

STUDENT PROFILES *(continued from page 3)*

In science, for example, courses that help you evaluate data, formulate questions, and design future experiments would be invaluable. Courses that could teach you communication skills would also be very important. Finally, we need a better system to make sure people don't fall through the cracks because of poor advising or lack of interest of a particular mentor."

FACULTY PERSPECTIVES**Discussion or Aggression?
Arrogance and Despair in Graduate School****Toril Moi**

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Among graduate students there is often a feeling of depression, as if out of humiliation, or a feeling of disappointment, as if out of arrogance. There is also, sometimes, a feeling of elation, which can arise out of narcissistic triumph but also out of delight at the discovery and mastery of new insights.

In the struggle to make a brilliant impression, to persuade everyone else that you are the smartest person around, some people will inevitably end up feeling despondent and others elated. Cultural sociologists inspired by the late Pierre Bourdieu would speak about the struggle for symbolic capital in graduate school, the relentless fight to become "consecrated" as one of the legitimate heirs to institutional power and glory. A psychoanalyst would point out that this makes graduate school an institutional environment in which most of its members are particularly vulnerable to intense experiences of transference, countertransference, projection, and identification.

In graduate school, then, it is easy to start believing that everyone else is smarter than you. That is a sign of loss of self-esteem and is bad for work. It is equally easy to start believing that you are obviously so much smarter than everyone else, including your professors. That is a sign of smugness and arrogance, and is actually also bad for work. Of course, these feelings often coexist in complicated ways. Perhaps my arrogance makes me despondent at being surrounded by so many people who fail to perceive my true worth, or perhaps I veer from one extreme to the other according to situation and mood.

Competitiveness, arrogance and depression are common human phenomena. They arise in people of every race, sex, and class. But such socio-psychological tendencies do not exist in a social and political vacuum. On the contrary, they tend to get mixed up with oppressive and unjust ideologies concerning gender, sexuality, race, and social class. When that happens, they are no longer just phenomena of anthropological interest, but political problems.

Many of us are used to discussing sexism, racism, homophobia, and class prejudice on general, ideological, social, and theoretical levels. On these levels, most people agree that discrimination and oppression are bad things. Unfortunately, it doesn't follow that we suddenly understand how such ideolo-

gies operate in our own everyday lives. To realize how we may collaborate in the production of injustice in spite of our best intentions, it is necessary to study cases and situations from everyday life.

The situation I want to look at here is the graduate classroom, the kind of seminar that most of us in the humanities engage in every week. (I shall discuss gender. But similar mechanisms can—and will—produce classrooms divided by race, sexuality or social class.) Every year some female graduate students tell me that they feel overlooked, marginalized, silenced in some seminars. They paint a picture of classrooms where the alpha males—so-called "theory boys"—are encouraged to hold forth in impossibly obscure language, but where their own interventions elicit no response. These women, in short, say that they are not listened to, that they are not taken seriously, and that they get the impression that their perceptions of the matter at hand are of no interest to anyone else.

Such experiences tend to reproduce a particularly clichéd ideology in which theory and abstract thought are thought to belong to men and masculinity, and women are imagined to be the bearers of emotional, personal, practical concerns. In a system that grants far more symbolic capital, far more intellectual power, to abstract theorizing than to, say, concrete investigations of particular cases, these women lose out in the battle for symbolic capital. This is bad for their relationship to the field they love, and it is bad for their careers in and out of graduate school. This is sexism, and all this goes to show that sexist effects often arise from the interactions of people who have no sexist intentions at all.

But there is another side to this. Sometimes I have a conversation with someone who has been described to me as a theory boy. Then I invariably discover that the theory boy doesn't at all sound like an intellectual terrorist. He is, simply, profoundly and passionately interested in ideas. He loves theory and precisely because he loves it, he has strong theoretical views.

But this is exactly what graduate students should be like, for intellectual passions are the very fuel of intellectual life. The problem, then, is not the intellectual passions of the theory boys, but the women's sense that they are not given the same freedom and the same encouragement as the theory boys to express their intellectual passions.

None of this means that all male graduate students are theory boys. Nor does it mean that every female graduate student goes around feeling intimidated and depressed. A problem does not have to affect every single member of a group to be serious. No graduate student, whether male or female, should have to experience life in the classroom as depressing and intimidating.

Graduate school—indeed, the whole of intellectual life—is a place for learning. We can't learn if we are unwilling to admit ignorance. Insofar as the theory boy holds forth as if there were no limits to his own wisdom, he is engaged in ideological mystification. Insofar as the climate of graduate school makes both men and women feel shy about admitting to ignorance and uncertainty, it encourages an intellectually destructive stance of all-knowingness.

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The problem, then, is how to express one's passionate commitment to specific theories, ideas or methods without implying that those who are not equally enamored by them must be morons. To speak with Bourdieu: the challenge is to find a way to express our own views without inflicting symbolic violence on our colleagues and classmates.

There are two ways of saying what we think. One way is monologic: it leaves no space for others to respond or attempts to coerce a specific response. In either case the speaker is deaf to the words of others. The other way is dialogic. Such speakers have mastered the art of saying what they think, passionately, strongly, but in a way which invites others to respond, to state their own views as forcefully as they just stated theirs.

This is where the theory boys and girls—and their professors—err. The theory boys and girls get so intoxicated by their own passion for certain ideas that they forget to ask themselves whether they are listening to anyone else. The professors aid and abet them by allowing classroom discussion to become a series of monologic speeches, which other participants may experience as pure narcissistic display. In such “discussions” everyone—speakers and listeners—lose sight of the most important thing: the subject matter at hand. As a result, the theory

boys and girls come out of class glowing with narcissistic energy, and a goodly number of other students (often, but by no means always, women), come out of class feeling as if they are sinking steadily deeper into the slough of despond.

The opportunity to argue passionately about ideas is the best thing about graduate school. But we are not necessarily born with good discussion skills. Graduate school is the place to learn this, but I think we—the professors—teach it badly, probably because we are not always that good at it ourselves. (We didn't learn it in graduate school either.)

Some of us—professors and graduate students—need to learn to stop being so touchy, vain and self-regarding, so that we can listen to well-founded criticism without becoming defensive. Others need to learn to become more assertive and how to stand their ground when their views come under pressure. We all need to care more about formulating our thought precisely and less about the impression we make on others. Finally, we should learn to distinguish between an attack on our ideas and an attack on our person. This would be easier if we also learned how to engage in free and hard-hitting debate without being unduly aggressive and domineering, and without silencing others.

TWO NATIONAL PROJECTS: THE RESPONSIVE PH.D. AND THE CARNEGIE INITIATIVE FOR THE DOCTORATE

As Dean Siegel mentioned in his Message, the Graduate School is involved in two national projects geared toward making doctoral programs more useful in preparing graduates for the requirements they will face both in- and outside the academy.

The first is the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation's “Responsive Ph.D.” program; Duke is one of 14 universities collaborating on this project, founded in 2001 with a grant from The Pew Charitable Trusts. The program is focused around the “three ‘P’s’”: finding *new paradigms* that can put Ph.D.s in a position to more fully inform the life of the nation; using *new practices* through which the doctorate can better represent adventuresome research; and increasing the involvement of *new people* from all backgrounds to diversify the American intellect.

The new paradigms are interdisciplinarity, which can pave the way to new kinds of research, and scholarly citizenship, which challenges academics not only to study rigorously, but to involve themselves in creative action in all available arenas. Professional development, including preparing Ph.D.s for non-traditional (non-academic) careers, and development of a systematic approach to pedagogical training constitute the new practices. There are two aspects to new people, as well: the first is attracting more diverse populations—minorities and, in some disciplines, women—to the professoriate, where they can enliven their disciplines and serve as role models to their students; the second is diversifying the American intellect, as mentioned above. Part of this latter aspect is related to the desire expressed by students of color to use their education to make a difference in their communities; they feel the only way to

achieve this is by seeking professional degrees. The Responsive Ph.D. wants to expand the image of the Ph.D. as something that is powerful outside the walls of the university. (See the faculty profile of Professor Paula McClain, later in this issue, for a look at how she and Duke are addressing this issue.)

Duke is also involved with the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate (CID), which works with departments to restructure their doctoral programs. Six disciplines are being studied under the CID: chemistry, education (educational psychology and curriculum and instruction), English, history, mathematics, and neuroscience. Faculty and departmental leadership in the disciplines is one focus of the initiative; others are doing a conceptual analysis of doctoral education and executing design experiments in the departments.

Fueling the CID is this question: “What is the purpose of doctoral education?” The answer is to help individuals develop the ability to creatively generate new knowledge, critically conserve valuable and useful ideas, and responsibly transform those understandings through writing, teaching, and application. Such individuals are “stewards of the discipline.” Stewards are more than their degree or the sum of their achievements; they are guardians and ambassadors of their disciplines, caretakers with a critical eye toward the future who are willing to take risks to move the discipline forward.

The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation Responsive Ph.D.: <http://www.woodrow.org/responsivephd>

Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate: <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/CID>
