorate the centennial of a long-ago war in moments of silence, cannon and rifle fire, parades and prayer, we will do well to recognize the civic uses of our November rituals.

Andrew Holman is Professor of History and Editor of Bridgewater Review.

Andrew Holman
If you have ever been the recipient of a vaccine for hepatitis or meningitis, or numerous other medical procedures, you have benefited from research conducted on chimpanzees. It is rare, though, for chimpanzees to have been the beneficiaries of medical research using human subjects. But this is exactly what took place with Holly, a 16-year old female chimpanzee who lives at the Saint Louis Zoo, in Missouri. Holly’s problem was a remarkably common one that humans often experience: she struggled to be fully accepted by her social group. Holly’s dilemma inspired “Project Holly,” in which, since 2009, a team of chimpanzee and human behaviorists have worked to help Holly socially integrate and to draw conclusions from her example. I am privileged to be on Holly’s team. When Project Holly first began, I was somewhat skeptical that we could make a difference in her life. But I love chimpanzees, and the opportunity to do some research with a group and perhaps help them, was irresistible.

My first introduction to Holly was on a CD that Dr. Margaret Bauman, an autism specialist from Harvard Medical School, gave me to view. The Saint Louis Zoo had contacted her with concerns about some of Holly’s behavior, and questions about their possible relationship to autistic behavior in human children. Dr. Bauman has worked with autistic children in the Boston area for many years, but she did not know chimpanzees. I do. I have studied their behavior since the early 1980s, both in captive situations and in the wild. Dr. Bauman and I traded information and shared insights into what we saw on the video and the interdisciplinary collaboration that became Project Holly began.

The behavioral and genetic similarities between humans and chimpanzees have been critical in our understanding of the evolution and ontogeny of human behavior. However, it has been unclear whether chimpanzees experience neural disturbances resulting in behavioral anomalies that parallel those seen more in human children (such as autism). Many captive chimpanzees display behaviors that are sometimes viewed as abnormal and not part of the typical chimpanzee behavioral repertoire. These may be so common, in fact, that they are often considered as “normal for captive chimpanzees.” Many captive facilities have introduced environmental and behavioral enrichment programs in an attempt to improve conditions for the chimpanzees and reduce the incidence of atypical behaviors. In spite of this, these behaviors often persist and may result in health or management issues. Holly’s behavior included rocking, self-plucking, clutching items and tandem walking with a peer. These behaviors did not decrease when Holly entered adulthood, as sometimes occurs with captive chimpanzees. Her caretakers felt that she did not respond well to social signals and was often the “odd-man out” in the social group.

Holly was born in 1998 at a small zoo in Alabama. As is often the case with captive animals, her mother lacked experience in taking care of infants and was considered “rough” with Holly. Concerned for her well-being, Holly’s caretakers removed her from her mother, and in her place substituted care by the human staff. Research on nonhuman primates dating back to the 1960s, such as the rhesus monkey experiments in the Harlow laboratories, has shown that in the absence of a mother, it is better for an individual captive primate to be raised with peers, rather than alone. So, at 3 months old, Holly was sent to the Saint Louis Zoo to join another infant female chimpanzee, Bakhari, who was also being cared for without a mother. The two were
raised together by the Saint Louis Zoo staff and docents until they could be integrated with the other chimpanzees at the zoo.

Upon her arrival at the Saint Louis Zoo, Holly was considered physically well-coordinated and very active, but she did not seem fluid in her movements the way other young chimps are. She did not want to be touched and would always play hard, even when it was not appropriate. In the wild, infant chimpanzees spend most of their first year clinging to their mothers and cuddled in their arms. Holly’s caretakers considered her behavior to be “different” early on, especially when compared to Bakhari, but they attributed it to hand-rearing or just personality differences. By age 1, both Holly and Bakhari were gradually introduced to the larger social group. At age 6-7, Holly was not outgrowing the infantile rocking behavior, and began rocking in a side-to-side, “tick-tock” motion. She continued to be rough in her behavior, and struggled to fully socialize with the group. As a young adult at age 11, Holly continued to display many behaviors that set her apart from the rest of the social group. She plucked her hair, rocked side to side, clutched items or a peer, and often had a glazed, staring expression on her face. She would react inappropriately to social stimuli, and was not well integrated with the group. Meanwhile, Bakhari was melding well with the others.

In June 2009, Dr. Bauman gathered experts in chimpanzee caretaking and behavior, along with human child psychology and development specialists in St. Louis to examine Holly’s situation, and determine if we could provide any help for her. Using rearing and developmental history, video tapes and direct observations, we assessed Holly’s behavior. She clearly engaged in many behaviors that were abnormal and perhaps deleterious to her health and the group’s social functioning. However, we ruled out a chimpanzee equivalent of autism as likely causing Holly’s behavior. The diagnosis of autism in humans is very complex, and often centers on language difficulties. While chimpanzees have very rich communication behaviors, it is not language in the same sense that humans employ. Thus, this human component of autism is simply not present for chimpanzees.

During our discussions and observations, alternate explanations to autism emerged emphasizing sensory integration and motor-planning difficulties. Key elements in Holly’s behavior that led in this direction included poor motor fluidity, posture rigidity, lack of restful postures, seeking tactile stimulation, and poor social awareness. The child development specialists, all of whom had no previous experience with chimpanzee behavior, were struck by how similar Holly’s behavior was to the human children with whom they worked. Following this preliminary diagnosis of sensory integration and processing disorder, I began a series of intensive behavioral observations to provide longitudinal data on Holly and her age-peers (Bakhari, Tammy and Utamu) in the group. Each individual’s behavior, social partners, proximity to others, and location within the enclosure were all recorded.
These observations supported the initial diagnosis focusing on sensory integration and processing. Holly’s interactions with the other group members demonstrate some of the consequences of her difficulties. Bakhari was one of her preferred partners, but unless distressed herself, Bakhari often avoided Holly. Holly’s second choice for a social partner was the younger Tammy, who was 7 years of age at the time of the observations. Holly was able to dominate Tammy and to some extent control her behavior with forced tandem walking. However, I observed that Tammy was gradually beginning to avoid Holly, and spent considerable amounts of time out of proximity to all group members. This appeared to affect Tammy’s normal development within the group. As she avoided Holly, she was also limiting her interactions with all group members.

Holly also had unstable relationships with the older adults in the group. She was very cautious of Hugo, the alpha male, and often avoided him. However, she often visually monitored his behavior from a distance and his movements often precipitated her rocking and tandem-walking behavior. While she seemed to be distressed by Hugo’s presence, Holly also sometimes approached him aggressively (not a good idea for a young female chimp), and did not seem to learn how to interact appropriately with him.

The oldest male in the group, Smoke, often tolerated Holly’s presence. However, Holly did not seem to read subtle social cues from him. While Holly often sat near Smoke, he at times attempted to increase the distance between them. When Holly sat close to Smoke, she sometimes draped her arm over his shoulders. Smoke was observed to gently lift her arm from his shoulders and scoot a few inches away.

The child development specialists, all with no previous experience in chimpanzee behavior, were struck by how similar Holly’s behavior was to the human children with whom they worked.

Holly again moved close to him and put her arm on his shoulders. Smoke then repeated the sequence. After several minutes of this, Smoke would quietly stand up and walk away. This type of sequence was observed several times. Holly didn’t seem to get the hint. Her relationships with the other adult females in the group were also difficult. Holly almost never interacted with Rosebud or Beauty, the older matriarchs. Only Mlinzi, who had sometimes mothered Holly when she was younger, consistently associated with her. Holly was often near Mlinzi, and would groom her. Mlinzi was the only chimpanzee in the group who groomed Holly. This was particularly telling, as grooming each other is among the most important chimpanzee social behaviors.

After making these detailed observations, “Project Holly” team members began to devise a plan for therapy. Dr. Teresa May-Benson from the Spiral Foundation in Newton, Massachusetts took the lead for this part of the project. She is an expert in occupational therapy for both children and adults with sensory integration and processing disorders. She used her experience with humans to develop a series of activities that could be used with Holly by the zoo keepers who provide the group’s daily care. This was not easy. Many of the therapeutic interventions used with humans involve close interaction and hands-on activities, such as deep massage. This is not possible with chimpanzees because of safety protocols. While Holly’s relations with other members of her social group were not ideal, separating her would have been extremely stressful, and more likely to exacerbate her problems than help. Thus, all therapy had to be adjusted to be chimpanzee-friendly.

The kinds of activities that Dr. May-Benson developed for Holly focused on different aspects of sensory integration. Some addressed tactile sensory stimulation, while others targeted vestibular, gross motor planning and coordination. At times, Holly had to be coaxed to engage in an activity; if simply provided...
learned from their mothers, siblings, and social group during a long juvenile and adolescent period. A captive chimpanzee would otherwise have no idea of what to eat or where to build a safe nest to sleep each night. Chimpanzees originally came into captivity, though, for our benefit – either for medical research or the entertainment industry. Thus we are now morally obligated to provide these chimpanzees and their descendants with the best lives we can give them.

Our work has just begun. Dr. May-Benson and I are extending the diagnostic and therapeutic protocols developed for Project Holly to other captive individuals, in hopes of helping them, too. Though she would not know it, Holly has opened the door to a research agenda that has a very big scope and holds significant promise for benefitting both chimpanzees and us.

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Postscript: Dr. Ingmanson is not affiliated with the Saint Louis Zoo and the opinions expressed above are not intended to represent the Zoo’s policies or practices. She wishes to extend her thanks and appreciation to Margaret Bauman MD, Teresa May-Benson ScD, Ingrid Porton, Terri Hunnicutt, Stephanie Braccini PhD, Martha Weber DVM, John Pruett MD PhD, David Beversdorf MD, Karen Bauman MA and the Saint Louis Zoo for their cooperation, input and help at different phases of the project.
While the movement of military personnel had become commonplace by 1944, this convoy was different. Its trucks carried 500 former Italian soldiers on their way from Camp Hereford in Somerfield, Texas to southeastern Massachusetts. Among the 600,000 enemy soldiers captured in North Africa earlier in the war, these men were some of the 51,000 Italians who had been shipped across the Atlantic as prisoners. Most had arrived in the U.S. in 1943 and, according to filmmaker Camilla Calamandrei’s 2000 web essay “Italian POWs held in America during WWII,” were quickly assigned to POW camps in the American heartland, away from coastal and industrial areas. Legally, their status changed in September 1943, when the Italian government of Pietro Badoglio signed an armistice with the Allies. Shortly thereafter, when Italy declared war on Germany, the Italians were no longer prisoners, or enemies, but rather “co-belligerents.” When given the opportunity to help the Allied cause by joining newly organized Italian Service Units (ISU), Calamandrei reports that more than 90 percent assented, and that is what brought these 500 men to Camp Myles Standish.

When the convoy reached its destination, the newcomers found a bustling military installation located in the heart of southeastern Massachusetts. Thirty-five miles from Boston, the camp had opened there on October 7, 1942. Records of the BPOE located in the National Archives state that the base covered 1,620 acres and was traversed by 35 miles of paved roads and almost 10 miles of railroad track connected to the main lines that reached every corner of the nation. Its mission was to receive military personnel from all over the United States and make certain that they and their equipment were ready for immediate shipment to the European Theater of Operations. The average stay at Standish lasted three to five days during which GIs received physicals, inoculations, dental exams and last-minute training. Meanwhile, their equipment—everything from typewriters to howitzers—was given a last check before being loaded onto trains bound for the ships waiting in Boston Harbor.

To accomplish all this, the camp had a permanent military complement of more than 2,500 personnel, including segregated African-American GIs who worked in service companies and women who served as nurses or members of the Women’s Army Corps. The camp also employed approximately 750 civilian workers, most living within a 30-mile radius of the base. Thousands of GIs passed through Standish every week. In fact, by the first week of September 1944, BPOE records show that a half million Allied personnel had been processed through the camp. This included not only Americans but also several thousand British, Canadian and Australian soldiers who were in the States for training or on special assignment.
Despite the magnitude of this around-the-clock operation, the Italians coming in as members of the ISUs found the camp well prepared for their arrival. A stockade fence had been erected while lights and sentry boxes were completed just days earlier. Additionally, a 10-bed section within the hospital was set aside for their medical needs.

Immediately upon arrival at Standish, the ex-POWs were assigned to one of two ISUs. Each man earned 80 cents per day in non-negotiable coupons that could be redeemed at one of the camp’s many service canteens. Records on file in the National Archives state that 240 men were assigned to kitchen duties while 100 others were placed in maintenance details. Still others were assigned as mechanics, blacksmiths, machinists and carpenters. Often, the vocational skills of service unit members went unrecognized in the urgency of staging thousands of troops. Stonemasons became cooks, while cooks became ditch diggers and carpenters. Vigliam Verzola, for example, was a bricklayer who was set to work in the kitchen cracking thousands of eggs a day. Skilled hands were applied to whatever tasks needed doing. One thing was certain, however; the Italians helped fill a critical labor shortage at Standish. The first two ISUs were so productive that Camp authorities immediately asked the Army for enough men to form two additional service units. This request was granted and the two new units were in place by the end of July 1944. Some of these new men were hired out to local farms and businesses as day laborers while the rest were put to work inside the camp.

The commanding officer of the ISUs at Myles Standish was George J. Semler, a 27-year-old lieutenant with a degree in English from Colgate University. He found himself presiding over 4,000 Italian workers who had become an integral part of the camp’s operation. Although these men were not prisoners of war, they were still subject to Army discipline and, like the GIs who belonged to the station complement, they were often exasperated by the Army’s seemingly endless rules and regulations. Like their American counterparts, for example, the Italians did not have access to all parts of the base. Instead, they were restricted to the areas where they lived and worked, and they were required to obtain passes for permission to leave the camp. Violators received the same punishments as delinquent GIs.

Like other members of ISUs who were distributed across the nation, the men who came to Camp Myles Standish experienced a complicated relationship with the local population. Though they were no longer the enemy, and had been allies since October 1943, the official records of the BPOE continued to refer to them as prisoners well into the summer of 1944, and the general population, including the Daily Gazette, Taunton’s local newspaper, continued to speak of them in that way for many years after the war ended. As the conflict in Europe raged, some residents found it difficult to reconcile the fact that while their former enemies were well fed and housed, American boys were still overseas living in great danger and privation.

This resentment, however, was generally not felt in the region’s Italian-American neighborhoods. From the Boston area southward through Mansfield and into the Providence, Rhode Island suburbs, thousands of first- and second-generation Italian
Americans opened their hearts and homes to the ex-POWs. Initially, regulations stated that ISU members who could obtain passes would be allowed to accept invitations to visit Italo-American clubs, churches or homes only when traveling in groups of five and accompanied by a designated GI escort. However, the number and frequency of invitations combined with the overall success of the ISU program convinced camp officials to relax this rule so that within months many former prisoners were regular visitors in the homes of Italian Americans, and eventually the army acceded to requests for the camp’s ISU men’s choir to perform in area churches.

But the ease with which the ISU members became acclimated to their new surroundings did not sit well with many outside of the Italian-American community. At the end of the first week of July 1944, the BPOE Intelligence Section, in its weekly briefing for the port commander, stated: “The controversy over the ‘coddling’ of Italian prisoners of war continues in the New England press, with strong resentment expressed against favors granted them.” This resulted in a flurry of directives sent downward through the system ordering installation commanders to make certain that the Italians worked full days and that supervision of them remained tight.

By the winter of 1945, following the Rhineland campaign, the outcome of the conflict in Europe was decided and victory brought significant changes to the BPOE. For two and a half years the personnel at Camp Myles Standish had devoted all of their energies to preparing GIs for shipment overseas, but now the whole process had to be reversed. Tens of thousands of servicemen and women returned home. Some of the returnees were sent to other installations for discharge, but the rest of them began training for the invasion of Japan.

On May 10, 1945—just two days after the official Victory in Europe celebrations—the Taunton Daily Gazette published a statement issued by the public relations officer at Standish saying that “several hundred” German POWs had arrived at the camp from overseas. These men were to be put to work on construction and maintenance tasks as well as performing routine camp labor, and the public was reassured that when not at work the Germans were to be confined to the stockade.

Arnold Krammer, in his excellent 1979 book Nazi Prisoners of War in America, writes that 360,000 German POWs were brought to the United States during the course of the war. Although most of their detention camps were located in the Southwest, some German prisoners were assigned to New England bases in the months before the European war ended. For example, Camp Devens in Ayer, Massachusetts housed more than 1,000 German POWs in the final months of the conflict. However, in the spring of 1945, with German soldiers in Europe surrendering by the thousands, more space had to be found for those arriving every week, and smaller camps, such as Standish, were utilized. Ultimately, Lieutenant (later Lieutenant Colonel) Semler and his staff were called upon to supervise 3,000 German POWs in addition to the 4,000 Italian co-belligerents already at the camp.
Though formerly comrades in arms with the Italians, there were major
differences as to how the Germans were regarded by the local populace.
The Germans were the enemy and were treated as such. Armed guards watched
every move and there were no passes issued for personal errands. A
POW’s off-duty hours were spent in closely supervised activities. With
the exception of approximately 35 prisoners who were trucked under heavy guard
each day to work in a Taunton tannery, the general public seldom saw
the Germans.

Almost 50 years after the war, Walter Scherdel, a former POW at Standish,
visited the site of the camp and spoke with a newspaper reporter and a
Taunton historian. In a July 1992 interview published in the North
Atteleborough Sun Chronicle, Scherdel recalled being captured in Belgium
as a 17-year-old paratrooper. His American incarceration began at Fort
Sill, Oklahoma and ended at Camp Myles Standish. He was well treated but
so tight was the security that he had no idea where he was being held. Scherdel
was assigned to work in a mess hall where he served meals to GIs returning
from Europe. Unlike the Italians, who wore regular work clothes, he and
his countrymen were required to wear prison uniforms of black pants and
black shirts with the large letters PW painted in white across their backs.

Although he recalled the kindness of individual guards at Standish, Scherdel
had other memories as well. In the kitchen area where the Germans worked, large, graphic, recently
released photographs of Holocaust victims were hung on the walls to remind
the Germans of what their government had done. Likewise, Scherdel recalled
guards telling him that he would never reach his home in Germany because
after the war the POWs would be sent to rebuild the European cities that
Hitler’s bombers had destroyed.

The American government, of course, realized that the POWs would go home
some day and officials wasted no opportunity to influence the kind of
nation the returnees would build. Every camp holding German POWs, including Myles Standish, conducted a so-called Intellectual Diversion Program, in which German prisoners were taught
English as well as American civics and history. The preeminence of demo-
cratic institutions was heavily emphasized, and no dissent was tolerated.
Prisoners who resisted were segregated or moved to a camp for troublemakers.

Japan’s surrender in September 1945 brought an end to Lieutenant Colonel
Semler’s program for managing detainees at Standish. By war’s end
more than a few members of the Italian Service Units had become romantically
involved with local women, and when the Italians departed Boston
for repatriation some of these women followed closely behind. In his book
Italian Prisoners of War in America, 1942-1946: Captives or Allies? (1992),
historian Louis E. Keefer writes that several hundred marriages were forged
from these wartime relationships. After marrying in Italy, many of these newlyweds returned to the U.S. to
build lives together. For the Germans, a less harmonious end marked their
stay in southeastern Massachusetts. Repatriation and deconstruction was
swift. The last German POWs, including 4,200 routed through Standish from Camp Forrest, Tennessee, left
Boston in November and December 1945. Just a few weeks later, Camp
Myles Standish was deactivated and declared surplus property and with that
this once critically important installation passed into history.

In May 1983, a ceremony was held on the grounds of the old camp to rededi-
cate a religious grotto that had been built by Italian laborers during the
war. Former Lieutenant Colonel Semler was an invited guest, as were

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I say that my brother and I come from a working-class family, even though our father’s pay as a clock-punching, union-protected, steel-mill worker probably put our family financially in the lower middle class in the area of rural western Pennsylvania where I grew up. But culturally, we were working-class. Dad worked in the Hot Mill Combustion department at the Armco steel mill in Butler, so the furnaces that melted the steel were his responsibility. His dad, also Bill, worked in the rail yard at the Pullman–Standard rail car mill across the street from Armco, and he worked a second job as a plasterer. Our other grandpa, my mom’s dad, Roy, was a truck driver. Our uncle Cliff is a carpenter at a state university. The women in our family worked just as hard as the men, mostly as homemakers, and occasionally in the service industry.

So, I was raised to work hard. Dad went off to work wearing steel–toed boots, carrying his hard hat and lunch pail. My dad’s dad shared stories about (mis)adventures navigating rail cars through the rail yard on his midnight shift at the mill, and then spending the following morning plastering walls and ceilings around town. On the weekends, my brother and I helped dad clear our property, stacking logs as he ran the chainsaw. I helped—well, mostly watched—as my uncle built a porch for my grandparents’ single-wide trailer one Saturday morning. My mom, Belinda, kept the house and clothes clean and always had a homemade meal on the table.

I was always good at school, so that’s what I worked at the hardest. But while I was smart and determined, sometimes I got lost. I didn’t always know how to ask questions or where to go to get the information I needed. And when I encountered difficulties, my family wasn’t familiar enough with the situation to offer suggestions. But I was fortunate in that they encouraged me to ask questions and not to be intimidated by authority figures. I also benefited...
from being a straight white male in a society that privileges that identity. Often I found my way only because when I was unsure who to ask, I felt comfortable asking everyone.

Once, for an undergraduate sociology class at Westminster College, I read the article “Moving Up from the Working Class,” by Joan Morris and Michael Grimes (Down to Earth Sociology, 2005). In it, the authors share interviews with fellow sociologists from working-class families, many of whom identified two difficulties they each had encountered in their own experiences. The first was a deficit in cultural capital. Because

One reason I hang this sculpture on my wall is that it expresses the cultural understandings of work and social class that I carry with me. I negotiate both worlds. I understand the strains, risks, and pride of physical labor, but I also understand the persistent curiosity and mental tenacity necessary for academic work. When I have trouble concentrating on reading, or struggling to find words as I write, I think about all the work that my family has done. I think about the clean laundry and homemade meals my mother made, my grandfather driving the truck further down the highway, my other grandfather changing clothes after a shift at the mill and the professional cultures in our fields, cultures that are different from the one in which we were raised. Neither of us has figured it all out. But we are both making careful decisions about our career paths, and we both bring passion to our work.

Many of our students struggle with the same sorts of challenges, as former BSU provost Howard London’s important research (“Breaking Away” [1989]; “Transformations” [1992]) on first-in-their-family university students has told us for some time. These students often struggle to navigate their new cultural worlds while maintaining their relationships with their families. Many of them feel a conflict between their duties as family members and the demands of university study, and the weight of responsibility as the family standard bearer for educational mobility.

Bridgewater State has a higher proportion of first-generation and working-class students than many schools in the region. One of the reasons I continue to be excited about teaching at BSU is the chance to work with students from these backgrounds. I want to pass along to these students the lessons that helped me make the most of my opportunities. So, I work to help students, from all kinds of backgrounds, use sociology to better understand how finding a good job isn’t always just about a degree and training, it is also often about developing subtle social skills and networking. I include lessons in my classes on topics such as the role of social capital and diverse social networks in helping students in their job searches. These are practical lessons, rooted in good academic scholarship.

In Spring 2014, I taught a Second Year Seminar titled “Doing Work, Sociologically” that extended these lessons further. A major assignment in this course, supported in part by the Office of Undergraduate Research, asks each student to collect an oral history

This sculpture reminds me that my office is comfortable, and that much of the work my family has done was not.

of their cultural background, the respondents felt they lacked the social skills necessary to do well in academic settings. The second involved a contradiction: while their parents encouraged them to “do better,” which implied going to college and likely working a job that did not involve manual labor, the parents also advanced a perspective that valued manual labor over other forms of work. Manual labor was acknowledged in a way that intellectual work was not. So, while these respondents had attained good positions in their fields, their work often did not feel fully legitimate. Their stories gave me perspective and provided some language to help me to make sense of my own experiences. They also pushed me to realize how useful sociology can be to explain how individual opportunities are shaped by social situations.
interview from a person working in a field in which he or she is interested in working. Students coordinate with BSU’s Career Services office to identify Bridgewater State alumni or other interested people in the local community to participate in the interviews. After collecting interviews, students write reflective essays about how the experience informs their perspectives on their potential careers. Beyond simply collecting oral histories about work from the local communities, this project gives students the opportunity to apply sociological concepts in practical ways that are meaningful in their lives, as they expand their social networks and accumulate cultural capital.

Additional resources for students struggling with issues like these are available, and several organizations are working to support university students from working-class backgrounds. There’s United for Undergraduate Socio-economic Diversity, a coalition of students, student governments and allies, which works to advance awareness of undergraduate socio-economic diversity (http://ufused.org/). There’s also Class Action (http://www.classism.org/), a non-profit organization founded in 2004, which works to help people communicate across the class spectrum and break down classism through workshops, consulting and public education. Additionally, there is the Working-Class Studies Association, when I was an undergraduate, I once told one of my professors, Jim Perkins, about my dad working at the mill. He responded by sharing with me an unpublished story he wrote called “Conceptual Art and Galvanizing,” based on his own experiences in a mill. The story begins at a local bar, when someone declares that “Professors have never worked a day in their life.” The protagonist of the story, like the professor in real life, accepts this as a challenge and spends the following summer working in a local galvanizing mill, hoping to prove he could do that work. The story then overflows with images of hard work and calamity, but the professor was ultimately welcomed into the group of mill workers with a round of shots at the bar after the last shift of his probationary period. The story could be seen by some as merely another version of an old American trope, an integration narrative, but it has particular resonance for me. I am motivated by the same forces, but in the opposite direction. The protagonist works to show that a professor can be competent and capable in a mill, while also using the experience in his professional work to demonstrate the value of stories. I am working to show that a kid from a working-class family can be a competent and capable academic, and that academic lessons have practical value for everyone.

It is ironic, then, that work rules at the university prevented me from actually hanging this sculpture on my office wall myself. That was work to be done by a carpenter—someone with the same job as my uncle—not a professor. When visitors to my office ask, and sometimes even when they don’t, I’ll tell them about the sculpture and what it represents. And after discussing my family’s work, I’ll return to my own. In my second year here at BSU, I am still just beginning my job as a university professor. I’ve got work to do.

I am working to show that a kid from a working-class family can be a competent and capable academic, and that academic lessons have practical value for everyone.

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* An earlier version of this essay was published in October 2013 on the Working-Class Perspectives blog at: http://workingclassstudies.wordpress.com/2013/10/28/work-to-do/
Figure 1. Spring Mountains

The Other Las Vegas
PHOTO ESSAY

Ronald F. Reynolds

When most people think of Las Vegas, the picture that comes to mind is of casinos, shows, honky-tonk and extravagance. But Las Vegas is also a community of regular people who work at mundane jobs and live ordinary lives just like the rest of us. When they have the chance they, too, like to get outside, hopefully beat the heat and enjoy the great outdoors. Many visitors never get beyond the “Strip” to experience some of the nearby scenic locations. These photographs show a few of those proximate attractions.

Summer temperatures really sizzle and often exceed 105 degrees. Even with the “dry heat,” it is hard to enjoy the outdoors under those conditions. But by taking a short drive, one can increase altitude substantially and undergo a dramatic decrease in temperature. In half an hour it is possible to escape to Mount Charleston in the Spring Mountains National Recreation Area (Figure 1). Since elevations exceed 10,000 feet, one will experience there a temperature drop of 20 degrees or more. Given these cooler temperatures and the low humidity, it is fairly comfortable for hiking and other activities. At this elevation trees grow and it is very picturesque. There are many hiking and climbing trails here as well as ski facilities, in the winter season. In the lower elevations, typical Mojave Desert vegetation prevails (see inside front cover photograph).
Figure 2. Red Rock Canyon

Figure 3. Scooters
Nearby is Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area (Figure 2), which is slightly warmer due to its lower altitude but still cooler than the city. This is a really beautiful place with a 13-mile scenic loop drive, numerous hiking trails and rock-climbing opportunities. “Scooters” (Figure 3) are available for rent. These two-passenger vehicles are colorful and a lot of fun to drive along the scenic loop. Here, it is possible to spot wildlife: a herd of wild burros (Figure 4), mule deer or bighorn sheep. A couple of miles down the road is Spring Mountain Ranch State Park (Figure 5). Before it was purchased by the State of Nevada in 1974, Spring Mountain had had several celebrity owners, among whom Howard Hughes was the best known. Surprisingly, there is no record of Hughes ever having stayed at the ranch. The Park is a lovely escape from the high temperatures and congestion of the city. At an elevation of 3800 feet, it is usually 10-15 degrees cooler than Las Vegas. The ranch is an oasis and a great place for horseback riding and other outdoor pursuits. There are picnic areas, grassy fields for playing baseball or Frisbee, tours of the ranch house and hiking trails. Lake Harriet (Figure 6) provides habitat for water-fowl and is frequently crowded with ducks. From May through September, there is an extensive Summer Theater program including outdoor concerts.
One of the most stunning attractions in the area is south of Las Vegas, outside Boulder City on the Colorado River. Here, Hoover Dam stands 726 feet tall and impounds Lake Mead, which extends 112 miles upstream. It is an awesome sight to behold, especially at night (Figure 7). The dam was completed in 1936, at which time it was the biggest construction project ever undertaken. There are three and one-quarter million cubic yards of concrete in the dam, so much that after all these years it is not yet fully cured! Hoover Dam has multiple purposes, including flood control, recreational use, and hydroelectric generation. It also functions as a reservoir. Until recently, the only way to cross the Colorado River in the vicinity was to drive directly over the top of the dam. There is always heavy pedestrian traffic there and it is a snarl to get through. Since 9/11, there have been major security concerns, so a new bridge was built over the Colorado just downstream from the dam. It is now possible to cross the river on a multi-lane road at high speed. When the bridge was built it included a pedestrian walkway from which you can now get a magnificent view overlooking the dam and part of Lake Mead (Figure 8). There is plenty to see on top of the dam, but you can also take guided tours inside the dam where you can see the turbines and pass through the network of tunnels. It is an eerie feeling to be deep inside the dam and feel it quivering due to the water rushing through and spinning the giant turbines.
Figure 6. Lake Harriet

Figure 7. Hoover Dam at Night
Figure 8. Hoover Dam
Figure 9. Lake Mead Marina
The Lake Mead National Recreation Area impounded behind Hoover Dam serves as a reservoir but also provides opportunity for people living in the desert to experience the fun of being out on the water. Many people own pleasure boats that they moor at the Lake Mead Marina (Figure 9) or at other marinas along the lake shore. All that water in the middle of the desert produces a marvelous sight. Today, it is a little less marvelous than it once was. Due to a combination of recent dry weather and poor conservation, the lake level has dropped substantially (80-100 feet) since 1991. Figure 9 documents this fall: there is a prominent white “bathtub ring” encircling the lake showing former water levels. Still, much of its beauty and function remain as it was. It is possible to rent a houseboat and spend time on the lake or take a paddle-wheeler cruise on the Desert Princess (Figure 10) and enjoy the magnificent scenery (Figure 11).

If you get to Sin City, take some time away from The Strip and explore some of The Other Las Vegas.

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The Business of Diversity Management

Jakari Griffith

Scholars who study organizational diversity often identify with Martin Luther King Jr’s remarks on equality, largely because they were a prelude to Title VII of The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed discrimination in hiring, promotion, compensation, and termination. “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny,” wrote King in his famous 1963 Letter from a Birmingham Jail, “and whatever affects one directly, affects us all indirectly.” King understood that our most significant political and social aims could only be met if we work with our neighbors to realize the promises of democracy. He believed that our society could flourish only through lawful recognition of the equal and inalienable rights of all people. For King, equality in group relations was essential not only to a democracy, but also to organizational governance.

Since King’s time, there has been at the heart of diversity management a fundamental need to promote equality in organizational processes and systems. While this has fostered important human resource management practices that target equality—grievance procedures, formal hiring and promotion systems, systematic recruitment schemes—the new managerial mandate has shifted away from simply promoting fairness and equality toward identifying unique perspectives from an increasingly diverse workforce that translate into tangible business value.

Today, globalization, rapid development of technology, and increased economic pressures all require a thorough reexamination of human resources, making the need to focus on diversity all the more apparent.

Businesses increasingly recognize that their success is strongly tied to the trends and preferences of a more diverse marketplace. In this respect, diversity management holds that having diverse personnel in business is essential to tapping into growing markets, adapting to environmental pressures, and capitalizing on emerging opportunities. To succeed in this new environment, organizations must draw on the full scope of human talents, qualities, perspectives, and skills as part of their larger strategies. Therefore, diversity management no longer concerns just fairness and equality, it also embodies a meaningful appreciation for different patterns of thinking, beliefs, and cultural assumptions as preconditions for learning and effectiveness.

When businesses apply diversity management, however, there is often great confusion about what constitutes “diversity.” First, it can be classified into two general areas: surface diversity and deep-level diversity. Surface diversity represents the visible indicators of difference, such as race, ethnicity, gender, and age. It is commonly employed in corporate diversity training programs, recruitment practices, and related policies. Surface-level diversity is easily measured and can be effective in driving corporate outreach policies, for example.

Deep-level diversity consists of attributes that are more difficult to measure, such as attitudes, values, beliefs, and perspectives. Since deep-level diversity can be informed by intersecting surface-level attributes (age, gender, etc.), it gives rise to variously situated social identities that are made clear through repeated interactions with colleagues. Deep-level diversity weakens the...
influence of surface-level attributes by challenging biases linked to stereotypes. Yet while it is easy to embrace the limited number of attributes contained in either the surface- or deep-level categorizations, it is important to note that any social category underrepresented in a particular context can be considered for diversity inclusion. This holds all organizational members responsible for ensuring that different social categories are respected and validated.

Putting the “Diversity” in Diversity Management

Diversity management, in the popular sense, uses differences in surface- or deep-level categories to create social and economic value. It is a distinct set of practices conceptually related to Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity (AA/EEO) policy, but different from it in that diversity management primarily concerns the voluntary promotion of diversity-relevant activities that benefit organizations. In a related sense, diversity management also means fostering inclusivity through socially integrated workgroups. It refers to the creation of conditions where people of diverse backgrounds and worldviews can develop their capacities and contribute to organizational goals. Some observers have even described diversity management as the recognition and valuation of cultural differences, informational exchanges, and alignment in functional expertise or background knowledge.

At the end of the day, business leaders must pay close attention to practices that affect the bottom line. This logic strays not too far from the late business diversity champion Roosevelt Thomas’s observation that diversity efforts are best supported when they are aligned with business outcomes. The architect of Coca-Cola’s Diversity Leadership Academy, Thomas (1945–2013) reasoned that an economic justification for diversity was a far superior rationale to impress upon managers than were social and moral ones, regardless of their societal value. The key argument here is that the greater the tie between diversity and performance, the more an organization will commit to investing in resources to support diversity efforts, a phenomenon scholars call the “business case” for diversity. Consequently, examining links between diversity efforts and specific business outcomes has become an important area of inquiry.

Diversity Management and Business Performance

Effective diversity management has a strong impact on organizational performance. One metric often used to assess this relationship is the degree to which companies are compositionally diverse, which refers to the numeric representation of various diversity groups. This approach makes organizational sense, because it encompasses surface-level attributes that are easy to count and observe, and therefore can be used to gauge the success of staffing and recruiting efforts. Companies that adopt the approach typically showcase the composition of their workforce in order to assess its value for diversity and show where they might improve. This could mean publishing the number of women they employ, or emphasizing the diversity of their workforces in brochures, leaflets, pamphlets and websites. But perhaps the most logical argument in its favor is that it makes diversity a point of positive differentiation from competitors.
How Does Diversity Affect the Bottom Line?

Visible diversity management practices send a message to external stakeholders that an organization is fair and inclusive. Studies have shown that organizations are rewarded for this sort of commitment by way of increased economic returns and investments. Moreover, high levels of compositional diversity allow firms to signal important information to labor markets about their ability to attract and retain workers from diverse backgrounds. There is general agreement among scholars that diverse job seekers form favorable impressions about a prospective employer when they see that the company hires people who look like them. Avery and colleagues (Personnel Psychology, 2006) found that job seekers who believed it was important to engage with diversity groups other than their own were also more likely to pursue employment with an organization that valued diversity because, to them, it increased the chances of their own identities being affirmed. Ng and Burke (International Journal of Human Resource Management, 2005) found that high achievers rated organizations with diversity management programs as attractive places of employment. In fact, among the 12 criteria in the 2014 edition of its annual “Great Colleges to Work For” feature, the Chronicle of Higher Education lists diversity fourth.

Taken together, perceived compositional diversity and the existence of a diversity management program seem to greatly expand the potential pool of applicants available to an organization while at the same time appealing to high achievers who are likely to reciprocate with supportive work behavior.

Also, by appearing diverse, businesses can create opportunities to make meaningful connections with important stakeholder groups and customers. The U.S. population has changed dramatically over the past four decades. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) predicts that by 2020 the U.S. labor force will be significantly older and more racially and ethnically diverse. This will create a new pattern in spending power, which suggests the potential to develop new markets for products and services. Firms adjusting their workforce demographics to match the needs of emergent customer groups stand to benefit substantially as these markets continue to grow, and increase the overall effectiveness of sales, marketing, and product development efforts. In addition, when a firm employs people whose demographics resemble those of its targeted customer groups, it signals to these groups that it values their experiences, beliefs, and opinions. Likewise, firms employing members of diverse groups benefit tremendously from cultural experiences and understanding that would be unavailable were such diversity inaccessible or nonexistent.

For example, Phillips and colleagues (Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 2009) found that members of homogeneous groups were more inclined to share unique viewpoints when more diverse members were included in the group. Moreover, members were also more likely to use diverse viewpoints to either validate or reexamine the logic supporting particular courses of action.

Finally, diversity also benefits company performance when the opinions, values, and experiences of a diverse workforce cross-fertilize to create novel insights and innovative performance. When people band together according to their more visible surface-level attributes, it can create subgroups that prevent effective group performance. On the other hand, research tells us that as diverse employees interact during group tasks, they discover similarities that lead to deeper levels of cooperation and communication. Susan Fiske notes in Reducing Prejudice and Discrimination (2000) that an increased sense of interdependence among diverse group members leads them to value others on the basis of their individual qualities, resulting in a better understanding of members’ needs, interests, similarities, and perspectives. Though scholars have often emphasized the role of conflict in diverse groups, studies now show that diverse teams with properly managed conflict are often more creative, arrive at better decisions, and are more innovative than their homogenous counterparts.

The Role of Diversity Training and Leadership

Given what is at stake, it is no wonder that formal diversity training programs have received so much attention over the past 25 years. Though many training methodologies have been devised and published, there is much convergence on the idea that training programs should emphasize diversity awareness as a means to promote positive intergroup interactions. This often
takes the form of workplace seminars and information sessions that provide important diversity facts, details of group-member experiences, knowledge about how cognitive bias works, and suggestions for improving the capacity for empathy. Businesses may even instruct employees on the importance of creating and managing a shared organizational identity in which members connect to one another through a common sense of purpose, conviction, and meaning. Tony Hsieh, CEO of Zappos.com and author of Delivering Happiness (2010), argues that a strong set of core values can foster a culture where everyone identifies with diversity, which for Zappos means being open minded, humble, and committed to pursuing growth and learning. Other diversity interventions focus on behavioral changes in interpersonal communications, so that employees can better communicate across cultural margins and integrate different worldviews in ways that lead to better business decisions. Regardless of whether training focuses on improving interpersonal processes or raising diversity awareness, it is important that any training be done as an integrated set of practices rather than a loosely configured campaign of isolated ones.

Diversity-training efforts alone are inadequate if they are not fully anchored in an organizational culture that has made diversity and inclusion a primary part of its mission. Whereas an employer may use industry-established best practices to differentiate it from competitors, a company committed to a culture of inclusion accepts diversity as a maxim governing its existence. These companies conduct systematic audits to assess the degree to which diversity is integrated throughout their systems, levels, and processes. They make frequent use of diversity assessment measures, hold managers accountable for creating inclusive work environments, and recognize diversity as an essential tool with which organizations create value for themselves and their stakeholders. This often means thinking differently about established power structures and learning to value individuals for their intrinsic as opposed to instrumental value.

But perhaps the most salient indicator of a company’s commitment to diversity and inclusion resides in its leadership. Whether elected or appointed, leaders should know that their constituents expect certain behaviors from them. In leading a diverse organization, this means showing high levels of trust and sensitivity, encouraging full participation of all members in organizational systems, showing interest in and appreciation for viewpoints and concerns different from one’s own, being transparent about how decisions are made, and maintaining attitudes that foster good communication. Leaders must also show genuine compassion and concern for all organizational members in both their public and private actions if they are to promote the common good and health of the organization. Most importantly, leaders must champion a discourse that affirms both the organization and the people they employ.

Although no one approach to diversity management fits all circumstances, it is becoming increasingly clear that targeted and deliberate diversity leadership programs are required for long-term organizational success. And though the benefits have been expressed through the narrow lens of financial profit, there are many other positive outcomes that do not lend themselves directly to measurement. Workplace diversity involves everyone’s values and the pursuit of both communal and individual good. Diversity management might have less to do with learning about others than discovering new and unimagined parts of ourselves. And that cost-benefit analysis requires no business case.

Though scholars have often emphasized the role of conflict in diverse groups, studies now show that diverse teams with properly managed conflict are often more creative, arrive at better decisions, and are more innovative than their homogenous counterparts.

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Marco Polo: Pioneer of East-West Communication, Transportation and Trade

Chien Wen Yu

Description of the World or, more commonly, The Travels of Marco Polo was the most influential travelogue concerning China in the thirteenth century. Today, there exist more than 130 versions of the book. Though scholars have examined many aspects of The Travels of Marco Polo, few have studied closely what it tells us about the origins of East-West communication and culture. The Travels is a popular text in China, but it is controversial in the West. Though many skeptics question the authenticity of Polo’s account, the work that scholars (members of my family and myself included) have done over many years translating and writing about Marco Polo proves that his coming to China contributed greatly to the advance of East-West communication, cultural exchange, transportation, and trade.

The Life of Marco Polo and His Journey to China

Marco Polo was born to a merchant family on the Venetian island of Curzola (present-day Korcula, Croatia) in 1254. When he was six years old, his father (Niccolo Polo) and his uncle (Maffeo Polo) made their first trip to China. When Marco was 17, Nicolo and Maffeo took him with them on their second trip to China. From Venice, they entered the Mediterranean Sea, crossed the Black Sea, and arrived in the ancient city of Baghdad in the Middle East. There they were robbed by pirates, which dissuaded them from travelling any further by sea. Instead, they took a land route to China. Riding on horseback, they overcame obstacles and went over the Pamir Mountains passing through Armenia, Persia and Afghanistan, before they arrived in the empire of the Mongol Great Khan. In May 1275, Kublai Khan invited the Polos to his residence where they presented him the privileges and letters that the Pope of Rome had sent. Great Khan was very pleased with the holy oil that they had brought. In 1277, Marco Polo was appointed an official of the Privy Council by Kublai Khan and served as a tax inspector for three years in the City of Yangzhou.

Staying and doing business in Mongol Empire for 17 years, the Polos acquired a wealth of jewels and gold, but they were anxious to go home. Kublai reluctantly let them go in return for escorting Mongol princess Kokachin so that she could marry the Persian prince, Arghun. The sea journey took two years; they passed through the South China Sea to Sumatra and crossed the Indian Ocean for a final landing in Hormuz. The Polos arrived back in Venice in 1295 by way of Persia, Constantinople and the Black Sea.

The Travels of Marco Polo and Controversies

The Travels of Marco Polo is a detailed account of his travels to China and neighboring countries in central, west and southeast Asia, using first-hand information. The book is of high academic and historical value since there were no annals in China to record the historical facts of that period. The document is divided into four volumes. The first volume provides an account of what the Polos saw and heard on their way to China. The second volume records the society of early Yuan Empire including political affairs, wars, secrets of the royal court, exotic customs, and economic prosperity of such cities as Dadu (Beijing), Shangdu (Zhangjiakou), and Xingzai (Hangzhou). The third volume depicts the conditions of the neighboring countries to the southeast of China. Of the four volumes, the second volume stands out because it is written from the perspective of Marco’s personal experiences in China and it is considered by many to be the best part.
Today, there are two schools among the scholars of Marco Polo, and they have formed opposing views. One side, the Believers, affirm that Marco Polo went to China, while Skeptics doubt that he went. Supporters are represented by scholars such as Tübingen University professor Hans Ulrich Vogel, British diplomat and Polo biographer Maurice Collis, and Chinese scholars such as Zhijiu Yang and Shixiong Yu. Skeptics are represented by Frances Wood, Head of the Chinese Collection at the British Library, and Professor Craig Clunas from University of London. Best known for her book *Did Marco Polo Go to China?*, Wood argues that Marco Polo didn’t, and that *The Travels* was merely a travel guide containing second-hand tales.

In the fourteenth century, the book spread throughout Europe in manuscript form, popularly circulated and copied by hand. Two years after Marco Polo returned from China, a war started between the city states of Venice and Genoa. During the Battle of Curzola (1298), Marco Polo was captured and put into jail as a prisoner of war. He spent several months of his imprisonment dictating his travels to a fellow inmate and writer, Rustichello de Pisa. Interpreting Marco Polo’s stories and incorporating his own ideas, Rustichello wrote down only what he was interested in. And here is the root of the controversy.

The historical debate about the veracity of *The Travels* focuses on what is (or seems to some to be) missing from the book. Why does the book contain no references to quintessential Chinese cultural practices and symbols, such as foot-binding among Chinese women, the Great Wall, Chinese characters or chopsticks, or even Chinese tea? The answers to those questions are pretty clear. For Marco Polo, the practice of foot-binding for women was rare, especially in the Mongol area. Mongol nomads practically lived on horseback; it would have been difficult for bound-foot women to function. The Great Wall was built in the Ming Dynasty after the Yuan Empire and Marco Polo’s travels. A Venetian, Marco Polo did not know or learn any Chinese, nor did he know how to use Chinese writing brushes or chopsticks. Therefore, there was no mention of Chinese characters or chopsticks. Finally, the Mongols did not drink the regular Chinese tea, which is brewed from tea leaves, and so Chinese tea is, naturally, never mentioned. In short, skeptics’ questions are easily answered and the believers’ case is sustained.

**Marco Polo’s Stories and Contribution to East-West Communication and Culture**

Marco Polo’s description of Chinese food and drink still plays an important part in our understanding of the origins of East-West communication and cultural exchange. The foods he mentions include rice, noodles, the meat of birds, and the meat of domesticated and wild animals. In terms of drink, there is mare’s (horse) milk, camel milk, grape wine and rice wine. Horse milk is a Mongolian drink that many claim tastes as good as wine. According to Marco Polo’s account, the Great Khans raised thousands of white horses, and only Kublai Khan and his immediate family had the privilege of being served of this kind of drink. In addition to mare’s milk, camel’s milk was a favorite drink because it was reportedly tasty and good for promoting the health of the whole body and strengthening will power.

Polo also wrote about grape and wine production in Taiyuan of Shangxi. Wine was believed to stave off hunger.
The Polos were adventurous merchants from Venice and went to the East to seek spices, silk and jewelries. Marco Polo was drawn to the powerful Yuan Empire and the prosperity of its economy and trade. Regarding the monetary system, he gave a detailed account of paper money, its money circulation and manufacturing process. Under the rule of the Yuan Empire, paper money was used by government officials and ordinary citizens. In Dadu, refusing to accept it as payment was punishable by death. Even the foreign merchants who came with silver, gold, precious stones and leather to the Yuan empire had to accept the paper money and take it for payment. Despite this threat, the use of paper money for trade was recognized by many in Polo's time and since as so much more convenient and efficient than bartering with goods for goods. It signified the progress of the Yuan Empire, but it also reflects the acumen the Marco Polo possessed as a businessman and an objective observer, and a conduit for connecting ideas, practices and cultures of the East and the West.

Marco Polo’s Stories and Their Contribution to East-West Transportation

As Marco Polo described it, the Yuan Empire was a vast territory that was remarkably well connected. Across the Empire were hundreds of communications posts where horses and couriers were stationed. In all, about 200,000 horses were kept and a system of town-to-town messengers was put in place for this purpose. Some messengers traveled 250 or 300 miles in a day. Marco Polo was impressed with the efficient transportation and communication system in the Mongol Empire. The Travels of Marco Polo describes another important feature of east-west transportation: the world-famous Lugou Bridge (which Marco Polo called the Bridge of Pulisangan). Appointed by the Great Khan as his ambassador to the West, Marco left Khan–balik (Beijing), crossing the handsome bridge of stone built with 24 arches and 25 piers. Lugou Bridge was a strategic point of transportation, crossing as it did Pulisangan River, which flowed into the ocean and was navigated by many vessels with considerable quantities of merchandise. Since Marco was the first westerner to cross the bridge and introduce the bridge to the West, many westerners call it “Marco Polo Bridge.”

The Travels of Marco Polo expanded the worldview of both his contemporaries and European explorers who came after his time. Some famous world maps were made using information provided by Marco Polo, and The Travels of Marco Polo contributed to the expansion of shipping ventures and business. After reading The Travels, Portuguese explorer Vasco de Gama (1460–1524) and Italian mariner Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) each became interested in the East, envisioned Chinese prosperity and civilization, and explored the East in a way that promoted the East-West cultural exchange, transportation and trade.
Miniature Books at Maxwell Library
Marcia Dinneen

For centuries, people have been fascinated by miniature books. Some have collected them; others have written about them; still more have simply enjoyed them. What many people do not know is that the Maxwell Library has its own collection of miniature books. Housed in Special Collections, these tiny treasures are rare in several aspects. The most obvious of these is their size. The standard definition for a miniature book as set by collector Percy Spielmann and by Julian Edison, editor of *Miniature Book News*, is three inches in height—up to four inches “if the intent is miniature.” By this measure, the BSU collection has 78 miniature books, including Bibles, religious books, novels, poems, hymnals and children’s books. The collection also includes 19 books published by Achille J. St. Onge (1913–1978) of Worcester, Massachusetts, whose publications are regarded as among the best-produced miniature books in America.

The origin of miniature books actually precedes the invention of printing. The earliest miniature “book” is a tiny cuneiform clay tablet produced by the Sumerians and containing government records. Miniatures were developed in manuscript form and only later as printed books. The first printed miniature book, according to historian Douglas McMurtrie, was the *Diurnale Moguntinum*, produced about 1468 by German printer Peter Schoeffer, who apprenticed with Johann Gutenberg. Early miniature books are rare. By the sixteenth century, miniatures were produced more frequently, and there are many examples that can be seen in such repositories as the British Library and the Library of Congress. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Thumb Bibles were particularly popular, as were Almanacs. By the nineteenth century, technological advances in typography and photography enabled the creation of the smallest books. “The 19th century,” Louis Bondy wrote in his *Miniature Books: Their History from Beginnings to the Present* (1981), was “the supreme age of the miniature book.” In that century, several London publishers developed complete libraries for children that were housed in specially designed bookcases, and religious tract societies produced huge numbers of tiny books, which they often distributed for free. Since then, miniature books have conveyed many types of knowledge, from dictionary entries to poems.

Fine workmanship is the hallmark of miniature books. Care is needed to cut and cast type, develop ink that will not clog the tiny type, select appropriate paper, and bind the minute volumes. Miniature books are works of art, but they are also useful. Because of their size, they have been easy to carry and, when necessary, to hide.

In 1832 Doctor Charles Knowlton (1800–1850) wrote a manual on the then-taboo subject of birth control, and published it under the innocuous title *The Fruits of Philosophy*, or the *Private Companion of Young Married People*. The book measures 2 3/4 by 2 1/2 inches and was easy to conceal. In 1862, the *Emancipation Proclamation* was printed in miniature book form by abolitionist John Murray Forbes of Boston. Copies were given to Union soldiers to carry and to distribute in southern states. On his travels in Africa, British explorer David Livingstone carried with him a miniature book of the poems of Robert Burns, and T. E. Lawrence gave miniature copies of the *Koran* to his Muslim soldiers as a battle talisman. Adolf Hitler used miniatures for propaganda, issuing cheaply printed biographies of Nazi officers, folk songs, and praise for himself. One miniature book, *The Autobiography of Robert Hutchings Goddard, Father of the Space Age*, published by St. Onge, was aboard the *Apollo 11* mission to the Moon in 1969.

Although miniature books were largely the creatures of publishers, some authors wrote their works in miniature. The Brontë sisters and brother Bramwell created their worlds of Angria and Gondal in tiny manuscripts. They replicated published print in careful calligraphy and used a variety of materials (including a flour sack, a sheet of music, or a wallpaper scrap) for each “volume.” As described by Kate E. Brown in her 1998 essay “Beloved Objects,” Charlotte Brontë’s *Never-Ending Story* (1826–29) is less than three inches tall, as is Bramwell’s *History of the Young Men* (1830).
Miniature books have great appeal to the avid collector. In his book *The Savage Mind* (1962), anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss called the miniature book the “masterpiece of the journeyman.” Some are driven to collecting miniatures because they can amass a great many of them in a small space. Empress Eugenie, wife of Napoleon III, had a collection estimated at between 1800 to 2000 volumes; sadly, it was wholly lost during the 1871 burning of the Tuileries Palace. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt collected more than 750 miniatures. Among the many libraries that collect miniature books are the Henry E. Huntington Library, the Boston Public Library, the Library of Congress, the American Antiquarian Society (which has 100 examples of American editions of Thumb Bibles dating from 1765) and the New York Public Library (which has a copy of the first miniature book printed in America, William Secker’s *A Wedding Ring for the Finger, or the Salve of Divinity on the Sore of Humanity* [Boston, 1695]).

Bridgewater State University’s own collection of miniature books ranges from literature to religion, from instructive manuals to biographies. The books are bound in cloth, paper, and various types of leather. Most of the books are children’s literature, 30 of them in all. Twenty-two books are of a religious nature, ranging from prayer books to books of Bible verses for each day. There are 13 Bibles. Sixteen books fall into the category of literature—novels and poems including some by recognized authors, such as Robert Frost. There are also inaugural presidential addresses: Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon. Some of the books at Maxwell are in poor shape and some of them are missing pages. The majority of the books are written in English. Some of the “books” are actually pamphlets and two are Christmas ornaments, complete with string, to hang on the tree.

Perhaps most interesting among the miniature books in the BSU collection, however, are a series of 19 miniature books (all of them in fine shape) published by St. Onge. He started publishing miniatures in 1935 with *Noel*, by Robert K. Shaw. His early books were printed in this country, but later he had his books printed abroad using, for example, the Enschede Press of Haarlem, Holland (the one that also prints money for the country). St. Onge’s *Inaugural Address of John F. Kennedy* was in such demand after Kennedy’s death in 1963 that the 1000 original copies quickly sold out, and the book had to be reprinted. Within the year following Kennedy’s death, 7000 copies had been sold. The Robert H. Goddard Museum at Clark University in Worcester holds all 49 miniature books published by St. Onge.

In addition to the St. Onge collection, BSU collection contains other intriguing little books. There is the 1828 three-volume set of the gothic romance *Children of the Abbey*, along with books published by the American Tract Society, such as *Daily Food for Christians* (1880). One fascinating book is *The Bliss of Marriage, The Way to the Altar, Matrimony Made Easy, or How to Win a Lover* (1854). The book is included in *Humbug. A Look at Some Popular Impositions* (1859) as an example of a famous hoax, purportedly offering advice for a happy marriage, but in reality selling various nostrums.

Among the miniature children’s books are stories and poems difficult to locate elsewhere, such as Frank L. Baum’s short piece “The Christmas Stocking,” published in the Christmas Stocking Series. Other important titles in the collection include *The Ladies Almanac*, published in 1856, which includes an informative article on women’s medical colleges.

Although housing and displaying a collection of miniature books can be challenging, having it is an asset to Bridgewater State. Many of the titles are valuable because they point to our history and reflect aspects of a forgotten past. Students, scholars and others fascinated by the riches inside these tiny books would do well to set aside some time to spend with them by visiting our Special Collections, on the third floor of Maxwell Library.

Marcia Dinneen is Head of Reference Services at Maxwell Library.
The Classroom as the World: Understanding the Value of Experiential Learning

Lisa M. Litterio

Experiential learning appeals to Bridgewater State students, whose lives consist of balancing rigorous course loads with full-time work and familial obligations. Experiential learning is exactly as it sounds: learning by experience. Learning by doing. It is a paradigm shift, requiring our students not to compartmentalize their lives between school and work, extracurricular and familial obligations; to seize opportunities to direct their own learning, make their own knowledge, and apply it. Bridgewater fosters this kind of learning and application of knowledge through its many internships, study abroad offerings, and practicums, but experiential learning can also happen with strategic classroom pedagogy. It can be a lens to reshape assignments and syllabi. My goals in this article are first to provide an understanding of experiential learning, then demonstrate two examples of experiential learning in classroom assignments to illustrate this concept as well as suggest ways to integrate this kind of teaching at Bridgewater.

Experiential learning was championed by early theorists in the field of education, nineteenth- and twentieth-century thinkers such as John Dewey, David Kolb, and Carl Rogers. More than a decade ago, L. Dee Fink defined experiential learning as a “paradigm of significant learning” that supports multiple learning objectives for students, including shaping their own knowledge through experience (Creating Significant Learning Experiences, 2003). More recently, educators Scott Wurdinger and Julie Carlson also encouraged instructors to involve their students in the learning process through discussion, group work, hands-on participation, and applying information outside the classroom (Teaching for Experiential Learning, 2010). At its core, experiential learning calls for us to envision the classroom differently. Rather than a fixed, physical location of desks and whiteboards, the classroom is the world: it is a summer internship, a trip to the grocery store, a carefully crafted assignment. Experiential learning not only invites us to reimagine the classroom, but also reconsider what constitutes learning and the formation of knowledge. It calls students to be the agents of their education—to learn by doing, discovering, reflecting and applying. This kind of learning, Fink explains, does not have one end goal; instead, its taxonomy spans six different areas of learning (see Figure 1), including “foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn.”

Figure 1. L. Dee Fink’s Taxonomy of Significant Learning, detailing 6 areas of learning (from Fink, Creating Significant Learning Experiences [2003]).
Today, “technology” is the buzzword in higher education with discussions centering on MOOCs (massive online open courses) and online/hybrid pedagogy. But experiential learning does not require new technology: it can be as refreshingly low-tech as building a chair. To provide some context, one of the courses I teach is English 201: Technical Writing. In this course, students consider how to write and deliver specialized (that is, “technical”) information to non-technical or general audiences. One of the most common examples of a technical document is a manual; it can be a physical manual for, say, a coffee maker or an electronic one, such as a PDF detailing how to use the latest iPhone. Designing a manual is a crucial part of technical writing because it relies on teaching students about audience, purpose, and clear content. Before students can design their own manuals, I encourage them to discover what that process is like by following instructions of a pre-existing manual. In this case, I use a manual from IKEA, and my 20 students are charged with the task of following these instructions to build a ready-to-assemble wooden chair. They are not building the chair because I need additional furniture in my home or office. They are building a chair to learn to think and write like a technical writer. But I do not tell them so. I want them to discover that for themselves.

The challenge is that IKEA’s manuals, as the illustration below (Figure 2) shows, contain a series of images and graphics, with little or no text. Adhering to the philosophy of experiential learning, I invited students in my Spring semester 2014 ENGL 201 class to brainstorm on how we should divide our labor. We decided that we would need a project manager and a team of builders. These students also spoke of the necessity for a team of writers who would observe their building process—and discuss what mode (text, verbal, visual) would be necessary to elaborate and represent various steps. One student suggested building the chair outside to have more space, and other students quickly agreed. Students spent the next 50 minutes building a chair, discussing and interpreting the IKEA manual as they assembled the chair with efficiency and precision. The one tool I provided them, a three-pronged screw driver, did not have a Phillips head, so they were almost unable to complete the final steps. Several students said that it was “hopeless” that they could finish, while others realized they were so close to a finished chair were not ready to give up. To complete their chair, one of the students ran to the nearby Art Building to borrow the correct screwdriver from an art instructor.

The students showed resourcefulness and perseverance as they shared aloud their process and as the manual writers observed, offered feedback, and collaborated to produce a revised document. This was not only experiential learning in progress, but it is also how I teach writing. Writing, too, involves discussion, collaboration, revising, and refinement. At the end
of this 50-minute class session, I had much more than a completed chair; I had a group of students who had willingly taken part in a pedagogical experiment, a lesson of experiential learning. This lesson resulted in a class more connected by this shared experience and students who realized that the ownership of teaching and learning and applying information is not in the hands of a singular person, but part of a collaborative effort.

In experiential learning, learning by doing leads to the questions of “Now what?” and “So what?” According to C. Haynes’s *Experiential Learning* (2007), “Students are encouraged to connect this experience to a real-life situation and apply what they learned in this experience to a similar or different situation.” Technical writers are often required to write manuals and user-friendly directions. Because students experienced building a chair from an unclear pictograph, they applied that knowledge in their own manual-writing process, asking themselves questions such as: How do I make this step clear to the reader? What kinds of terms do I need to define? What equipment or materials are necessary? Should I include disclaimers or other notations? Do I include both text and images, or only one of them?

For their own projects, I invite students to write their manuals for any user, but let them know that as their instructor, I will complete the steps listed and evaluate them on the clarity of their instructions. And so, in past semesters, I baked an orange cake, played Fantasy Football, and even attempted to change my own brake pads based on the documents that students submitted. Here is the beauty of experiential learning: it’s not one-sided. It encourages instructors to guide students in their own learning process, allowing them to experiment and discover. It also invites the instructor to be part of a shared experience that fosters not only a strong sense of community, but also student autonomy.

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Beyond the technical writing classroom, I see students drawing from the experience, whether it is writing a series of instructions necessary for a visitor watching their cats while they are away from home or, with respect to the more life-threatening cases we study, crafting technical documentation relating to the Challenger Explosion, aviation crises, or the nuclear crisis at Three Mile Island. In other disciplines, experiential learning could involve students creating art to illustrate a mathematical equation, developing maps from spaces they visit for a geography class, or conducting interviews with grocery store customers for a marketing project.

Experiential learning also encourages us to reconsider what we mean by the classroom. At Bridgewater, students already take part in study abroad programs, hold internships, and undertake service-learning projects. Yet, how can we integrate sites of study and exploration as part of the classroom? How can we extend the classroom as a site of learning? Even within the confines of a course syllabus, instructors can question how our material, our understanding of our world, is influenced by experiential learning practices. One of the ways in which Bridgewater supports this practice is through the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR). Each semester, funding is allocated to faculty applicants through course-embedded research grants—funds that support students in their research, reimbursement for classes to travel off campus, or for supplies. Last semester, OUR provided a grant for my English course, “Writing for the Public: The Art of Persuasion” (ENGL 389), a course that explores how writing can influence people to reconsider viewpoints, discover common ground, compromise, or even create policy change. As the culminating project in ENGL 389, students were invited to consider how public writing extends to memorials and monuments as sites of writing, speech, and memory. This assignment not only encourages students to analyze and consider a memorial in a public space to develop a thoughtful and articulate rhetorical analysis of the space, it also requires students to experience a physical place. We visited the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston.

ENGL 389 class members traveled to Boston on a Friday afternoon in April. We spent time together as a class not
analyzing or evaluating images in a textbook or on a computer screen, but analyzing exterior spaces in person. The students who went to Boston presented their own theses and arguments about the memorial they encountered at the Undergraduate Research Symposium on April 28, 2014. Their experience was of more than just visiting a research site to conduct fieldwork, interviews with observers, and fellow classmates; they also disseminated that research to a wider audience that consisted of members of the BSU community. They cultivated what Fink considers the human dimension of experiential learning, as they learned of the atrocities of the Holocaust and pondered the quotations from personal accounts. They also learned about cultural significance, as they observed the small stones that are routinely piled on the entryway to the memorial. One student of Jewish heritage shared with the class that stones are often left on Jewish graves to symbolize the permanence of a person or event. Consisting of six glass towers representing each concentration camp, the Memorial was a physical site with which students interacted. They all considered carefully how the Memorial was constructed and positioned, but also how viewers interacted with the space. They noted that many people seemed to walk right by and not even realize the solemnity of the space. A few peered through the metal floors to see smoke and lights flicker, reminiscent of the Gas Chambers, according to the designer’s vision.

What I am encouraging... is that we help our students see that there is no singular divide between academia and the real world, and that our role is to facilitate and cultivate opportunities for students to be self-learners. Experiential learning requires us to reflect on what we teach and the way we teach it, examining our syllabi and assignments, and engaging in conversations with other faculty about our teaching practices. As educator Larry Spence summarizes, “We won’t meet the needs for more and better higher education until professors become designers of learning experiences and not teachers” (Fink, 2003). Following Spence, let us craft and shape learning opportunities that best serve our students at Bridgewater and beyond.

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**Winner of the 2014 Lois P. Rudnick Book Prize, New England American Studies Association.**

At the start of the twenty-first century, critics concerned about white appropriation of black culture reached back into their cultural lexicons to resurrect a term that Norman Mailer had popularized in 1957: “The White Negro” … Between 1999 and 2003, nearly every media journalist and scholar writing about the rise to fame of white rapper Eminem felt obliged to use Mailer’s phrase to describe the hip-hop star who claims to be “chocolate on the inside.” Revealing the stereotyping logic often lurking beneath white attraction to African Americans, Mailer’s famous essay “The White Negro” typified the white bohemian fascination with the supposed sexual potency, anarchic wildness, and hip poses of black men. Desiring escape from a 1950s white culture of conformity and anxiety, the hipsters that Mailer describes sought an antidote in the swagger and “primitive” emotions of “the Negro”: “He lived in the enormous present, he subsisted for his Saturday night kicks, relinquishing the pleasures of the mind for the more obligatory pleasures of the body, and in his music he gave voice to… his rage and the infinite variations of joy, lust, … [and the] scream and despair of his orgasm. For jazz is orgasm” (341). The jazz-consuming “White Negro” has now been resurrected as the “wigger,” a term for suburban white kids who dress in ghetto style and consume gangsta rap music to stoke their fantasies of macho power and violence. Of course, whites’ impersonation and appropriation of blackness has a much longer, multimedia history, encompassing blackface minstrel shows, modernist poetics, and Hollywood film. With good reason and ample evidence, many scholars read this cultural history from blackface to wiggers as a long and repetitive story of the imperialist and racist nature of whites’ desire to possess the black “Other.”

*Beyond the White Negro: Empathy and Anti-Racist Reading* complicates this history of white appropriation by analyzing white audiences consuming African-American literature, film, theater, and music in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Extending the cultural sphere of the debate beyond hip-hop music, I argue that the White Negro paradigm is inadequate to describe the varied politics of cross-racial identification in the past decade, given the evolution of whiteness in our contemporary moment. To question the often pessimistic and cynical scholarly view of cross-racial empathy and affiliation, I examine encounters with black literature and culture that foster the development of “white allies” who are divesting, rather than investing, in white power and privilege.
Rather than treating whiteness as a transhistorical essence synonymous with domination, I explore how encounters with African-American literature and popular culture help whites to develop and strengthen anti-racist sensibilities.

women’s fiction on The Oprah Winfrey Show, Boston-area book clubs reading African-American literature, and college student viewers of the racial-conflict films Do the Right Thing and Crash. In his book Everything But the Burden: What White People Are Taking From Black Culture (2003), editor Greg Tate brings together essays examining white fascination with blackness as a “fetish object” in the realms of music, sports, fashion, comedy, art, cinema, and politics. As his title implies, Tate reductively assumes that white people take everything from black culture except the burden of living in a racist society, and that black culture “remains the most co-optable and erasable of consumption” is a term commonly used to describe reading, viewing, and listening to texts, the word “consumption” is ill-fitting for my purposes because it signifies purchasing and eating, implying that the culture in question is commodified, easily digested, and disposable. Instead, I highlight experiences of cross-cultural encounter that can profoundly alter the self-conceptions of white readers, viewers, and listeners of black-authored texts. Although white co-optation is an undeniably potent force in the present, the possibility remains for white audiences to do more than simply consume and copy black style, but to experience a perspective shift by being exposed to African-American ways of seeing and interpreting the world, including racist structures of power. While my research confirms that cross-racial sympathy can often resemble a colonizing appropriation of blackness for white needs, the evidence also suggests that cross-cultural encounters can stimulate radical acts of treason against white privilege. In her book White Women, Race Matters, Ruth Frankenberg concludes that “whiteness changes over time and space and is in no way a transhistorical essence,” yet critical race scholars such as Noel Ignatiev continue to essentialize whiteness as “nothing but an expression of race privilege” (Race Traitor 289). Rather than treating whiteness as a transhistorical essence synonymous with domination, I explore how encounters with African-American literature and popular culture help whites to develop and strengthen anti-racist sensibilities. The nouns “White Negro” and “wigger” are inadequate to describe this reception phenomenon because they imply that blackness is a state of being that can be embodied by white people—a false premise given the tenacity of white privilege in this country. In contrast, Beyond the White Negro emphasizes that cross-racial empathy is a state of mind and an aspirational process, a struggle that is ongoing and never complete.

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With that said, it would be easy to begin reading The Boom by Russell Gold, senior energy reporter for the Wall Street Journal, with your mind already made up about whether the benefits of fracking outweigh the costs. Unfortunately, in this respect, Gold’s story about the pros and cons of fracking probably won’t offer much to change your mind. That is to say, if you are in search of a data-dense analysis about whether the images of flames coming out of the water faucets of Pennsylvanian homeowners can be blamed on fracking, you should look elsewhere because that is not the author’s intent. However, if it is a level-headed, well-balanced story about the history of the political, economic, social and environmental aspects of this game-changing technology that appeals to you, consider The Boom an adequate primer on the subject. The Boom is an easy read and the book’s author takes an even-handed position concerning the process of fracking and the major players in its long and interesting history.

From a detailed explanation about how hydrocarbons form from ancient, tiny water-dwelling organisms to how the process of fracking differs from conventional hydrocarbon production, from the enormous costs associated with drilling and fracking a single well to the global economics of energy industry, Russell Gold covers his bases.

Throughout the book, Gold focuses on the science and technology of fracking by expertly providing the reader with both facts and context. For example, he tells us that an astonishing 100 wells per day are drilled in the U.S. and nearly all of them are fracked. Gold also explains how this oilfield technique is used to release the hydrocarbons locked within deep shale formation by injecting tons of sand, millions of gallons of water and often dangerous chemicals at high pressure to induce man-made fractures in the rock. These fractures, in turn, provide fast pathways for hydrocarbons to move more freely and flow into the well and increase hydrocarbon production. Unfortunately, as Gold notes, these fractures may also provide direct pathways for hydrocarbons to travel into nearby aquifers, thus polluting drinking water sources. The process has critics and defenders, but no one debates that fracking has become an increasingly important fixture on the domestic and global energy landscape. In fact, cleaner-burning natural gas produced by fracking is now overtaking coal as the dominant fuel used to generate electricity in the United States.

Somewhere near the midpoint of the book, Gold summarizes the secondary focus of his 300-plus page primer: the major players in the world of fracking. In the opening lines of Chapter 8, Gold states: we “Americans like our abundant energy, but not the men who provide it.” In addition to a story about the process of fracking, this book is about the people who make a living in the fracking industry; the ones responsible for the technology and strategy for producing America’s enormous supply of natural gas; the ones arguably responsible for lower energy costs, reduced carbon emissions in the U.S., and perhaps a resurgence of American manufacturing. This book is also about how some of those industry leaders, in a rush for money and market dominance, may have risked the environment and public health to produce hydrocarbons as quickly and cheaply as possible.
Gold introduces us to Edward Roberts, the Civil War veteran who observed that shell explosions during battle cracked the sides of trenches and explains how he parlayed that into the first down-hole frack of a tight oil well. He presents George Mitchell, the modern “father of fracking,” who by most accounts is an extremely environmentally conscious billionaire. He also gives a significant amount of space to the audacious Aubrey McClendon, the former CEO of Chesapeake Oil, arguably the biggest player in the modern natural gas boom, and, for a few years at least, the largest single monetary contributor to the Sierra Club. Gold notes after first meeting with McClendon: “Is he a huckster, a dynamic salesman, a visionary, a fool? I can’t tell.” The stories of these men are as much the story of fracking as is the process itself, and they offer an interesting lens through which Russell Gold narrates the history of fracking.

Gold also introduces us to the everyday men and women who work in the oilfields and traces how the fracking boom has provided a good, honest way to make a living. He also introduces us to the people living in fracking communities and shows how fracking has caused both problems—such as noise pollution and bad drinking water—as well as benefits, such as steady income and economically revitalized communities.

There is no disagreement that modern societies run on fossil fuels. There is also no dispute about the strong correlation between a country’s affluence and its energy consumption. Americans, the most affluent people on Earth, have the most voracious appetite of any nation in the world, consuming as they do nearly 20% of all oil produced annually. Over much of the last five or six decades, Americans have imported a great majority of their hydrocarbons. The Boom is the story of how this is now changing due to fracking and the production of a cheap, domestic sources of energy. Fracking may be the single biggest game changer on the American economic landscape since the dawn of the internet. Gold takes us through fracking’s destiny in the global energy landscape by explaining: (1) a favorable legal framework that incentivizes development of natural resources; (2) the surprisingly lucrative financial incentives; (3) the ever-degrading environmental attitudes toward coal-powered power plants; and (4) the deteriorating political attitudes toward importing foreign oil.

The Boom is certainly not the last word on fracking, but is it a comprehensive introduction. As we know, this important debate will continue because it poses questions that are complicated and nuanced. Is fracking good for our communities because it brings money and jobs that help revitalize struggling communities? Is fracking bad because of the noise pollution and environmental destruction associated with drilling oil wells? Is the story of fracking one of reduced carbon emissions and cheap, abundant energy production, or one in which our landscape is drastically compromised, our drinking-water aquifers poisoned and global climate change advanced? Is this another of our society’s mistakes, or is it the beginning of a more environmentally friendly energy era? Like most debates, it is all about perspective. What is clear is that fracking has become a fixture on the American landscape and the global economy, and the people living in communities where fracking is prevalent are having their lives drastically changed.

Call for Submissions

Bridgewater Review invites submissions from full- and part-time faculty members and librarians for publication. Bridgewater Review is published twice yearly by the faculty and librarians of Bridgewater State University. It provides a forum for campus-wide conversations pertaining to research, teaching, and creative expression, as well as a showcase for faculty art. Articles in all disciplines and genres are welcome and encouraged, including scholarship about research interests and trends, scholarship about teaching and learning, creative writing, and short reviews of other publications.

Articles should be 1700-2200 words in length, though shorter articles will also be considered. Creative writing can be submitted at lengths briefer than 2200 words. Those wishing to submit are asked to consult the Bridgewater Review submission guidelines (available from the Editor). In keeping with the founding spirit of our faculty magazine, the editors are equally interested in unfinished pieces of writing that may need assistance with revision and in polished pieces that are publication ready. All submissions will be reviewed, but there is no guarantee that submitted work will be published.

Bridgewater Review also welcomes Letters to the Editor with the hope that BR may become a locus for community discussion at Bridgewater State University.

Submissions should be sent electronically to:
Andrew Holman
Editor,
Bridgewater Review
bridgewater.review@bridgew.edu

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READERS RESPOND to BR, VOL. 33, NO. 1 (Spring 2014)

I thoroughly enjoyed the essay on marginal scribbling, a practice that I have engaged in for four decades! I enjoy returning to books I read in graduate school … and seeing the conversation I was having with the text at that time. I also see how, over time, I have read books more than once and have entered notes in different colors.

Several of the other essays brought back memories. The photo of Foucault was more of a nightmare, because I hated his Discipline and Punish, a work loved by radicals in their critique of prisons. It was brilliant but indecipherable and, to a degree, wrong (the insidious nature of non-physical controls did not explain why prisons became more violent and unruly at the very time he would have predicted greater discipline). I must confess that I also have an aversion to the lover of interdisciplinary enterprises in academia. When such efforts emerge naturally, they can be great. But too many universities try to force interdisciplinary courses/programs when there is no enduring base to sustain them. Oh, but I am a fan of Diane Ravitch. I have read some of her writings (mostly in magazines) and find her refreshingly empirical! She changed her mind because she read the data. Her insights in Finnish education are wonderful. I think that system, which I recall produces among the highest scores internationally, contributed to her change of heart about testing. The Finns recruit high quality students to train [as] teachers and then use a strong professionalism to ensure high quality teaching.

I could go on, but I just wanted to thank you for inspiring some thinking on my part!

Frank Cullen ’72  
(The writer is Distinguished Research Professor at the Center for Criminal Justice Research, University of Cincinnati)

Just used a copy of the Bridgewater Review to kill an enormous bee in my office.

Keith Lewinstein, History