I'M FROM THE WORKING CLASS but I feel like I'm from Mars!

"Poor people, when we talk to each other, we sit down," says sociologist Barbara J. Peters, "we don't stand with a wine glass and a little plate of stuff trying to balance everything.

"From the day you arrive you don't know the rules," says Chelsea Starr, who used to help her mother clean houses. (Continued on the next page)
Writing under the headline of “High-class academia shuns beer-and-pretzels profs,” Michello Locke of the Associated Press quotes Peters and Starr about negotiating the “chardonnay-and-brie world of academia” where they feel “uncomfortable at those department receptions where big career moves ride on the small talk.”

In response to this need, Peters developed a web site called Working Class Academics where members can help each other out by “venting, mentoring and chewing over philosophical issues such as when - or if - one ceases to be working class and whether cheap clothing will get you railroaded off the tenure track.” Locke notes that the group holds an annual meeting where these issues can be addressed in person.

*all quotes are from Michelle Locke’s article which appeared in The Detroit News on January 21, 2001, p. 12A.

To Access the web site on Working Class Academics go to

www.uair.edu/~jrpullen

“Working-class academics who try to crash the college class barrier say the risks are greater than, say, using the wrong fork at the chancellor’s dinner. It can mean missing out on grant money and jobs because you are the first person in your family to attend college and you don’t have the right connections.”

Michelle Locke

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In this helpful book about the life of Working Class Women in academia, Tokarczyk and Fay include chapters like “What’s a Nice Working-Class Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This?” by Saundra Gardner and “Grandma Went to Smith, All Right, but She Went from Nine to Five” by Patricia Clark Smith.

One of the problems for working-class women academics the authors raise the meaning of “work”: To those who understand work as manual, “teaching and committee work often seem like more concrete activities than research and writing (particularly when it can take a year to get an article into print after it has been accepted for publication). As the essay by Valerie Miner suggests, many working-class women academics have to remind themselves that sitting in a library or at a computer all day is working.” (P.13).
HOW DO I TURN MY DISSERTATION INTO A BOOK OR ARTICLE?

In Scholarly Writing and Publishing, editor Mary Frank Fox notes that "... For the most part, scholars learn the strategies of publishing only very capriciously and sporadically, taking many costly stumbles and falls along the way. ... the problems are especially acute for women and minorities, who often fall outside the informal channels of information and support, and for new Ph.D. holders, who are located, increasingly, in minor colleges and in universities with restricted climates for productivity in research and publication." Fox’s book includes chapters on

- how to publish journal articles
- how to choose publishers and follow through with them
- how to publish textbooks
- how to make time for your own work
- and her own chapter on "The Transition from Dissertation Student to Publishing Scholar" for which she provides the following

# Strategies and Solutions

The new graduate must break away from the habit of dissertation prose and respond to the following challenges:

1. AVOID EXTENDED 'WARM-UPS.' State the objective and aim of the manuscript early on. The reader as well as the reviewer of your manuscript already understand a good deal about the background of your problem, and they want to know the core - the contribution - of your piece. So cut the lengthy preamble that traces your argument to Plato and his predecessors and zero in on the statement of the problem and the gap it fills in our knowledge about the subject.

2. AVOID EXCESSIVE "WARNINGS" AND "REMINDERS." Often anxious about their own status and that of their work, doctoral students devote considerable text to pointing out what is coming, reminding the reader that it is still there, and then referring to it further along the way. Since one can ill afford a situation in which the doctoral committee misses a point, such warnings and reminders may seem a reasonable tendency. But in postdoctoral writing, one must trust that the reader can look forward and backward at the text on her own. Excessive warnings and reminders rob the text of momentum and forward movement, and dilute rather than substantiate the argument.

3. ELIMINATE REDUNDANCY. Redundancy may be of two kinds - structural-functional or informational. * Both types simply add to the bulk of prose, but not to its strength or its message. Structural-functional redundancy consists of extended excursions into methodology for their own sake or for the edification of the author (but not the reader), or protracted reviews of arguments and positions that need no reviewing.

   Informational redundancy is simply too much of an otherwise good thing - information, data, or documentation. It consists of the time honored dissertation practice of hounding the
reader with tables, graphs, diagrams and footnotes that are not only excessively presented but discussed at great length.* This practice makes editors shudder - partly because length and technical complexity are expensive for typesetting and production.


4. BEWARE OF THE "SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD" AND "CONDITIONAL COWARDICE."

Owing to the tenuous academic status of dissertation students as well as to the "vast volumes of bad prose" in their disciplines, dissertation students are the past-masters of conditional, subjunctive and passive prose. So,

5. GET A COPY OF STRUNK AND WHITE'S ELEMENTS OF STYLE AND STUDY IT WITH ECCLESIASTICAL FEVER. This book is a timeless statement for clarity, brevity, and boldness in writing. . . Clear writing demands precision, directness and exactness; these factors, in turn, demand clear thinking. . . Clear writing demands patient intellectual search, relentless trial and error, and a high tolerance for frustration; so does clear thinking, and so does good scholarship.

Noting that "This interplay of writing and thinking has implications for the integration or integrity of work and life," and for the building of a scholarly career which will require "courage, zeal, and, above all, tenaciousness," Fox goes on to comment on how this interplay can translate into effective strategies for new graduates:

• Because certain data indicate that those who publish early continue to do so, it is critical to try to begin publishing early before receipt of the doctorate or immediately thereafter. This forms the habit, reinforces the activity, and supports sustained productivity.

• "In addition, for women and minorities, especially, it is crucial to look beyond the restrictions of the immediate environment and expand collegial support. Because academic women are disproportionately clustered in minor colleges and universities, in departments with heavy teaching loads and undergraduate enrollments, and in isolated circumstances and marginal appointments, they may lack support for their scholarship. More specifically, in academia as in other professions, women often exist outside the dominant culture. . ."

• It is critical, then, for all scholars to get beyond such local and institutional tyranny and to locate colleagues, collaborators, and scholarly support within regional associations, section memberships, and national associations. If these associations fail to turn up colleagues and readers for your work, do not give up (ever, ever, ever). Send your papers and requests for critique and review to those persons in the field whose work you have read and respected.

#This article is excerpted with her permission from pp. 10-14 of Mary Frank Fox, "The Transition from Dissertation Student to Publishing Scholar," in Mary Frank Fox, Editor, Scholarly Writing and Publishing: Issues, Problems, Solutions. Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985. Its tips remain up to date. In fact, with many disciplines taking to obscure academic jargons throughout the 1990s at a time when academic presses were shifting their market to more general audiences, revising dissertations aimed at tiny intellectual coteries to readable books and articles is more important than ever. AP.
SHOULD I CONSIDER A NON-ACADEMIC CAREER? CAN I RETURN TO ACADEMIA LATER - IF I WANT TO?

Non-academic careers seem to be the buzz among doctoral students these days. When I was finishing up my Ph.D. a few years ago, I heard many students express that they wanted nothing to do with the stress of the tenure track and academic politics. As doctoral students they often had front row seats to the infighting, stress, elitism, sexual discrimination and harassment among their more senior academic colleagues and wanted no part of it.

I appreciated their position but was certain that I would follow the academic path, if only for the supposed advantages—scheduling flexibility, summers off, academic freedom, the possibility of job security through tenure etc. Now I have talked to enough junior professors to know that flexibility is at the whim of the department chair, “summers off” means three months of no pay with not enough time to catch up on publications, and that academic freedom is elusive at best.

But as a graduate student the academic life still seemed the way to go. Given my favorable (and I’m sure unrealistic) expectations of academia, imagine my surprise that four years later I am firmly in the non-academic world, working for the US government in a research-related position. The following are my reflections on the non-academic life for Ph.D’s.

- The lines between academia and non-academia are blurring. Many of my colleagues have university appointments, usually at medical schools. One of my colleagues at the local university has a commercial venture, and is currently trying to sell me a computer system! And of course there are persons like myself who have non-academic jobs but are among the growing ranks of adjunct lecturers. Like graduate students, some of us teach more than the “full time” professors!
- The Ph.D. is not the ticket to fame and fortune in the non-academic world. Many of my Ph.D. colleagues work in jobs that do not specifically require a Ph.D. Technical skills (in my field, data analysis, database management) are often more important than higher degrees in ensuring that work is adequately compensated. Some employers are even suspicious that we have accepted a non-Ph.D. job, and getting beyond the “overqualified” label can be challenging.

(Continued on the next page)
You probably guessed this already but infighting, stress, elitism, sexism, and racism happen here too.

Contentment, reduced stress, more time for activities outside of work—all of these are possible with the right non-academic position, you just have to carefully research the position and ask a lot of questions.

Can I return to academe later? Do I want to? I do a lot of things that my fellow social scientist Ph.D.’s do. I write grants (probably more than some junior professors, since promotion depends on it). I write papers, attend conferences, and try to connect with others who share my interest and vision. Will the academics want me back? Many say no: lots of academics think government work is for academics who can’t cut it elsewhere, and as time goes on it may be hard to overcome that stigma. Do I want to? Hard to say. All of our lives (academic or non-academic) are fluid and ever changing, and, hopefully, we will find the courage to follow where our hearts lead us. Best luck in your journeys!

Faith P. Hopp, Ph.D.

"The obvious question, then, is what’s the point? Why get a degree that best prepares you for a job that you probably won’t get? Certainly, many Ph.D.’s have asked themselves this during dark nights of the soul, but when they wake up, few of them regret their time inside the academy. Geoff Kabaservice, a Yale history Ph.D. who works for a corporate research company, puts it this way: ‘There’s a benefit to spending your 20s reading a lot and stretching your brain.’”

Rachel Hartigan

"WHEN ACADEMIC DREAMS FADE"

In an article published in the U.S. New’s Best Graduate Schools 2001 subtitled “Many newly minted Ph.D.’s are leading wonderful jobs outside the ivory tower,” Rachel Hartigan describes academics who have found a non-academic life. This article is well worth accessing at usnews.com. Among other useful tips you can glean from it are

- A listserv started by Paula Foster Chambers, who realized while a grad student that, in leaving a 16 hour day job in the film industry, she had just exchanged “one brutal work environment for another.” With the listserv, Chambers asks Ph.D.’s who have found jobs outside of academe to help others making the same transition. (Listproc@lists.acs.ohio-state.edu)

- For a Virtual Job Fair for Ph.D.’s and other useful hints for life beyond the ivory tower, go to http://chronicle.com/jobs/2001

CURRENT ISSUES OF EQUITY TO BE EXPLORED AT NWSA NATIONAL CONFERENCE

At the NWSA Annual Conference on June 13-17 in Minneapolis, the Academic Advisory Board will present a panel on

Exploring Current Issues of Equity and Equality for Women's Studies.

At last year’s conference in Boston, it became clear to the Academic Discrimination Advisory Board that Women’s Studies has an obligation to find creative ways for its faculty to become tenured, for its part-timers to advance, and for its graduate and undergraduate students to become successfully mentored. When Women’s Studies began in the late 1960s, one of its goals was the feminist transformation of the university. In the 21st century, we have survived as an academic field, but we have accumulated casualties and encountered rough spots along the way as the university shapes programs into traditional molds.

There are special relationships that form between Women’s Studies faculty and students. How can the collaborative forms of relationship that transcend lines of power be nurtured within the hierarchy of the academy? What are the ethics of mentoring? How can the relationships between full and part-time faculty in Women’s Studies be mutually supportive, and how can part-time faculty advance their positions with the encouragement of full-timers? Finally, how can Women’s Studies programs and departments position their junior faculty in such a way that the work they do to improve the status of women is recognized as significant enough by the rest of the university to gain them tenure?

In back to back panels on June 11 senior and junior Women’s Studies faculty will offer their insights and experiences in handling these issues.

At 2 p.m:

⇒ “Imposition of Empowerment: Resolving the Tension Between Faculty and Student Collaboration in the Academic Hierarchy. Sharon Leder, Moderator; Barbara Horn and Meta Plotnik, Nassau Community College.

⇒ “Part-Timers and Full-Timers: Leveling the Playing Field in the Academy.” Florence Boodakian, English and Women’s Studies, Marist College and SUNY at New Paltz.

At 3:30 p.m:

⇒ "How Academic Discrimination Cases Develop: The Early Warning Signs, Academic Freedom, and Shunning." Panelists will discuss
1) how to recognize the signs of academic discrimination and which steps to take;
2) the ambiguous nature of academic freedom;
3) the organizational discourse, behavior, and attitudes underlying shunning, a common component of academic discrimination cases.

This session will be co-facilitated by Profs. Ines Shaw and Sharon Leder, Nassau Community College.

THERE WILL BE A BUSINESS MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC DISCRIMINATION ADVISORY BOARD ON FRIDAY JUNE 15: CHECK YOUR PROGRAM.
**BOOKS TO HELP YOU KEEP ON KEEPING ON**


*Entering the Profession: Advice for the Untenured.* Put out by the National Education Association in 1988, this brochure has currently useful information on, for example, "The Perils of Probationary Status."

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- As an African American faculty member I can't find time to get my job done!
- Help! My Evaluations are lower than I think they should be.
- Why can't my colleagues be my close friends?