

At the Intersection of Work and School: Internships and the Liberal Arts

by

Lauren Valentino
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Internships are a recently burgeoning phenomenon. The number of students in the United States completing internships rose from 41% in 2004 to 61% percent in 2007 (“More” 2008). As internships have grown in popularity, so too has media coverage of them. A content analysis of the term “internship”¹ appearing in American newspapers in the last thirty years reveals that the majority of newspaper coverage of internships has occurred in the last five years: 16.6% of the articles are from 1980 to 1999, 29.8% occurred in the years between 1999 and 2004, and a whopping 53.5% were written since 2004. Additionally, universities’ career centers are incorporating information about internships into their repertoires. Some colleges are creating faculty positions to directly address internships; Wesleyan University is planning to inaugurate a Director of Internships in 2010.

In Europe, the internship has even become a hotly contested political issue. In 2004, students from several organizations (DGB Jugend Students @ Work, *Génération précaire*, Fairwork, *Generation Praktikum*, EPSA, and *Generazione 1000*) representing five countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Austria and Italy) united under the umbrella group Generation Precarity. This organization identified itself as “represent[ing] young people who face difficulties (e.g. unfair internships) when it comes to access to the European labour market” and presented a petition to the European Parliament in November 2007 (“Presentation” nd). In France, the battle ended in 2006 with the passage of the Charter of Student Internships in Business that delineated the exact nature of the internship as well as the legal responsibilities of the student, of the internship-offering organization and of the supervising professor (“Charte” 2006).

Yet in the United States, the internship remains largely uncontested and has to be the subject of critical commentary. The existing literature in sociology that discusses internships is limited to pedagogical concerns. Some sociologists consider internships as a tool to pre-professionalize the undergraduate sociology major, noting that many sociology undergraduate students enter the business world. Internships are a way for undergraduate sociology programs to prepare their students for careers that do not require

immediate further education (Danzger 1988). These authors consider the internship a capital-neutral tool that can be used to provide concrete skills for undergraduate students seeking work experience.

Another perspective encourages those who intern to use sociology as a lens through which to view their employment experience. Internships are an opportunity to practice fieldwork (Parilla and Hessler 1998). They allow students to experience first-hand sociological methods, such as participant observation, in order to understand the larger institutional forces at play in the workplace in which they are interning. Miller (1990) proposes a methods course in participant observation to accompany the internship. These authors encourage interns to think critically about the institutions in which their internships are situated, rather than analyzing internships *themselves* as institutions or social things to be studied.

This is what I am to do in this essay. I argue that internships are an increasingly crucial tool of stratification. I locate internships within the stratified landscape of higher education, identifying the internship as a way of obtaining capital. Using a lens that includes four processes of capital acquisition, I understand the development of postsecondary education in the United States as a series of encroachments and boundary maintenance based upon elite institutions employing the fourth process of *being ineffable*. I then look at three cases at one elite liberal arts college, Wesleyan University. There I find two historical instances in which the boundary of ineffability was defended. Lastly, I use interviews with current professors to determine whether the internship represents an incursion – or a reinforcement – of this historically inscribed boundary.

STRATIFIED HIGHER EDUCATION, STRATIFIED INTERNSHIPS

Systems of stratification provide access to different types of capital. The three types of capital implicated in these processes are economic capital, social capital, and cultural capital. Economic capital is anything which may be converted into money and thus holds a financial value (Bourdieu 1986). In the realm of higher education and work experience, this includes payment (through a stipend or a wage), academic credit or time.

Social capital is relationships, connections, or ties known as “social obligations” (Bourdieu 1986) as well as marketable skills and human capital (Smith 1776). Social capital can be network ties that hold future employment possibilities (Granovetter 1974). It may also be the skills that are required of an employee; conversely, these may be skills learned on the job or through work experience. These include soft skills such as the ability to interact well with customers, coworkers, and supervisors (Tilly and Tilly 1998).

Lastly, cultural capital is the tastes, habits, and other often non-quantifiable assets that an elite group uses to distance and distinguish itself from non-elites (Bourdieu 1984). Bourdieu amassed much survey data which indicated that the taste and knowledge of film, music, and visual art could be explained by one’s social position, notably education level up to a certain point, and then by parent’s occupation and education (1984). He also found that academic success was a function of cultural capital, in addition to economic and social capital (1986). Bourdieu explains three types of cultural capital: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized. Embodied cultural capital exists within the person as culture or cultivation. Objectified cultural capital is cultural goods, such as works of art. Bourdieu describes institutionalized cultural capital as scholastic credits, such as an academic diploma. In addition to academic knowledge, I contribute that some work experiences exist as another form of institutionalized cultural capital in which cultural capital is both required and transmitted.

It is the nature of all three forms of capital that they may be exchanged one for another. For example, economic capital may be leveraged to achieve cultural capital by paying tuition at a university to acquire a college degree. In another instance, an individual could use a network tie (social capital) to obtain a high-paying job, thus achieving economic capital. All three forms of capital are thus interconnected.

Higher education exists as a horizontally stratified landscape made up of several types of institutions (Gerber and Cheung 2008). Community colleges, land grant state universities, institutes of

cooperative education, and liberal arts colleges all confer different capital in different ways (Steven, Armstrong and Arum 2008). I contribute that it is their curricula – and the extent to which and nature of how they incorporate the work world – that also plays a role in providing access to different capital in different ways.

There are two main processes of capital acquisition present amongst institutions of higher education in the United States. Some institutions – such as land grant state universities, community colleges, and institutes of cooperative education, where work is well integrated into the curriculum – employ a process that allows students to acquire economic and social capital. Other institutions – namely liberal arts colleges, where the curriculum is focused on knowledge and eschews the work world – use the process in which the acquisition of cultural capital is the primary goal.

Internships similarly exist as a stratified field in which different capital is obtained. There are two categories of internships which map onto four processes of capital acquisition. The self-interested internship plays into the process in which economic and social capital are obtained. A paid internship with the bank Goldman Sachs would be considered self-interested because it implies both economic capital through payment as well as social capital through prospects of networking as well as skills gained through the position. In the disinterested internship, neither social nor economic capital is obtained; instead, cultural capital is involved. The disinterested internship further breaks down into three processes in which cultural capital is obtained, each process describing a different way in which cultural capital is procured. An unpaid internship teaching students English in a remote Chinese town would be disinterested because the intern receives no compensation for his or her work (and often must pay either living, travel, or program expenses to be able to do the internship) and has no prospects for making network ties or gaining any skills.

FOUR WAYS OF ACQUIRING CAPITAL

In reviewing the existing work of sociologists that discuss the ways in which capital is obtained, I identify four processes: the substantive-instrumental (*getting ahead*) process, the substantive-non-instrumental (*signifying wealth*) process, the non-substantive-instrumental (*being the first*) process, and the non-substantive-non-instrumental (*being ineffable*) process. Their nomenclature borrows the concept of substantivism from economic sociology and the concept of instrumentalism from the pragmatist school of thought. Substantivism refers to the economic process of accumulating commodities and capital in order to subsist (Polanyi 1944). As I refer to it, substantivism may be thought of as a cumulative process of capital acquisition. Instrumentalism refers to the pragmatic function of education as a means to an end (Dewey 1915). Consequently, instrumentalism may be considered a process of obtaining capital simply to obtain capital, rather than for the purpose of signifying. These four processes are best expressed in the following figure:

		<u>Instrumentalism</u>	
		Instrumental	Non-instrumental
<u>Substantivism</u>	Substantive	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Getting ahead</i></p> <p>Primary authors: Lareau, Rumberger, Granovetter, Tilly</p> <p>Higher education curriculum: vocational, pre-professional training; cooperative education</p> <p>Type of internship: self-interested</p> <p>Capital obtained: economic, social</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Signifying wealth</i></p> <p>Primary authors: Veblen, Schor</p> <p>Type of internship: disinterested</p> <p>Capital obtained: cultural</p>
	Non-substantive	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Being the first</i></p> <p>Primary authors: Simmel, Packard</p> <p>Type of internship: self-interested or disinterested</p> <p>Capital obtained: cultural</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Being ineffable</i></p> <p>Primary author: Bourdieu</p> <p>Higher education curriculum: liberal education, internships?</p> <p>Type of internship: disinterested</p> <p>Capital obtained: cultural</p>

Getting Ahead: The Substantive-Instrumental Process

The substantive-instrumental process is one of cumulative, vertical moves in which temporal pores are filled in with accomplishments and experiences. In the proverbial game of acquiring capital, this is the game in which she who has the most (awards, volunteering experiences, skills, jobs, internships) wins. This process implies an ever-accumulating push toward accomplishment, whether it be through activity-filled childhoods, constant pursuit of further degrees, or acquiring work experience while in college via vocational or pre-professional training, cooperative education, or internships.

The *getting ahead* process is present in institutions of higher education where learning is a means to an end. This subordinates academic knowledge to the end goal of acquiring employment via economic and social capital. Thus, vocational and pre-professional training, as well as cooperative education, are curricular features of this process. These curricula exist mainly at community colleges, land grant state universities, and institutes of cooperative education.

Internships that play into this process are by nature self-interested. Because the substantive-instrumental method is an accumulation of accomplishments by filling in time, internships are maximized to their fullest utility. Thus, an internship in which someone gains valuable soft skills or makes productive network connections best serves the intern. These accomplishments allow the intern to get ahead of others by doing as much as possible as early as possible. Internships obtained through this process require social capital (network ties and skills) in order to land positions which are strategic in that they will provide more social capital as well as economic capital.

Annette Lareau describes this process in detail in her work *Unequal Childhoods* in which she studies parenting styles across various classes. What she refers to as the “dominant cultural repertoire” of parenting, concerted cultivation, is indeed the cultivation of busy children (Lareau 2003:4). Concerted cultivation manifests itself as “organized activities” which are “established and controlled by [the children’s] mothers and fathers [and which] dominate the lives of middle-class children” (Lareau 2003:2). The other

style of parenting that Lareau identifies is the accomplishment of natural growth, which involves a lack of “organized leisure activities” (2003:5). Lareau found this type of parenting to be typical of lower and working class families.

The substantive-instrumental process is best seen in Lareau’s time studies of the children she surveyed. In her sample, the average number of activities for a middle class child was 4.9. The working class child had 2.5 activities on average, and the poor child averaged only 1.5. According to Lareau, it is the accumulation of these activities that will lead to greater advantage for the middle class child and disadvantage for the working class and poor child. Thus, work experience, for example, the internship, is another “organized activity” to add to the resumes of children in order to get ahead.

Another manifestation of the substantive-instrumental process is the accumulation of social network ties as enumerated by Mark Granovetter. His work points to the great importance of personal contacts, particularly weak ties, in the dissemination of job information (Granovetter 1974). This process has become publicly known as *networking*. Thus, the accumulation of more network contacts (ties) in order to strengthen one’s job information exemplifies the substantive-instrumental process. Vocational, pre-professional curricula; cooperative education; and self-interested internships play into this process by expanding students’ networks for future employment possibilities through ties with people in the fields of study or work experience.

Two types of skills may be directly accrued through these curricula and work experiences: direct and soft skills. Direct skills are learned through training programs within the classroom, such as those in vocational or pre-professional studies. Soft skills are accumulated through work experience outside of the classroom. Charles Tilly and Chris Tilly describe the “social interaction” factor that employers look for in potential employees (1998:179). Specifically, this is “motivation and the ability to interact comfortably with supervisors, customers, and coworkers” (1998:187). Because of their personal nature, soft skills can

arguably be a way of discriminating against certain groups, such as non-elites (Moss and Tilly 1996). However, continuous accumulation of such skills can be used to acquire more and higher-quality jobs.

Getting ahead is not a particularly stable process of capital acquisition because it relies on ceaseless accumulation. One consequence of this upward push is overeducation, a word that entered the public lexicon in the 1970s (Rumberger 1981). If job-seekers are constantly pursuing education and other qualifications that create a highly competent labor supply while the amount of positions remains relatively stable, increased competition will create an upward push that causes job-seekers to accept positions that are paid lower than they expected (Rumberger 1981). Indeed, these predictions have already begun to emerge: a sizeable portion of college graduates work in jobs for which no college degree is required, and almost ten percent of the working poor in Chicago have a college degree (Geoghegan 1997).

Moreover, the substantive-instrumental process is not one in which cultural capital can be acquired. It is thus a leveling process in which possessors of embodied cultural capital – those born into culturally wealthy families – may be threatened by those who rise through the ranks. Such a process opens up the playing field. Thus it is the most disruptive to the status quo enjoyed by the elite.

Signifying Wealth: The Substantive-Non-Instrumental Process

Like the substantive-instrumental process, this process involves the accumulation of capital. However, instead of accumulating capital through instrumental approaches (such as those demonstrated by Granovetter and Tilly), this process relies on a continual distancing of oneself from labor and industrial work. The substantive-non-instrumental process involves taking on disinterested internships because the internship is not seen as a means to an end. It requires economic capital in order to intern without compensation to signify wealth.

This process of capital acquisition in the realm of internships results in taking on disinterested internships, particularly those abroad, as they would involve large travel expenses as well. In contrast to internships taken on as part of the substantive-instrumental process, these internships are not about the

accumulation of economic capital (through wages or stipends) or social capital (through new network ties or skills gained). Instead, the more unpaid, disinterested internships one does, the greater distance one places between oneself and necessity. It is this character of accumulation that gives this process its substantive quality.

The foundation of Thorstein Veblen's theory of elite distinction is distance from necessity. What he termed the "super pecuniary class" maintains its hegemony through its "abstention from productive work" (1992[1889]:41). This nonparticipation in fruitful activities signifies the "consumption of time and substance involved in their acquisition" (1992[1889]:50). Thus, the elites are demonstrating that their basic needs have been fulfilled and are hence of no concern. They are also signifying that they have the excess time and resources that they have left to indulge in nonpecuniary pursuits.

Important to this process is the notion of luxury. Luxury cars, for instance, are vehicles which serve more than the basic necessity to safely travel from Point A to Point B. They may be able to reach extremely high speeds, have leather seats, or be equipped with gadgets to amuse passengers. This luxury is signified through conspicuous consumption.

The concept of conspicuousness is equally crucial. The more visible signs of luxury one shows, the more resources one must have at his or her disposal. These resources need not be limited to monetary ones: they may be time or social ties. These are often known as status symbols, those commodities most visible others. Thus, the concept of the brand name exemplifies Veblen's theory. Luxury brands in particular connote the ability to buy more than necessary. Even purchasing seemingly vital items – such as food – can take on this characteristic when an individual makes a conscious decision to buy a brand-name commodity rather than the generic equivalent, particularly when the purchase is made in a conspicuous way or a visible place.

Juliet Schor empirically tested this process in her study of women's cosmetics. She found that women were more likely to buy luxury brand cosmetics because "women are looking for prestige in their

makeup case” (1998:49). In her study of women’s consumption of lipstick, mascara, eyeshadow, and facial cleansers, she concluded, “people buy top-end brands of visible products far more than high-quality invisible ones” (1998:50). Her subjects particularly highlighted the importance of buying brand-name lipstick because of its visibility, noting that women can recognize brands from across the table a dinner party. She also discovered a “snob effect” in which the more expensive the lipstick, the more consumers buy the item in order to underline the importance of the social status inherent in the purchase. Thus women’s patterns of cosmetic consumption indicate their distancing from necessity by purchasing visibly conspicuous (brand name) products.

Signifying wealth is a somewhat precarious process of acquiring capital. It does require significant amounts of economic and social capital to display; however, it does not require cultural capital. Once again, the status quo elite who are born into culturally wealthy families are threatened through this process by anyone who can, quite literally, get their hands on economic or social capital.

Being the First: The Non-Substantive-Instrumental Process

This is a process of arbitrary, lateral moves that keep non-elites a step behind the trends. The crucial aspect of this process is its reliance on the notion that these trends are arbitrary; that is, they are undertaken by the elite *simply because* the masses have never done, worn, or performed the particular trend. Because of the arbitrary nature of the signifier, this process is manifested in both self-interested and disinterested internships. Indeed, the type of internship matters not; it is the simple fact of doing that which has not been done before that is important.

This process of trends is articulated by Georg Simmel as fashion:

Fashion is the imitation of a given pattern... it satisfies the need for distinction, the tendency toward differentiation, change and individual contrast. It accomplishes the latter, on the one hand, by the change in contents – which gives to the fashions of today an individual stamp compared with those of yesterday and tomorrow – and even more energetically, on the other hand, by the fact that fashions are always class fashions, by the fact that the fashions of the higher strata of society distinguish themselves from those of the lower strata, and are abandoned by the former at the moment when the latter begin to appropriate them (1997 [1905]:188).

This process relies on the rarity of the fashion in question. While rarity does limit the fashion to those who have a means to acquire it, it is not the sole indicator of an elite trend. For example, if a fashion is rare but has already passed into the realm of unfashionable because the elites perceive that it has been picked up by the masses, even the rare fashion will be abandoned (Roach and Eicher 2007).

Vance Packard describes this process as responsible for the shift from the automobile as status symbol to the home in the mid-twentieth century. He notes that “with the general rise of incomes and installment buying a luxuriously sculptured chariot has become too easily obtainable for the great multitudes of status strivers” (1995 [1959]:57). Thus, the home became the next great status symbol. There is nothing inherent in the home or the automobile that makes them status symbols; it is simply an arbitrary switch to that which has not yet been pursued by the non-elites. Since Packard’s writing, one could say that there have been many more ‘switches’ of status symbols in this cat-and-mouse game.

Of the four processes described here, the non-substantive-instrumental is the most precarious. It is the most easily achieved by non-elites because of the arbitrary nature of the signified fashion. As Simmel indicates, once the masses catch on to what the elites are doing, eating, or wearing, the elites must find a new fashion. This cat-and-mouse game results in the ephemeral nature of fashions and trends.

Being Ineffable: The Non-Substantive-Non-Instrumental Process

This process involves moves from the codified to the ineffable. It manifests itself in the liberal education curricular trend: learning is general education – rather than specific, cumulative, practical knowledge. Elite valuation of the ineffable necessitates a level of disinterestedness that spawns disinterested internships. Through this process, elites circumvent the problem of academic knowledge codifying culture by resorting to extracurricular general culture. This culture is “applied beyond the bounds of the curriculum, taking the form of a ‘disinterested’ propensity to accumulate experience and knowledge which may not be directly profitable in the academic market” (Bourdieu 1984:23). This is a game of “symbolic gymnastics, always contain[ing] something ineffable, not through excess... but by default,

something which communicates... falling short of words and concepts” (1984:80). So it is not an accumulation of knowledge as a means to an end, but simply knowledge of a particular type: that which is unquantifiable. For this reason, acculturation must be ineffable, and therefore so internships are disinterested which play into this non-substantive-non-instrumental process.

Culture becomes codified when its symbols are understood by all. Pierre Bourdieu names curricular academic knowledge as an example of codified knowledge (1984). General culture, or *la culture libre*, is non-quantifiable knowledge; it is ineffable. For elites whose tastes and preferences are ineffable, “the essence in which they see themselves refuses to be contained in any definition” (1984:24). Specifically, the ineffable is cultural knowledge that is “irreducible to a sum of strictly verifiable knowledge” (1984:89).

For Bourdieu, the educational system has an important role in this process. For instance, when art is taught (rather than *experienced* through exposure to museums and artists), this rationalization “provides substitutes for direct experiences,” offering “shortcuts on the long path of familiarization” (1984:68). This can be conceived as a leveling of the playing field for non-elites. Thus, it should come as no surprise that elites are resistant to this process of rationalization that inherently occurs in education. The

rationalization implied by every institutionalized pedagogy, in particular the transformation of class ‘sense’... into partially codified knowledge... has the effect of reducing... the weight of what is abandoned to inherited ‘senses’ and, consequently, the differences linked to economic and cultural inheritance. It is also true that these differences continue to function in other areas, and that they recover their full force as soon as the logic of the struggle for distinction moves its real stakes into these areas – which it of course always tends to do (Bourdieu 1984:78).

Therefore, educational capital does not have a monopoly on the production of cultural capital because it is constantly engaged in a process of codifying this capital (1984).

This process is the most secure of all four processes because it requires two kinds of capital: economic and cultural (to perceive that which is ineffable). Because of this stability in maintaining the status quo, as well as its distance from the substantive-instrumental process, this process has become the

elite counterpoint to nonelite incursion – both in the landscape of higher education and within the realm of internships.

PAINTING THE MACRO PICTURE: THE HISTORICAL NICHE OF THE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE

The landscape of higher education in the United States has always been a battleground for the pursuit of capital. This is a dynamic process of encroachment and reconfiguring. Indeed, the American university began as a direct way of educating and distinguishing elite through Bourdieu's process of institutionalized cultural capital. The first institutions of higher learning in the United States were nine universities known as the colonial colleges. Their purpose was to make men who "would spell the difference between civilization and barbarism" (Rudolph 1990 [1962]:6). The newly formed colonies "needed leaders disciplined by knowledge and learning, [they] also needed followers disciplined by leaders, [they] needed order" (Rudolph 1990 [1962]:7). Thus, the creation of higher education in the United States was the first tangible institution that distinguished 'leaders' from 'followers,' the elite from non-elite. These colonial-era colleges today represent many elite liberal arts schools, such as Amherst, Wesleyan, and Williams. The pursuit of knowledge that occurs at these institutions is both non-instrumental and non-substantive.

Thus, these universities maintain an elite hegemony in higher education as well as American society in general. However, creation of federal land grant state universities created an unprecedented system of mass higher education which created a new series of challenges in which the elite liberal arts schools differentiated themselves and maintained their distinction. This is never a stable position of domination. As knowledge becomes codified and higher education becomes massified, the elite position of these liberal arts schools becomes threatened. By maintaining their non-instrumental, non-substantive character, elite liberal arts schools continue their supremacy.

The first incursion into higher education was the creation of land-grant state universities. These institutions were born under the Morrill Federal Land Grant Act of 1862. This legislation had a dual

purpose: firstly, to create research institutions which would apply recent developments in science and technology to boost American agricultural and industrial productivity (Rudolph 1990 [1962]) and secondly to “promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life” (“Morrill” 1862). These institutions gave degrees that were markedly different from those offered at the colonial college. Rather than classical subjects, state universities offered diplomas such as the Bachelors of Scientific Agriculture (Rudolph 1990 [1962]) and other “agriculture and mechanic arts” (Rudolph 1977:117). Thus, these public, land-grant universities were providing practical education to those who previously could not and did not acquire postsecondary degrees.

Another encroachment into the elite hegemony of higher education was the cooperative education movement which began in the early twentieth century. Herman Schneider, a civil engineering professor, believed that “traditional classroom instruction could take engineering and other technical students only so far” (Smollins 1999). He then constructed an education model in which students learned their craft while attending classes, thereby offsetting their tuition costs and practically applying their classroom knowledge. In 1903, the University of Cincinnati hired Schneider and implemented his cooperative education system.

The University of Cincinnati was “developing a new type of college student” (Stockbridge 1911: 14267). This new student spent half of their college time working (often the “hardest kind of manual labor” [14267]), and half of their college time in the classroom. For these students, the academic setting needed to serve to enhance them as workers. In the classroom, they “pull[ed] the teacher down out of the clouds and ma[de] him lay hold of the real facts of nature and of life” (14268). Schneider drew a line in the sand between colleges such as those like the University of Cincinnati and other unnamed institutions: “Our colleges are endowed for the benefit of the public and not to make life’s pathway easier for the individual” (14270). For these institutions, learning was to be the means to an end and was clearly instrumental in nature.

In 1909, Northeastern University was next to adopt Schneider's cooperative education model. Although it was not a public institution like the University of Cincinnati, Northeastern's roots lay in vocational training. It originally began as a "night school for working men," known until 1916 as the YMCA's Evening Institute (Smollins 1999). After the Higher Education Act of 1965 included a provision that provided funding for schools that offered cooperative education, the number of institutions with co-ops exceeded one hundred.

The final infringement into the elite domination of the American university was the GI Bill of 1944 which, in turn, engendered the proliferation of the community college. The federal government mandated the opening-up of higher education to the average American – the GI Joe returning from war. However, the university system at this time refused to absorb the impending influx of students (Brint and Karabel 1989). Thus the nonselective community college became a prominent feature of the American higher education system.

Acknowledging their inability to compete with four year institutions, especially well-endowed private universities, leaders of the community college movement chose a new niche for their students: vocational training. This was an adequate solution that resolved the dilemma of the community college: "On the one hand, [it] accept[ed] the democratic pressure from below to provide access to new levels of education while, on the other hand, [it] differentiat[ed] the curriculum to accommodate the realities of the economic division of labor" (Brint and Karabel 1989:11). The community college opened up higher education to many Americans, though there was a catch:

Walter Crosby Eells, founder of the *Junior College Journal* and executive secretary of the American Association of Junior Colleges from 1938 to 1945, noted that while universities tend to train leaders, democratic societies also needed 'educated followership' and so proposed junior college terminal education as a particularly effective vehicle for training such followers (Brint and Karabel:1989:12).

As Eells demonstrates, the opportunities community college provided were deliberately limited to non-elite pathways.

Indeed, as higher education became massified, these incursions were countered by curricular changes at elite schools. These changes allowed elite institutions to maintain their superior position within the stratified field of higher education. The first elite reaction established their institutions as those in which learning is non-instrumental through the proliferation of the service ideal at the colonial-era colleges.

The service ideal was an undertaking of the “middle class conscience” aimed at combating the ills of urbanization and industrialization (Rudolph 1990 [1962]:357). For example, graduates of elite women’s colleges such as Vassar, Smith, and Wellesley created settlement houses in which they worked with poor Jews and Catholics to civilize them. They taught them how to save money, sing Protestant hymns, be neighborly, and even the way to properly bathe themselves (Rudolph 1990 [1962]).

This service ideal of the university formed a distinction between those for whom college was instrumental and those from whom it was non-instrumental. In other words, some went to college to be served, and some went to college to serve. This represents the vertical axis of the four processes of obtaining capital. Institutions where learning was not a means to an end were elite because of cultural capital obtained in their disinterested service endeavors, for instance; those where learning was a means to an end were not elite.

Elite schools established themselves as non-substantive by adopting liberal education as their curriculum. They eschewed both cumulative and instrumental knowledge, namely the vocational and practical courses of study that existed at the land grant universities, institutes of cooperative education, and the community colleges. Critics of these institutions lamented the diminishment of intellectualism at the American university. Barbara Ann Scott writes:

The attempt by academic administrators to resolve the intertwined crisis of finance, governance, and surplus labor has provoked a profound crisis in the content of the curriculum and the purposes higher education is supposed to serve. The new practicality, in comfortable alliance with the pragmatic professionalism of faculties and administrative staffs, constitutes a powerful centrifugal force that has dissociated intellectual activity from the pursuit of reason and from its true center in the liberal arts curriculum. The result has been the trivializing of the academic enterprise and the intellectual impoverishment of much of the academic community (1984:xiii).

Stanley Aronowitz similarly notes that “The elite university finds itself in serious trouble, mainly because its own uncritical traditions, its technocratic orientation, and the market orientation of students who failed to get the message not to worry, conspire to produce a degraded educational and intellectual environment” (1984:78). Such critiques identify technical, vocational, and professional curricula as incursions into the eliteness of higher education.

Proponents of liberal education argued against the trend toward specialization inherent to the vocational and professional training that especially existed at the public land grant university, cooperative education institutes, and community colleges. A report by the Association of American Colleges and Universities found that “colleges have lost sight of the value of liberal education and their curricula have deteriorated into a hodge-podge of training in technical skill” (Commission on Liberal Education 1942). Robert Maynard Hutchins (1950) complained, “Specialized education has now reduced us all to the level of students who cannot talk together unless they both happen to remember the score of last Saturday’s game.” These critics sharply disapproved of the teaching of technical and specific skills.

Even today, the Association of American of Colleges and Universities’ (AACU) Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative defines liberal education as “expanding horizons, building understanding of the wider world, honing analytical and communication skills, and fostering responsibilities beyond self.... [It is] more a way of studying than a specific course or field of study” (“Liberal Education and America’s Promise” 2007:3). Thus, liberal education is defined in contrast to the more professionally or technically oriented curricula of the public land grant university, the cooperative education institute, or the community college. Whereas these institutions focused on technical and pre-professional specialization, liberal education centered on the opposite: breadth and general education.

Indeed, Allan Bloom celebrates the undergraduate years as those in which liberal education exists to provide breadth before specialization is imposed upon the student: undergraduate liberal education is “civilization’s only chance to get to [the student],” and as such, it is the “space between the intellectual

wasteland he has left behind and the inevitable dreary professional training that awaits him after the baccalaureate” (Bloom 1987:336). Bloom celebrates undergraduate liberal education as a time of exploration across many areas, rather than as training for a specific career or field.

Daniel Bell’s conception of general education is a curricular innovation that ensures breadth while avoiding a direct codification of knowledge. His notion of general education aims “to provide a ‘common learning,’ to give the student a comprehensive understanding of the Western tradition, and to combat intellectual fragmentation with interdisciplinary courses” (1966:282). The provision of ‘common learning’ eludes codification by “hav[ing] the student accept the idea of tradition (and becom[ing] part of its continuity) and the idea of the past (and relat[ing] himself to it)” (1966:283). Thus there is no prescribed syllabus or reading list, and the experience of liberal education can therefore avoid replication by autodidacts.

Liberal education’s emphasis on the broad and its avoidance of specialization demarcates the horizontal axis of capital acquisition. This breadth of learning renders the learner’s knowledge ineffable in that it cannot be quantified or applied to one specific field, discipline, activity or profession. This is perhaps why definitions of liberal education are so unspecific. There is no guarantee of concrete facts or knowledge that the liberal arts student will have when he or she graduates. The only thing that can be guaranteed is this *lack* of specialization. Yet it is this quality that is the value of liberal education: being “broadly prepared and [able to] contribute productively to the waves of innovation and change that are now the reality for organizations and communities alike” (Schneider 2005:65). This amorphousness, the ability to adapt to any situation and to think critically about it, is the most ineffable form of knowledge, a non-substantive and non-instrumental way of knowing.

The history of higher education in the United States began with a simple division: elites and non-elites, leaders and followers. As colonial-era colleges were joined by public land-grant universities, community colleges, and programs of cooperative education, postsecondary schooling was no longer an elite phenomenon. Thus it became necessary for the elite schools to create distinction within higher

education to preserve their hegemony through horizontal stratification. Through the service ideal, elite colleges signified their learning as non-instrumental. With the advent of liberal education, knowledge became ineffable and hence non-substantive as well. Liberal arts colleges embody the epitome of the ideals of service-learning and liberal education. Therefore, liberal arts colleges occupy the most elite position in higher education due to the nature of their education as non-substantive and non-instrumental.

CASES OF BOUNDARY WORK AT WESLEYAN

Wesleyan University identifies itself as a small, elite liberal arts college. It is a colonial-era college, having been founded in Middletown, Connecticut in 1831 (“University”). Since its inception, Wesleyan has maintained a liberal arts curriculum and has kept an academic policy of liberal education as its core focus (“University”). As a liberal arts institution, Wesleyan gains its elite status by maintaining a boundary between itself and universities where the pursuit of education is instrumental and/or cumulative. This boundary has been threatened many times throughout Wesleyan’s history.

Two particularly revealing instances of past incursion have been teaching certification programs and science graduate programs. In the former case, the meaning of the teaching program was managed so as to strip it of its instrumental and cumulative nature, thus converting it into a facet of the liberal arts curriculum. In the latter case, the program itself was managed and minimized in order to limit its visibility, so as not to detract from the liberal education environment.

Teaching Certification Programs

At their genesis, the programs were not contested, despite their more vocationally oriented nature. This was due to the optimism regarding the field of teaching at this historical moment. Indeed, the meaning of the teaching program was managed such that it was construed as an initiative that was part and parcel of liberal arts and liberal education. When the optimism faded, the meaning of the program as liberal arts in nature no longer held water, and the teaching program was terminated.

Thus, Wesleyan's programs in teaching have roots not only in the nature of the elite liberal arts college, but also in the trends of public education. Despite the historical genesis of elite schools as creating 'leaders,' by the mid-twentieth century, fewer and fewer Wesleyan graduates were entering the field of public education (Pearson 1953). This decline may be attributed to the change from "emphasis on 'what to teach' to emphasis on 'how to teach it'" (Pearson 1953). Indeed, the training of educators had developed a notably "professional sense by concentrating almost exclusively on the development of technical schools required for the teaching of necessary social skills" (Hill 1956). As a liberal arts college, Wesleyan refused to embrace such specialized and technical training.

So rather than change its own pedagogy, Wesleyan attempted to revolutionize the field of public education. Then-president Victor Lloyd Butterfield led this charge, saying:

Because [Wesleyan] hold[s] such a conviction [of liberal education], in the midst of a society that has grasped the importance of 'how' but is feeling only tentatively the importance of 'what,' Wesleyan seeks to solve some of the problems that perplex public education.... [A teacher training program] may narrow the gap between 'methods' and 'substance' (Pearson 1953).

In 1952, the Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program began in earnest. The program relied heavily on Wesleyan's liberal arts curriculum; in fact, most courses in the MAT program were already in existence as standard liberal arts courses ("Weeks" 1952). The program took on a three-pronged approach: an emphasis on "liberal arts (content), educational psychology and philosophy (theory), and actual classroom teaching (practice)" ("Teaching" 1962). Thus, the MAT program never remotely resembled the technical teacher training programs at other institutions. It preserved the elite distinction by remaining far away from the non-elite teacher's colleges. Wesleyan's teacher programs were so innovative and radically different from the training of public educators at the time that the MAT was never contested.

Interestingly, the MAT program presents the first emergence of internships as an official phenomenon. Beginning in 1961, teaching students were able to take on internships with public schools ("Teaching" 1962). While practice teaching had always been a part of the MAT curriculum, teaching interns

took on full teaching responsibilities for a semester in local public schools. They were paid a percentage of a typical teacher's salary ("Teaching" 1962). This is perhaps the closest Wesleyan ever came to the trends of non-elite higher education. Such a program perhaps be considered cooperative education or vocational training.

However, Wesleyan continued to maintain its distinction from other teacher training schools through its commitment to the service ideal. Several programs were available to teach in East Africa. There was even a "Program for Urban Teaching" which aimed to place Wesleyan student teachers in inner city schools to work with disadvantaged youth ("Master" 1968). These types of programs preserved the disinterested nature of the institution. Wesleyan was not training teachers so that its students would have a guaranteed career upon graduation. The programs were for helping others, particularly public school students in need in both inner-city America and impoverished East Africa.

By 1973, the MAT program had been downsized to an undergraduate Educational Studies Program. This occurred despite continued growth in matriculation of MAT students the previous year (Cohan 1971). The Educational Studies Program was "always highly regarded in Connecticut and the Northeast [and] became a leader among the undergraduate teacher-preparation programs in the country" (Church 1993). However, it too was phased out in the early 1990s.

Despite continued interest in graduate-level teacher training programs and despite a respected undergraduate program, teacher education at Wesleyan was eliminated. Wesleyan's mission to reinvent the field of public education was always present. However, the tide had changed once again in the trends of public education and teacher training. A veritable crisis was unfolding in public schools. The unionization of teachers and the ensuing 1968 strikes in New York City led to an abandonment of public education by institutions of higher education ("Public" 1968). Indeed, the federal government released its *Nation at Risk* report in 1983, marking the beginning of national intervention into the ailing public schools. The report catalogued the failings of American public education:

The educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur – others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments” (“A Nation” 1983).

Now leaders in public schools were simply considered with the most basic operations of the public school; incorporating the classic liberal arts subjects into their curricula became a lower-order concern.

Hence Wesleyan’s experiment in revolutionizing the field of public education waned. It had become clear that public schools had minimal interest in liberalizing their curricula. As was evidenced during the strikes of the 1960s, racial and ethnic tensions remained at the core of public education’s dilemma. The attempts to incorporate liberal arts into public school classrooms faded into the background as the inequality, racial animosity, and bargaining disagreements became public education’s primary worry. Thus, while the teaching certification programs did not begin as a threat to Wesleyan’s ineffable boundary, once the context of public education changed, the threat became clear. Wesleyan would either have to commit the unthinkable sin of vocationalizing its teacher training programs, or it would eliminate them. Unsurprisingly, institutional leaders chose the latter option.

Science Graduate Programs

In contrast to the genesis of the teaching programs at Wesleyan, the creation of graduate programs in science was much contested. This contestation continues presently: the science graduate programs are currently at risk of downsizing or elimination due to recent budget restrictions (“Mid-Year Report” 2010). In order to mitigate the incursion posed by the science graduate programs, the programs, their students, and the students’ work are underemphasized.

The impetus for the programs began in 1960, when a committee of faculty members that called itself “The Mystical Nine” submitted a working paper recommending the addition of graduate programs in science in order to be able to attract competitive faculty (Arendt 1966). Then-president Butterfield made the decision that advanced learning was in the best interests of the college. Many faculty members hotly contested this choice. They had two fears concerning the addition of science graduate programs:

Wesleyan would unsuccessfully be attempting to emulate Ivy League schools, and that the programs would pre-professionalize the university.

Professor William Arrowsmith warned of other colleges who succumbed to graduate science programs: "Instead of cleaving to their Socratic pretensions and traditions, they have tended instead to become petty universities" (1967:34). Arrowsmith suggested that Wesleyan not play the graduate 'game,' but that "it should be a different game altogether, designed to produce men who did not think it beneath their dignity to educate others; men in whom the general civilized intelligence survives; humanists with a concern for men; scholars convinced that the world needs humane knowledge as never before" (1967:35). This goes hand-in-hand with the fear of professionalization of Wesleyan: "emphasis on graduate studies effectively professionalizes the university" (Arrowsmith 1967:4). Arrowsmith hopes that "the college may have a higher function than feeding professional schools" (1967:34).

Despite the initial hesitancy of many faculty members, the graduate programs began admitting students in the early 1960s. Yet this was not the end of the debate over the legitimacy of the programs. Again and again, the programs came under scrutiny and possible elimination. Since their inception, the science graduate programs have been under threat of extinction. In 1974, frustrated with the possibility of nixing the programs after less than a decade, one science faculty member perceived that "doctoral programs weren't the thing for a small New England college to be doing. That sentiment has been a constant thing" (Horowitz 1974:3). Twenty years later, the debate raged on: "Having only six Ph.D. programs has left the university caught between an identity as a liberal arts college and a research university" (Schell 1994). Chemistry professor Rex Pratt responded by saying "We have to teach students how to do science, not just teach them about science" (Schell 1994). This gets at the fundamental problematic of the graduate programs: these programs provide a kind of training, and this professionalization crosses the boundary between liberal education and non-elite forms of education.

To minimize the presence of this threat, the science graduate programs (and their students) were downplayed. Unsurprisingly, students noted “an administrative tendency to seek containment rather than expansion of [graduate] programs” (Wayshul 1981:6). One student complained that “one often hears of outstanding achievements and awards of Wesleyan’s undergraduate alumni. Rarely, if ever, does anyone praise the grad students’ accomplishments” (Wayshul 1981:6). Another graduate student pointed out “our role in the university is secondary... For the most part we are ignored” (Pachman 1976). While the graduate students sensed alienation, such isolation was necessary to preserve the boundaries between Wesleyan and other types of institutions.

Contemporary Boundaries: Liberal Arts and the Internship

Through interviews with current professors², I sought to understand their contemporary perspective of boundaries at Wesleyan to determine if the historical hegemony of eliteness is still in place. Using their conception of these boundaries, I was able to determine whether internships represent a threat to these institutional borders. In professors’ discourse, I find that Wesleyan derives its elite status through the fourth process of obtaining capital, non-substantive-non-instrumentalism. Professors illustrated this process through both distinction from other types of institutions and responses to incursions of the boundary at Wesleyan.

To first determine the how Wesleyan locates itself institutionally in the realm of higher education, I asked professors to explain the liberal arts. Consonant with my earlier findings concerning the historical niche of the liberal arts college, many professors defined liberal arts by what it was *not*, underlining its distinctiveness from other types of institutions of higher education. For instance, when I inquired as to the definition of the liberal arts, a professor of German responded:

My concept of the liberal arts is [that] we try to give an education that is not focused narrowly on professional and pre-professional training. It’s not focused on the learning of discrete facts. It’s an education that’s directed toward the development of the whole person and that means both right and left brain. It’s an education in how to find information, how to process information, how to analyze phenomena, how to see the complex connections among separate phenomena and how to appreciate the complexity of life on earth, the interrelationships.... As we [in the liberal arts] use engagement, it’s related to...

responsibility. It's the very opposite of isolated technical knowledge or skills. It's the ability to delve into any kind of endeavor or any field of knowledge or any art and see connections, care about the effects of actions.

Indeed, the professor's careful distinction of the liberal arts from learning at other types of institutions (places of "professional and pre-professional training") is a reaction to the historical incursion of higher education. The definition of the liberal arts has developed in distinguishable contrast to other types of colleges and universities so as to preserve its hegemony within the field of higher education.

This distinction between the liberal arts and pre-professional training explains why much of Wesleyan looks and operates the way it does. The distinction characterizes boundaries that have defined Wesleyan's academic departments and course options. For example, a professor of economics explained why the department of economics is not a department of business. He defined the place of his discipline within the liberal arts precisely by its distinctiveness from the business major: Economics "is a way of thinking about how the world works, not a way of running a business or running an investment bank... Whereas a business major would teach you how to run a business, an economics major would teach you to study how a bunch of people running a business would interact." A German professor made a similar distinction when asked to explain why Wesleyan would never have courses in communications or media: "We're not in the business of training people to go and work for Fox News but we could train people to analyze the way Fox News puts together stories, uses the English language, makes use of images, selects what it covers. All that would be in the realm of inquiry." Thus, what is in the "realm of inquiry" is that which is theoretical, namely not directly applicable to a job or career. By maintaining a strict boundary on this realm of inquiry, there are acceptable majors (economics rather than business) and courses (classes in analyzing news media rather than techniques for working in the media). These boundaries developed as reactions to specific incursions into the hegemony of the colonial-era colleges.

In professors' conceptions of liberal arts, I found resistance to substantive and instrumentalist tendencies, which indicated that the liberal arts continues to maintain an elite hegemony through the fourth

process of capital acquisition. Several professors critiqued situations they found to be incursions of the strict non-substantive boundary at Wesleyan: A classics professor lamented the substantive process of “an ever-earlier emphasis on professional training.” This professor saw a conflict of interest between those newer professors who are more concerned with “staking out a territory for themselves, a specialization” than with their “institutional identification with Wesleyan.” While speaking specifically about internships, a film professor explained a similar discouragement of this substantive accumulation of credentials:

We've found that over the last ten years in particular, more and more students are doing internships.... Maybe it's because when they were in high school, they didn't spend their summers scooping ice cream. They spent their summers doing activities that would look good on their resume. They sort of carry that mindset over into college.... We find more and more people doing more and more internships earlier and earlier... That is not an idea that we encourage or advocate in the department.

Thus, these professors demonstrate that the accumulation of experiences, credentials, or activities is not the essence of the liberal arts education. Indeed, as the film professor pointed out, such incursions are socialized as unacceptable: substantivism is “not an idea that we encourage or advocate.”

I also found a widespread commitment to non-instrumentalism. This characteristic particularly distinguishes Wesleyan as distinct from pre-professional training as well as from universities, even extremely selective ones. A professor of government recounted:

There's a commitment to ideas here [at Wesleyan]. Wesleyan students aren't conventionally ambitious in the same way that, say, students [are] at Princeton or Yale... I hardly ever get asked 'Is this going to be on the test?' There's a different kind of student culture here.

Indeed, at the liberal arts school, it is not the test or exam – the instrumental indicator of value or importance – that is the central concern; it is the pursuit of ideas, of knowledge for knowledge's sake. As a professor of French put it more bluntly, “The notion is [that] what we offer here is supposed to be... more theoretical and not practical.” Moreover, the professor of economics pointed out that it is “intellectual skills” that are taught at Wesleyan, rather than skills which can be put towards practical ends:

For instance, you couldn't leave my econ course and go be an economic analyst. I would help you get along the way there, but there are blanks that they would have you fill in, that are to me more strictly vocational and detailed, rather than interesting because of structure of thought.

It is the gaining of knowledge – the process of learning theories – that is fundamental to the liberal arts, rather than its ability to be applied towards instrumental or practical ends.

The importance of non-instrumentalism is reinforced despite incursions from students and parents.

A professor of German describes students for whom the pursuit of knowledge *is* an instrumental one:

There are some who maybe just want to get a certain kind of education and go out and be technocrats or go out and be surgeons, and who look upon their education here as just giving them the tools that will allow them to do that. But I've met so many Wesleyan alumni who are out in the world, maybe in business, maybe in medicine, but they remain very receptive to learning. And they haven't just settled into a routine of making money or gaining power.

This professor made it clear, however, that these instrumental pursuits of knowledge are relatively uncommon, and are managed through socialization. The economics professor recounted a situation of incursion in which both parents and students pressed the boundary of non-instrumentalism:

We'll often get pressure from students or from their parents saying 'Well we need them to know relevant skills. So you should teach courses that train them to be a 'blank.'" And the answer that liberal arts education gives is 'no.'

Indeed, the pressure is so strong that the economics department is sometimes forced to create a course that is instrumental in nature, such as accounting:

[When we face this pressure,] we try to arrange... for an adjunct to teach an accounting course. [The course] doesn't count towards the major because we're not a business major, we're an economics major. We're not teaching you to be an accountant; we're teaching you to think about how economic systems work.

Socialization is a way of minimizing this incursion into the realm of the instrumental. Students are socialized into the liberal arts way of doing things – that is, the emphasis on the theoretical rather than practical. This is evidenced in the economics department through the low status that it accords to the accounting course; it is not taught by a full faculty member, and it is not credit-worthy within the economics major.

Socialization is an important way to manage incursions of the non-substantive, non-instrumental boundary. However, much socialization occurs before the student arrives at Wesleyan. Indeed, any university is made up of a self-selected group of individuals; it therefore follows that most liberal arts

students are fully complicit in protecting the elite status of their college. As an art history professor pointed out, “Everything depends on what people are exposed to before they get to [Wesleyan]... The people who apply here are looking for what this place has to offer.” These people are those who understand the necessity to resist codification of knowledge. As I have shown, when students are intruding into this boundary, the department socializes them.

Sometimes an asymmetry exists between parents and students. Often in these situations, students have been socialized prior to arriving at Wesleyan or a liberal arts college, while their parents have not. Those parents who have not, according to the German studies professor, are “lack[ing] cultural capital.” Their children, however, have been socialized by members of the elite:

The kids who come here [whose parents are lacking in cultural capital] have very often benefited from community-based organizations or mentors [or] teachers who took them under their wing along the way and encouraged them to apply to a place like this.

These organizations, mentors, and teachers are those that understand the cultural capital inherent in a degree from a liberal arts college. While parents who have not been socialized may fear that their child will be unprepared for a profession, it is indeed this lack of practical expertise that requires them to go on and receive further graduate or professional school training, thereby guaranteeing them a place amongst the elite as a doctor, lawyer, professor or other accordingly high status position.

Since the education at the liberal arts college is neither substantive nor instrumental, it is an acquisition of ineffable knowledge, knowledge that resists codification. Thus, I found professors who refused to define the liberal arts, instead highlighting their ineffability. This defiance of categorization of the liberal arts embodies resistance to codification. A government professor attempted to explain this phenomenon, noting that the liberal arts exist

in an ad hoc way, because the interconnections are so many and so variable and peoples’ interests are so different, and because Wesleyan is committed to the idea that our students should be mastering or shaping their own educational experiences in accordance with their goals and what they’ve already learned and so on.

According to the classics professor, what the students learn from their liberal arts experience may not even manifest itself in any way for some time:

Another thing that makes what we do here [at Wesleyan] different from pre-professional training, technical training, is that [for] so much of what we do here, the results are deferred. You can't really tell what's going to be important until a few years out.

The economics professor pointed out that the liberal arts teaches its students "the ability to think on their feet and [to] learn how to learn." Perhaps the government professor came closest in explaining the liberal arts as best as the undefinable can be defined:

[The liberal arts] is a kind of flexible or plastic thinking; this idea of it being self-reflective, problematizing the taken-for-granted, the emancipatory dimensions of that.

Thus, these definitions point to the variability, individuality, and even deferred purpose of the liberal arts.

These characteristics all resist codification and reinforce the ineffability of the Wesleyan education.

Another way in which liberal arts knowledge is ineffable is its emphasis on breadth as well as depth. Breadth permits its learner to be a not-quite-Renaissance-man, having knowledge in many areas, though lacking enough specialization to become a professional in any one discipline, at least without further education. The art history professor characterized Wesleyan by this breadth, simultaneously distinguishing Wesleyan from other types of institutions:

What ideally Wesleyan offers, or a place like Wesleyan, is a very high degree of intellectual stimulation across a broad range of disciplines, and that's a goal that institutionally is different from purely professional education.

Thus, breadth of knowledge is an important feature of the liberal arts education that is distinctive from other colleges and universities.

Wesleyan University's president, Michael Roth, has written many newspaper articles and blog entries defending the liberal arts boundary. Indeed, the ineffable breadth of the liberal arts means that the student's education is

not reducible to the material circumstances of one's life (though they may depend on those circumstances). There is a promise of freedom in the liberal arts education offered by America's most distinctive, selective, and demanding institutions; and it is no surprise that their graduates can be found disproportionately in leadership positions in politics, culture and the economy (Roth 2008).

Because the liberal arts are not “reducible,” being instead a “promise of freedom,” they are ineffable. The cultural capital acquired sets up the liberal arts graduate for leadership positions. Roth also points out that the liberal arts provide for a set of experiences that cannot be replicated anywhere else, and are thus unique and rare:

The cosmopolitanism of curricula at America's best liberal arts colleges is in tune with the wonderful diversity of student life. The thirst for experimentation, the ability to cross disciplinary or cultural borders, the scale of residential life -- all of these factors extend to learning outside the classroom and create vibrant communities that students remember and value throughout their lives. The great advantage of our cosmopolitan liberal arts education is that it allows students to explore international, virtual networks of knowledge while learning the virtues (the pleasures and effectiveness) of face-to-face conversation, team participation and cooperation (Roth 2009).

As the president of Wesleyan suggests, the liberal arts cannot be reduced to a pre-scripted set of activities or qualities because it is a community made up of texts as well as people. It is this ineffability that forms the core of the liberal arts and gives it a secure place in the stratified landscape of higher education.

These faculty members have demonstrated that Wesleyan derives its fundamental character and mission from the non-substantive and non-instrumental nature of the liberal arts. This includes an emphasis on theoretical and nonpractical, nontechnical and nonvocational education. Does the internship – or some categories of internship – represent an incursion into this boundary of non-substantive-non-instrumentalism?

Similar to Wesleyan's teaching program, the internship has been constructed in a way so as to manage its meaning. This is exemplified by the term 'internship.' It is likely used rather than other nomenclatures (such as work-study or work experience) to set the internship apart from these non-elite activities. Indeed, the word 'internship' has been borrowed from the term for the practicum portion of a medical student's education. Medical school and resident training carry more elite associations than work-study or work experience, and the medical field is largely considered an elite one (Scully and Bart 2003).

As previously discussed, an important function of the internship is that it serves as a marker of distinction. This may occur through any of the four processes outlined earlier. Therefore, the internship

may cause an accumulation of economic, social, and/or cultural capital. Thus, the internship is a critical tool for acquiring capital, particularly for the college-aged individual.

Nonetheless, internships may potentially represent an incursion of Wesleyan's boundaries because they are problematic in several ways. Most importantly, the internship can be vocational in nature. This vocationalism is in direct opposition to the nature of liberal education. Yet the internship in and of itself poses no direct threat to the elite liberal arts school, or more specifically, to Wesleyan. When populations (parents and students) advocate for internships to be credited, a central function of the liberal arts school (as a signifier of eliteness) collides with a central function of the internship (allowing accumulation of various types of capital). It is in the ensuing battle that the other problematic aspects of the internship become visible: whether paid or unpaid, as well as self-interested or disinterested, internships are more credit-worthy.

Two professors were very firm that their departments do not offer credit for internships: a professor of economics and a professor of film studies. When I asked why economics majors cannot receive credit for internships, the professor responded that "internships are more vocationally oriented, not educationally oriented." The film studies professor explained that internships are not credit-worthy because "an internship functions much like any work experience does... We [the film department] do not want to position ourselves as a pre-professional major; we want to position ourselves as a liberal arts major." Thus, the economics department and the film studies department both eschew internships because they threaten the liberal arts-theoretical/non-liberal arts-practical distinction.

Some professors were willing to grant internships credit if they were disinterested, rather than self-interested. When I asked whether a nonprofit internship is as credit-worthy as an internship with an investment bank, the professor of classics replied, "The nonprofits sort of have the moral high ground, whereas Goldman Sachs definitely doesn't." An English professor answered this question by defining internships as inherently disinterested:

I don't really see working at Goldman Sachs as an internship. It sounds to me like a job. I think there's a difference. I think an internship is usually unpaid.

However, the professor was "absolutely" in favor of internships when defined as disinterested. Thus, to professors in some departments, disinterested internships were found to be more consonant with the liberal arts. Indeed, the disinterested internship plays into the process of ineffability and acquisition of cultural capital. As such, it exists as a non-substantive, non-instrumental process of capital acquisition. Therefore, being in the same pursuit of ineffability as the liberal arts, the disinterested internship is more in line with Wesleyan's institutional boundaries.

Meanwhile, several professors saw no problem in granting credit for internships of any kind, self-interested or disinterested. The professor of art history pointed out that internships were very common amongst art history students; in fact, the professor often helps students locate internships. The art history department has offered credit for internships. Similarly, the German Studies professor provided several examples in which a student could potentially receive credit for an internship. While the professor believed that it was perhaps not necessary to do an internship, the internship is still considered a useful endeavor.

Why are two departments categorically against offering credit for internships while several others are at least willing to consider crediting them? The answer lies in necessity of socialization. There is significant asymmetry amongst the disciplines here. Departments which have seemingly little practical application, such as art history, classics, and German Studies, are more willing to offer credit for internships. These departments experience little to no pressure from students or parents to vocationalize or professionalize the major. Indeed, the art history professor informed me that the department "very rarely hear[s]" such requests. Thus the boundary work in these departments is less focused on the practical/nonpractical divide.

However, economics and film studies are clearly more applicable to their respective careers. Indeed, during their interviews, both professors spent considerable time distinguishing their discipline from

their practical doppelgangers, business and film production. Both departments expend much energy socializing their students into the liberal arts majors of economics and film studies; hence the economics professor's accounts of students and parents requesting accounting courses or the teaching of "relevant skills." The film studies professor pointed out that the department is "very conscious of the fact that what we do is something distinctly different from what USC does, or NYU." The latter are both schools notable for their film production programs. Indeed, the film professor informed me that the socialization begins even before the students arrive at Wesleyan:

It makes us [the film department] honestly a little nervous sometimes when we have [prospective students] who come and say 'I'm deciding between Wesleyan and USC.' Because we're like, 'These programs don't really have much in common.' And we don't want students to come here expecting the experience to be like NYU or USC because... that's not the kind of program we are. If all a student is interested in is filmmaking, then this is probably not the program for them. We want them to be interested in more than just getting behind the camera.

Thus, the film department faces the task of socializing its students into the liberal arts version of the film major: a major that is largely focused on studying film history and analyzing films, rather than creating them. Departments such as economics and film therefore have a greater task of socialization before them than some other disciplines. This explains why they see internships as a greater threat and are less willing to grant credit for internships than these other departments.

Service-learning classes are somewhat akin to offering credit for internships, and represent an already-existing encroachment into the liberal arts boundary. Service-learning classes are courses that have a service component in addition to a classroom portion. Many professors mentioned their support of such courses, notably because of their disinterested nature. In fact, service-learning courses are designed in careful consideration of the self-interested/disinterested boundary as well as the practical/nonpractical boundary. A professor of sociology who teaches a service-learning course pointed out that some people think such courses are "soft... [and] not rigorous [because] it brings sort of the dirty world into what should be liberal education, which should be ideas." Thus to delineate the boundary between the "soft" practical

world and the nonpractical, theoretical world of ideas, there is “a very rigorous definition of service-learning here [at Wesleyan]... it can’t just be service. It has to be service that serves a pedagogical purpose.”

Secondly, the service-learning course “must be of service to the community.” Such courses help to repay the “debt [that] universities have to the society.” This means that the service aspect typically involve work with nonprofits or community groups. Thus, “if it’s for private profit, we’re not going to do it.” In a way, this preserves the disinterested nature of the liberal arts. Nevertheless, receiving credit for such experiences codifies them. Academic credit may be considered a form of economic capital since each credit-hour corresponds to a certain amount of tuition dollars. Service-learning courses, then, may not be wholly disinterested. Therefore, by offering credit for service through service-learning classes, this diminishes their cultural capital value and places them outside the realm of non-substantivism-non-instrumentalism.

Internships may follow the path of service-learning if they too are offered credit. Even if the boundary of non-instrumentalism is preserved by only allowing disinterested internships to be accredited, this changes the nature of the process of capital acquisition. Firstly, it destroys the disinterested character of the internship by offering some form of capital as reimbursement: academic credit. Secondly, it codifies the internship into a definable entity, thereby removing its ineffable quality.

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF WESLEYAN AND THE INTERNSHIP

Amongst other types of capital, higher education offers the promise of cultural capital. While historically, elite status was guaranteed by simply attending a university, massification and codification of higher education led to an elite need for distinction between colleges and universities. The elite distinguished themselves by attending institutes where they gained an ineffable education – one that was not only non-instrumental or nonpractical, it was also non-substantive and therefore ineffable. The liberal arts college, by defining itself against institutions that are instrumental and/or substantive (such as land-

grant state universities or community colleges) and by maintaining a curricular emphasis on breadth as well as noncurricular and extracurricular experiences, exemplifies this acquisition of ineffability.

As a self-proclaimed elite liberal arts college, Wesleyan University similarly defines itself in contrast to instrumental and substantive peers. In order to preserve its elite status, it must defend this boundary. Several historical conflicts have threatened this delineation. The teaching certification program began during a period in which it was possible for Wesleyan to carve out a disinterested, ineffable, liberal arts niche in the profession of teaching and thus to maintain its distinction. However, as the larger national trends proved these hopes wrong, the program was eliminated. The creation of the science graduate programs generated – and continues to generate – much discomfort in that it threatens the border between undergraduate studies (pure knowledge) and graduate studies (professionalization). One way that this boundary is upheld is by downplaying these programs and Wesleyan's graduate student population.

Internships somewhat represent a contemporary incursion into the boundary that upholds Wesleyan's eliteness. While it is important for the liberal arts student to intern so as to build up noncurricular culture and distinguish themselves from their peers, the introduction of the work world into academia attacks the heart of the liberal arts mantra of non-instrumentality and non-substantiveness. This conflict is particularly felt in those departments where the students are less – or not yet – socialized into the ineffability of their major. The disinterested internship is perceived by some professors as less of a threat to the liberal arts boundary; however, like service-learning courses, offering credit even for disinterested internships would negate the disinterestedness and would erase the ineffability assured by such internships.

At Wesleyan, then, the soon-to-be Director of Internship position may not be one in which accreditation of internships is standardized. Indeed, it may be a way for the institution to monitor the incursion of the internship, protecting its elite boundaries of ineffability and non-substantive-non-instrumentalism. Conversely, if the internship comes to be accepted as credit-worthy at Wesleyan or liberal

arts colleges in general, it seems clear that a new, compensatory phenomenon will arise to brand the colleges – and their students – as ineffable and therefore elite.

¹ Using Factiva’s database, the keyword searched was “internship” while “medical” was excluded in order to avoid articles that solely discussed internships of medical students. This was done under the assumption that medical internships have long been required of medical students and would therefore misrepresent the trends of media coverage of the type of internship discussed in this essay. The search included all newspapers from January 1, 1980 to January 1, 2010.

² I interviewed nine professors from nine different departments: art history, classics, economics, English, film studies, French studies, German studies, government, sociology. To protect the professors’ privacy, I have refrained from using their name and refer to them as the professor of their respective department.

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