Chapter 11: Comparison & Contrast

This chapter emphasizes connections between critical thinking and comparison. It maps important techniques for creating comparisons:

- How to distinguish comparisons from other types of writing
- Ways to identify the key features of comparisons in writing
- Engaging in critical thinking while writing a comparison
- Crafting a successful comparison by using a set of planning steps
- Recognizing that the categories for comparison are always selected on the basis of values, beliefs, and needs

People make choices: what car to buy, who to vote for, what bend in the river to fish, what song to download, what advice to ignore, who to marry. The list of choices is long because life requires decisions about what matters and what does not. Most people have made lists of differences and similarities to guide a decision. That is a practical technique for simple problems. The bigger choices in life may begin with a simple list, but good comparisons require more than a list. If you learn to make conscious comparisons, you will make better decisions and write more effectively.

Key Features of Comparisons

Comparisons range from the simple to the complex. Writers can compare hamburgers to hotdogs, or they can use statistical tools to compare treatments for breast cancer. Both are comparisons, but they have important differences based on the needs of the audience, the objects compared, and the writer's purpose.

Comparisons and Contrasts

Writers look at similarities, and they also look at differences. Often, the similarities and differences enable them to make judgments, insights, and discoveries. For example, if Carlos is tall and Joshua is short, the contrast seems real. Although the difference is important, we need to ask why it is important. To a basketball coach, the reasons are obvious. Being tall is an advantage. Given only the facts about their height, the coach would probably want to recruit the Carlos. The idea of contrast seems useful.

On the other hand, the coach might say, “Aha! These two players are part of the issue of height-in-basketball. There is always a tradeoff between height, speed, and coordination. I have to remember that both have height, but I have to relate height to other issues.” At this point, the players share a feature. If the feature matters, then they are different and it is a contrast; if the feature doesn’t matter in relation to other things, then it is a comparison. The difference in whether or not height matters depends on the needs of the audience. In this chapter, both similarities and differences are called “comparisons” because it encourages critical thinking about *shared* criteria.

Simple Comparisons and Complex Comparisons

1. Simple Comparisons: comparisons often solve simple problems -- Coke or Pepsi? There is no need for new criteria, and the writer does not need to make a complex analysis. Such comparisons help make simple recommendations. Their emphasis is on the *outcome* of the comparison. However, a simple comparison can lead to more complex discoveries.

2. Complex Comparisons: complex comparisons also analyze the beliefs and values behind a criterion. Such comparisons lead to the choice between medical treatments, the selection of a college major, the design for solar panels, and other high-level decisions. Understanding the values, beliefs, and assumptions that have created the criteria is typical of the comparisons found in research and scholarship.

Using Comparison to Think Critically

All comparisons involve activities that are already familiar:

1. *Mapping the existing knowledge about the items being compared*
   a. Identify key features of each item
   b. Identify the existing criteria for comparisons
   c. Identify the values and beliefs behind the existing criteria

2. *Discovering the blanks in the existing map*
   a. Discover important criteria that *are not* being used to create a relationship between the things being compared
   b. Identify the values and beliefs that would make these criteria important

3. *Re-drawing the map:*
   a. Apply both the old and the new criteria
   b. State the values and beliefs that have been discovered
   c. Evaluate what the new criteria make important
   d. Apply both the old and the new criteria to create a judgment or insight

A good comparison is like any other kind of writing. It maps what is already known. It finds the blanks in the map, and then it re-draws the map. The new map has a new insight that explains how the differences and similarities matter to a specific audience.

Comparisons Use Values and Beliefs

Good criteria help readers understand what matters. That is why a comparison is more than a list of differences and similarities. For example, one writer can compare dozens of cars on their technical features. However, a second writer might have friends who are unemployed automotive workers. This writer will probably pay attention to where each car is built. A third writer who lives in Los Angeles, Atlanta, or New York may find pollution a major problem. This writer may judge that the exhaust emissions of a car are important. Values create the criteria for comparison, and each writer will have a different recommendation. Stating the values behind the criteria enables the reader to make an independent choice.

Putting Comparison to Work:

Imagine that you are buying a new car, and you want to compare five mid-sized, mid-priced cars. Do the following:

1. Select five automobiles to compare.
2. Create a list of criteria that focuses only on technical aspects of the cars.
3. Create a second list of criteria that reflects the connection of cars to employment in the U.S.
4. Create a third list of criteria that reflects the environmental impact of cars.
5. Apply each set of criteria to the list of automobiles in #1.
6. Explain the effect of the different criteria on the outcome of the comparison.

USING COMPARISON FOR CRITICAL THINKING

Recently, a community college wanted to know why students failed or succeeded. Counselors, professors, and administrators knew that the students at the college were different from students who went directly to a university. The school had two systems for identifying students who needed extra help, so they decided make a comparison. One system came from a large company, and the other system had been created by asking students about the things that interfered with college. The college decided to compare the two screening tests *and* to pay close attention to the assumptions behind each test.

How the College Used Comparisons to Predict Students' Success

The first screening test in the comparison was from ACT, Inc. The company sells tests that try to predict academic success and failure. The college looked at the ACT ENGAGE screening tool. It tests for a variety of personality traits. These personality traits -- according to ACT -- predict success or failure in college. Here is how the company describes the ENGAGE test:

Domain	ENGAGE Scale	Definition
Motivation & Skills Personal characteristics that help students to succeed academically by focusing and maintaining energies on goal-directed activities.	Academic Discipline	The amount of effort a student puts into schoolwork and the degree to which a student sees him-herself as hardworking and conscientious.
	General Determination	The extent to which one strives to follow through on commitments and obligations.
	Goal Striving	The strength of one's efforts to achieve objectives and end goals.
	Commitment to College	Commitment to staying in college and getting a degree.
	Study Skills	The extent to which students believe they know how to assess an academic problem, organize a solution, and successfully complete academic assignments.
	Communication Skills	Attentiveness to others' feelings and flexibility in resolving conflicts with others.
Social Engagement Interpersonal factors that influence students' successful integration or adaptation into their environment.	Social Connection	One's feelings of connection and involvement with the school community.
	Social Activity	One's comfort in meeting and interacting with other people.
Self-Regulation Cognitive and affective processes used to monitor, regulate, and control behavior related to learning.	Academic Self-Confidence	The belief in one's ability to perform well in school.
	Steadiness	One's responses to and management of strong feelings.

http://www.act.org/engage/college_features.html (accessed 9 September 2011)

The "ENGAGE Scale" names the company's criteria for predicting a student's success. These criteria identify students' differences and similarities. If students have high levels of certain traits, they are more likely to stay in college and succeed. The ACT test creates profiles for identifying at-risk students. Thus, the test seems useful, but it might not ask the questions that matter most at the community college.

The test has been created to identify differences. What is “different” between the two groups is shown by differences in their test scores. The school can use the tests, look at the results, and create programs to help at-risk students. The school can then design programs that will help the students.

Scholars know that developing useful criteria is a fine art. The criteria require constant re-examination because each group can have smaller groups within them. These smaller groups might be different from the overall patterns. The college suspects that the ENGAGE test might not recognize how its own students are different. Thus, it wants to compare the ENGAGE test to one based on interviews with its own students.

To create a second system, the community college asked *students* about what interfered with their success. The criteria *they* proposed for measuring differences between successful and failing students were radically different from the ENGAGE test:

	Failing Students	Successful Students
Financial Pressures		
Total costs beyond support (out of pocket) for education		
If you have a disability, do you get financial aid?		
Do you purchase tutoring assistance?		
Family		
Describe your child care arrangement		
Are you a single parent?		
Name your race/ethnicity/gender/sexual orientation		
Work		
Working full time?		
Working part time; seeking full time?		
Unemployed but seeking work?		
Collecting unemployment?		
Unemployment has run out?		
How many jobs do you hold?		
Transportation		
Is your schedule dependent on what someone else does for their schedule, e.g., parent's transportation takes precedence over yours?		
Do you have your own car?		
Plans		
Are you planning to transfer to another school?		
Education History		
How long since previously in school?		
Prior education: degree received		
Clarity of the registration process: were there any problems? List them.		
Have you found that your race/ethnicity/gender/sexual orientation leads to different (negative) treatment in the classroom?		
Education Goals:		
When do you expect to graduate?		
How long is your program?		
How long will it take you to graduate?		
How much time do you have available to study on a typical day?		
Home While Growing Up:		
Divorced parents?		
Deceased parent(s)		
Single parent?		
Married parents?		
Foster child?		
Are you the first of your family to go to college?		
How many houses/apartments have you lived in prior to coming to college?		

Students developed this list of factors. Their list suggests that they see success as controlled by external forces. They see raising children, paying the rent, finding transportation, working long hours, cooking meals, and other duties as the things that affect success. Their list focuses on the outside world that makes up their lives. The students named a set of *social* forces that affect success. By contrast, the ENGAGE criteria focus on *individual* strength, commitment, and attitudes.

Findings

Comparisons solve problems, and they do it by carefully building terms that discover meaningful differences and similarities. There is no obvious choice. The ENGAGE researchers can cite detailed data that justify their criteria. On the other hand, no criteria are ever complete. The community college has two tests that claim to do the same thing. Comparing the two tests will involve tracking groups of students, recording academic performance, and making judgments about the meaning of the differences. Comparisons begin with an identification of values and beliefs. "Failure" and "success" acquire a meaning when they are put in context.

These two sets of criteria remind readers that comparisons are based on values and beliefs. If comparisons have values and beliefs built into their criteria, then writers have to also create their own comparisons with a clear understanding of their own values and beliefs. The danger is that comparisons may seem obvious and natural. They are not, and it is the writer's job to be honest about the basis for the comparisons. Sometimes there is no need to examine them; Coke or Pepsi is not an earthshaking decision. But for important issues, writers have to recognize the value systems written into the document's insight.

Putting Comparison to Work

1. Notice that the students' list has headings: financial pressures, family, work, transportation, educational history, educational plans, family history, growing up, etc. These questions create a map. Should any of these be combined or divided further? If so, which ones?
2. List the criteria in order of importance *to you*, and then name one or more additional criteria that you would use to compare successful and failing students.
3. Review the list of criteria from ACT and from the students. Explain the following:

a. Why do students emphasize the *external* (social) forces that prevent success?

b. Why does the ACT emphasize the *internal* (psychological) qualities that lead to success?

c. What do the differences tell us about differences between the people who design ACT tests and the students who designed their own list?

Once you have recognized that these two sets of criteria are different, you can compare the two systems. You can ask a question that affects students:

How Context Affects Comparison

What do the differences between the two lists tell us about the way educators think about academic success and failure?

Good comparisons offer a clear answer to the “So what?" that readers ask. Students might ask, “Why should my school pay more attention to ACT scientists than to us?” That is a fair question. The college might say, “The people at ACT are experts in this field.” But the contrast between the scientists and the students really illustrates the importance of point of view. Both matter, but it’s important to recognize how the education, experience, and values of each group causes them to construct different criteria. It is no surprise that each set of criteria is based on their own concerns. This is *not* about who is “right” and who is “wrong.” It is about understanding how explanations are created.

HOW TO CREATE A COMPARISON

Select Comparable Objects

Comparisons begin with a need. We need to choose a major, decide to apply for a specific job, perform a valid statistical analysis of breast cancer treatments. These all require comparisons. They range from the mundane to the life-saving. When we compare things, we have to use terms that matter. Real knowledge is the launching pad for real questions. For example, there is no point in comparing Tamoxifen and aspirin for treating breast cancer because the alternatives do not both reflect an expert understanding of cancer treatments. A writer needs to know that Tamoxifen is a chemical with a statistically measurable effect on breast cancer survival, and aspirin has no history of such an effect. It would be more useful to compare Tamoxifen and another drug with a promising history of effectiveness. Knowing what to compare comes from mapping the subject. A good comparison requires knowledge of the clinically verified treatment alternatives for cancer. Without this contextualizing knowledge, the comparison is the equivalent of comparing avocados and bicycles. These two things have nothing in common. The result is obvious; there is no comparison. At best, this is inept. At worst, it is dishonest and prevents research from going forward.

Know the Needs of Your Audience

Key words alert readers to the presence of a comparison. Comparisons frequently use the following terms:

Differences	Similarities
on the other hand	in similar fashion or similarly
however	likewise/like
but	in the same way
although	as well
unlike	both
in contrast	also
differs from	is similar to
while	resembles
yet	too

Remember to use these to create comparisons and as signs that a comparison is in progress. After finding objects to compare, the writer has to have useful criteria for building the comparison. Some of these come from the needs of the audience. For example, if the comparison helps the reader choose between two automobiles, the writer has to know what the reader needs. How many people will be riding in it? If they are traveling 97 miles to get to work at a job that pays $25,000 per year, mileage will probably matter. The differences can lead to an insightful understanding of automotive transportation and the values it reflects, especially when those values are directly stated as a key feature of the comparison. A useful comparison goes far beyond saying, “Buy a four-cylinder Doofus,” or “Buy an electric Edsel” because it explains the strengths and limitations of the insight.

Select from Two Basic Organizational Strategies

Comparisons can be organized in two basic ways. One is called *point-by-point*. The other is called *block*. Each produces a different effect, and each has its advantages and disadvantages.

Consider the following when choosing a comparison strategy:

1. *Point-by-Point:* The writer first applies one criterion to one object. For example, the writer might first discuss the gas mileage of a Prius. Then, the writer applies the criterion to the other object. For example, the writer then discusses the mileage of a Volt. The document goes back and forth between the objects being compared. The criteria control the sequence of topics in the paper. The writer concludes by making judgments and insights about the two cars.

   Note: this method can be useful for a longer paper because the reader will need reminders about the other item being compared. Both items remain in play throughout the document.

2. *Block:* The second type of organization begins with a complete discussion of only one item. This section uses all the criteria. When that is finished, the comparison turns to the other item in the comparison. This method makes the objects themselves seem most important, and they control the paper. It works well for short documents.

   Note: writers can organize a paper this way so that one item in the comparison serves as a means of understanding the other. The first item dominates because it is often more familiar to the reader. Thus, it enables her/him to understand the second item.

These strategies are similar to the choice of key terms. They let the reader know that the paper is a comparison. More important is that the cues and the organization set an expectation that the comparison will provide an insight.

What Kinds of Critical Thinking do Readers Expect?

When writers present differences and similarities, the reader asks the key question: "So what?" If the paper does not include an answer to that question, the comparison is incomplete. The paper can answer the "So what?" question in four different ways:

1. The answer provides an evaluation.
2. The answer can organize the criteria into larger categories. Then, it can discuss how the categories satisfy the needs of the reader.
3. The answer can develop a better description of the readers' needs that make the comparison useful.
4. The answer can use the differences and similarities to discuss the values and beliefs that make the compared objects "mean" different things to different people.

Sometimes, it almost seems as if a list of differences and similarities will be the comparison. Such lists are not completed comparisons. They are initial steps toward a comparison.

THREE EXAMPLES OF COMPARISON

One way to write good comparisons is to look at examples. The first example below is a poor example. The next two comparisons are good examples. They show how to think critically about the way we make judgements. Remember that the processes of reading and writing are a two-way street. Good writers are good thinkers who can travel in either direction.

Example #1: A Comparison That Forgets to Answer the "So what?"

The example below is not really a comparison. It attempts to compare refrigerators, and the reader expects some sort of recommendation or insight. Instead, there is only a list of similarities and differences. Even though this is a flawed comparison, it does illustrate the writer's responsibility to answer the reader's "So what?" that always comes after facts have been presented.

<table>
<tr>
<td>There are many types of refrigerators, and they do not have identical features. These differences are important, and they are the basis for comparing the choices available to shoppers. The differences have been summarized in a chart provided by a consumer agency. The differences show the variety of products available.</td>
<td>These sentences do not tell the reader anything new. They say, “Hey, there are a lot of refrigerators out there, and guess what? They’re not all the same.” Just because the differences can be listed, the list is not a a comparison. It does not include an insight about the choices, the values the choices represent, or the need for other criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>
<table>
<tr><th>Features</th><th>Maytag M1TXEMMWW</th><th>LG LBC22520SW</th><th>Samsung RF266AEWP</th><th>Kenmore Cold Spot 59422</th></tr>
<tr><td>UPC</td><td>883049155272</td><td>048231782555</td><td>036725515949</td><td>883049132570</td></tr>
<tr><td>Total Volume (cubic feet)</td><td>21</td><td>22.4</td><td>26</td><td>25.1</td></tr>
<tr><td>Annual Energy Consumption (kilowatt hours)</td><td>416</td><td>465</td><td>462</td><td>577</td></tr>
<tr><td>Refrigerator Type</td><td>Top freezer</td><td>Bottom freezer</td><td>French door</td><td>Side-by-side</td></tr>
<tr><td>Controls / Display</td><td>Knob/dial</td><td>Digital temperature controls</td><td>Electronic controls</td><td>Knob / dial</td></tr>
<tr><td>Defrost</td><td>Frost-free</td><td>Frost-free</td><td>Frost-free</td><td>Frost-free</td></tr>
<tr><td>Dispenser</td><td>Cubed ice</td><td>No</td><td>Cubed ice, crushed ice, filtered water</td><td>Filtered water, cubed and crushed ice</td></tr>
<tr><td>Door Opens</td><td>Reversible</td><td>Reversible</td><td>Left and right</td><td>Left and right</td></tr>
<tr><td>Exterior Color</td><td>White</td><td>White</td><td>White</td><td>White</td></tr>
<tr><td>Other Available Colors</td><td>Bisque, black, stainless steel</td><td>Black, stainless steel</td><td>Black, stainless steel, platinum</td><td>Black</td></tr>
<tr><td>Extra Features</td><td>Gallon door storage</td><td>Door alarm, adjustable door storage, antibacterial seal</td><td>Twin cooling system, power freeze/cool</td><td>PUR II water filtration, Microban-treated crispers</td></tr>
<tr><td>Freezer Volume (cubic feet)</td><td>6.5</td><td>6.9</td><td>8.1</td><td>9.9</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
<td>The chart is a map of what others have said. There is no examination of the map for omitted information, errors, or other opportunities for insight. Copying-and-pasting the chart is an open admission that the writer has no intention of re-drawing the map. Without such critical thinking, the paper is not a comparison.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>These differences tell a lot about the choices shoppers have. Manufacturers offer many products to choose from, and you can choose whatever serves your needs.</td>
<td>The paper has no conclusion. It only says that different things are . . . different. That is not enough. The responsibility for critical thinking has been shifted to the reader.</td>
</tr>
</table>

What does this example tell us about comparison?

Writers who create comparisons must provide an insight for the reader. The writer is not just a compiler of facts that can be thrust under the nose of the reader. The next example shows how a student has used a TEQ Sheet, a Purpose & Problem Statement, and a Prospectus to build a real comparison that relies on critical thinking.

Example #2: A Useful Comparison that Uses Three Planning Steps

Useful comparisons often discover criteria. Good comparisons see what others ignore. They can help identify hidden values attached to the criteria. Thus, a good comparison expands the readers’ thinking. For example, choosing an automobile can be a mechanical choice based on summing up differences in mileage, acceleration, and options. For a comparison assignment in a first-year course, a student wrote about two cars she was considering. She had narrowed her choice, but she wanted to go beyond the obvious criteria and ask other questions. In the process, she not only selected a car, but also understood some of the values that were often ignored in comparisons of cars. Her work starts below:

The student started out by getting an online chart that described two cars:

	2011 Chevrolet Cruze LTZ SEDAN 1LZ	2012 Ford Focus 5dr HB Titanium
		
	MSRP[1]: $22,225	MSRP[2]: $22,700
	Competitively Equipped: $22,975	Competitively Equipped: $23,495
	Change Vehicle	Change Vehicle Remove
Powertrain		
Standard Engine	Turbocharged Gas I4	Gas I4
Displacement	1.4L/83	2.0L/121
Drivetrain	Front wheel drive	Front Wheel Drive
Horsepower @ RPM	138 @ 4900	160 @ 6500
Torque @ RPM	148 @ 1850	146 @ 4450
Fuel Injection	Direct Injection	DI
4-Wheel ABS	Standard	Standard
4- wheel Disc Brakes	Standard	Standard

http://www.chevrolet.com/tools/comparator/compareVehicle.do?modelYear=2012&makeName=13&modelID=21067&selectedTrim=330547&year=2011&pvc=12238&comparisonVehicles=330547~309339~315776&sValue=&snType=model

The student began by assuming that other criteria might be important. She wanted a way to discover them, so she used the Terms, Expectations, & Questions Sheet (TEQ Sheet). She knew that the sheet would help her identify what others had already said. It would also help her discover what was being ignored. She wanted to see if additional criteria would improve her decision.

Understanding an Existing Map

Terms/**E**xpectations/**Q**uestions: THE TEQ SHEET

Complete Citation:

http://www.chevrolet.com/tools/comparator/compareVehicle.do?modelYear=2012&makeName=13&modelID=21067&selectedTrim=330547&year=2011&pvc=12238&comparisonVehicles=330547~309339~315776&sValue=&snType=model

Terms and Phrases

To make its claim, the source uses important concepts. These organize the evidence and make sense out of it. **Identify** four key terms or phrases that are especially important to the source's claim. **Explain** why each is important to the source's claim.

1. Standard Features: these are the features that are found in all cars of that type. This collection of features makes them seem responses to "natural" customer needs.

2. Fuel injection: raises the question of fuel efficiency. Gasoline is injected directly into the cylinders for greater efficiency and power. Suggests that efficiency is measured in mechanical terms rather than by social, environmental, and other "contextual" issues.

3. [visual "term"] Web site enables users to check off items for comparison. By choosing from among a narrow range of options, the user accepts the choices as the full range of features. This confines the user to the criteria selected by the manufacturer/vendor. If there were an "other" box, the user would recognize that there are many more issues that need to be recognized. The site does not want that to happen.

4. Change vehicle button uses an imperative verb with an implied subject ("you"). Again, it gives the user a feeling of control and choice. This seems to be a major goal of the web site.

Expectations

An anomaly is something different from the normal pattern: a black polar bear, a talking dog; a blood pressure reading of 190/160. Anomalies are opportunities to make your own claim because they often identify unexplained territories that are worth writing about. List four anomalies from the source. These can be facts, claims, or relations, or information that is being ignored. How was each different from what you expected?

Anomalous Evidence or Claims	What You Expected to Read
Comparisons do not always favor the writer; some differences show the advantage of another company's product. The site seems surprisingly "neutral."	I expected a strong "hard sell" that always emphasized that the Chevrolet product was the preferable one.
The comparisons can involve many cars. Users might use the site to compare cars that are made by two "non-Chevrolet" companies. I see the site as a form of advertising, but this doesn't seem to be as focused on "persuasion" as most advertisements.	I expected only the Chevrolet products.
This is like the anomaly above, but there seem to be "rules" that make an advertisement an advertisement. This seems to be an addition to the definition of "advertising." It isn't a purely emotional appeal.	Advertising seems a form of persuasive writing. Persuasion would seem to rely on emotional appeals.
The control of the results seem to be in the user's hands (or mouse).	I expected that my job would be passive. I'd just absorb what they put out for me to read or look at.

Questions

After you have carefully reviewed the source, ask useful questions whose answer might become your claim. These questions should address the source's assumptions, evidence, thesis, or issues that it ignores.

1. What would be a useful heading for the type of information presented in the comparisons? Naming it might reveal what it is not. Would this would open up the information to additions and analysis? I'm beginning to wonder if a simple list of criteria should always have a name for the category they belong to.

2. If there were alternative "headings" or categories, would this require the inclusion of vehicles other than the ones selected for comparison? "New" seems to be the first "filter" that the comparison uses to select cars, but this is not exactly neutral because other cars might be as desirable if they were compared with, say, "fewer than 20,000 miles." Do such "filters" operate in all comparisons? What is the difference between a criterion and this kind of choosing ahead of time?

3. I'm worried that I'll just put my own "filter" up ahead of time, and the comparison that I create will be just as biased as the ones I've been reading. Am I doomed??????

The student knows that good writers ask questions. She creates a Purpose & Problem Statement to sharpen her focus.

Purpose

Why am I writing this? First, I'm doing the paper because I'm taking a course that teaches modes like comparison. Second, I need a car for school and work, and I'll use the assignment to choose one of the cars I'm considering. I can spend about $150 per month. My parents will help with the rest of the payment. A critical comparison would help me make a choice that reflects my own needs and my personal values.

Problems

There seems to be lots of mechanical information available, and I would create a heading for "mechanical features" if I were making a chart. But I also note that additional headings are needed for "environmental impact," "mileage," and "family friendliness." My dad used to work building cars, but he lost that job because production moved to Mexico, so, I'm also interested in where the car is built. My biggest task is to revise the list of criteria. Once I've done that, I have to decide on the relative importance of each one. That should let me make an overall assessment of what best reflects my preferences, and it won't be stuck on just the technical aspects of the cars. I also won't be stuck inside the comparative system provided by the people who sell cars.

She has identified gaps in the map by looking at the existing map of differences between the two cars, and she has begun to re-draw the map by adding her own criteria. The criteria have values and beliefs that connect cars to a network of values, beliefs, and real world issues. Her list is more thorough than a simple list of engineering specifications. Compare her work to the simple list in the first examples that compares refrigerators.

Based on what she has discovered, the paper is closer to a beginning. She reviews her discoveries, and then she decides to summarize what she *expects* to say. This is her Prospectus.

Prospectus

Cars have become a natural part of America's landscape. They're so natural that we choose between types of cars with a narrow focus on their mechanical features. Engine size, horsepower, and the other usual aspects of these machines seem all that's needed to measure their differences. However, the criteria for comparing cars can be more complex. The criteria can include environmental impact, mileage, and family friendliness. If we make a comparison on the basis of a larger picture of the world, we will start to think differently about what cars mean. For example, if we see unemployed workers in our community, we might add a criterion that identifies the place of production as an important difference. Although it's tempting to say that comparisons need lots of good criteria, a comparison of cars does something more than just help choose a car. It uses the automobile as a tool for seeing how the objects of daily life tell us about the worlds within which we live. The relation between environment, personal preference, employment, and carbon fuels becomes visible when I develop more complete headings. They name topics that need to be discussed, and those are the real topic of my paper.

What Does This Example Tell Us About Comparison?

At this point, she has a paragraph that can serve as the introduction to the first draft of her paper. She can now start writing a paper that explains her values and beliefs as she reviews the criteria for comparing cars. By revealing these to the reader, her recommendation will be honest and thus much more persuasive. Readers can see the promises she is making about the topics she will cover, and they can clearly see her major idea: cars are a way to understand the culture of America. The comparison in the paper will lead to understanding larger contexts, and it will make a statement.

Example #3: Three Planning Steps that Prepare for a Comparison

For the third example, let's return to the choice between two tests that predict academic success or failure. Another student in the same class as the woman who wrote the comparison of the cars chose to compare the ENGAGE test and the "test" designed by students. He also used the TEQ Sheet, the Purpose & Problems Statement, and a Prospectus to arrive at his paper.

By the end of each term, lots of students have vanished from my college classes. Some just disappear, but others sort of fade out before they're gone. I'm always curious about why they leave school. It seems like we ought to be able to figure which students are likely to drop out, and then do something to prevent it from happening. This would mean that we have to compare successful students to students who fail. Different surveys try to make predictions about who will succeed. I've seen the web site from the ACT company for their ENGAGE survey, and I've also seen a list made up by students in a writing class who were trying to figure out the same thing. The two lists of reasons that predict success are really different. On one hand, the ACT people know lots about creating tests, so I'm uncomfortable about saying that a list created by a class of first year students at a community college is worth weighing against the company's work. On the other hand, the students' criteria are so radically different that I have to think about some of the values and beliefs behind each set of criteria. I'm not really interested in comparing successful and failing students. I really want to compare the two lists to see what's behind their differences. If I contrast the lists, two key ideas seem to be guiding the thinking about what makes students succeed or fail: 1) individual strength, and 2) social forces. While the differences in the lists will tell me about the values and beliefs of each, it will do more. It will make me think about academic failure and success in a better way.	The writer begins by stating the problem and then giving background information about two responses to measuring student success and failure. The focus is on the differences in the criteria. He announces that he will use a comparison of the two lists to understand how people explain success and failure. He is not choosing one list over the other. The introduction seems to rely on the second part of a very thorough Purpose & Problems Statement. The emphasis on unresolved problems is especially useful to a comparison paper. Note that the first three paragraphs are an introduction. They announce the topic, the problem, and the method of the paper. The thesis will likely be a discussion of important issues that will be presented in the conclusions.

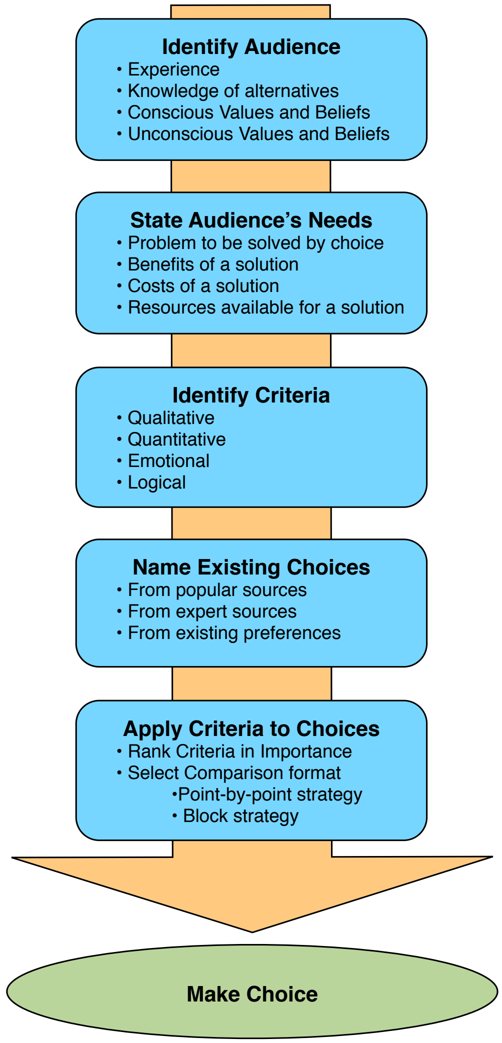
The ENGAGE test asks only about individual characteristics that lead to success. Every one of the criteria is about individual psychology and individual traits. The biggest heading is called "Motivation and Skills." These include everything from self-discipline to "goal striving." Even the heading that seems to be about the outside forces that affect students are really individualist. For example, the heading "Social Engagement" is about the individual's personal feelings about social connections and social activity. It's still focused on the individual. The last major heading for the criteria is "Self-Regulation." The term speaks for itself in terms of its focus on the individual. The ENGAGE criteria are different from the students' criteria because they focus only on the individual. A strict focus on the individual seems very narrow, something that might have come from an idea about behavior that begins by assuming the individual is the only "true" way to understand successful behavior.	The writer uses a block strategy. He begins by thoroughly exploring the ACT list. The key terms are applied first to the list posted on the ACT ENGAGE site. The reader expects a similar section to follow that deals with the students' list.
The students' list is almost the opposite of the one created by ACT. The students don't focus on individual strengths and weaknesses. Instead, they focus on external forces that affect their lives. Their list points to hours worked, childcare responsibilities, the family history of education, and transportation. It seems as if the social world controls what the individual can do. Their strategy emphasizes that students' lives are social lives. Where the ACT strategy is to look inside the student, the students' strategy looks at outside forces. In some ways, this focus has an assumption about there being only one source of failure and success. The students are as interested in success and failure as the ACT researchers, but they seem to have an entirely different set of explanations that account for performance. It seems less moralistic and psychological than the other strategy.	After thoroughly discussing the ACT ENGAGE list, the writer turns his attention to the students' list. The same criteria are applied, and the differences from what was found in the previous section are discussed.

It's hard to predict who will fail and who will succeed in college. It seems reasonable to think in terms of individual strengths and skills. But it also seems reasonable to think about all the roles that students play: student, worker, family member, etc. These roles probably carve up the time and energy a person can devote to being a student. When we think about success and failure, explanations tend to reflect our assumptions about the relative importance of the individual and society. It seems important to recognize how this can be a bias that keeps us from considering important issues. While the ENGAGE test can claim much more power and a lot of research for its tool, that does not mean that the tool deals with social forces. Their work seems to trump the work of the students, but the students' work asks good questions. It may deserve the kind of research that measures how social forces affect a student's probable success.	The conclusion identifies the key ideas that seem to have controlled the similarities and differences between the two strategies. He avoids a true/false, pro/con, either/or kind of thinking, but nonetheless makes a judgment about the two systems of comparison.

What Does This Example Tell Us About Comparison?

The example shows how comparisons can go beyond a simple recommendation. The evidence is based on attention to similarities and differences. The writer finds a valuable difference, and clearly states why the difference matters. This points to a larger, background issue that becomes the focus of the paper.

A Flow Chart for Writing Comparisons



Summary

Comparisons begin by identifying important similarities and differences. Comparisons conclude by recognizing what those similarities and differences tell us. Sometimes, they say something simple: "buy the red shoes, not the green shoes." Other times, they are more complex because they *discover* an ignored category: "find out if any of the shoes are made using child labor." The needs of the audience often dictate whether the writer will use a simple comparison or a complex comparison. As both readers and writers, we need to be wary of thinking that the categories of a comparison are natural. The categories for comparison are always selected on the basis of values, beliefs, and needs that should be recognized.

Looking Ahead

Comparison and classification are closely related, but the next chapter emphasizes their differences. In the next chapter you will learn more about categories, and criteria. You will learn to use them to solve practical problems and to identify problems that others have ignored.

WRITING YOUR OWN COMPARISONS

Assignment #1

So Far:

We have looked at comparisons in daily life, and academic and work settings. We have seen the difference between simple and complex comparisons. Comparisons have proven to be a way to make practical choices, illustrate values and beliefs, and create a space for critical thinking. This assignment emphasizes the use of comparison to make a practical choice: choosing a college.

Now:

Your task is to use the knowledge gained from the chapter to perform your own comparison. Imagine a student who is trying to decide between attending a specific community college and a specific university. *One of the schools must be the one you are attending.*

Construct an essay that recommends whether a student should attend the community college or the university. Begin by doing the following:

1. Develop a list of the student's needs, interests, resources, background, and history
2. Complete a Terms, Expectations, & Questions (TEQ) Sheet* for each school's web site
3. Write a Purpose & Problem Statement* for the assignment

4. Develop a list of categories (points of comparison) for a student who is trying to decide between attending the community college and the university
5. Write a Prospectus* that can serve as the introductory paragraph for the rough draft

Use these planning tools to construct a final draft that makes a reasonable, acceptable recommendation to the student.

**You may wish to check the Toolkit to review TEQ Sheets, Purpose & Problem Statements, and Prospectuses*

Assignment #2

So Far:
We have looked at comparisons in daily life, and academic and work settings. We have seen the difference between simple and complex comparisons. Comparisons have proven to be a way to make practical choices, illustrate values and beliefs, and create a space for critical thinking. *This assignment emphasizes the use of comparison to illustrate values and beliefs:* ***identifying the kind of student valued by each school.***

Now:
Your task is to use the websites of two colleges to understand the values and beliefs that they emphasize to potential students. This assignment requires that you use the websites from the colleges to compare the way the schools are different from each other and how they are similar. You will need to name the categories that each school uses to describe itself. Pay attention to the images, words, and navigation. Then, take the next step by addressing the "So what?" Who does each see as its kind of student? Begin by doing the following:

1. Complete at least one Terms, Anomalies, & Questions (TEQ) Sheet* for each school's website.

2. Use the "problem" section of the Purpose and Problem Statement. What are areas of overlap in how they discuss themselves? In other words, what categories do they highlight in terms of what they can offer students? What categories are present in one website and absent in the other?

3. Write a Prospectus* that can serve as the introductory paragraph for the rough draft

After mapping out the values and beliefs of each school, your task is to discuss the kind of student valued by each school.

**You may wish to check the Toolkit to review TAQ Sheets, Purpose & Problem Statements, and Prospectuses*

Assignment #3

So Far:

We have looked at comparisons in daily life, and academic and work settings. We have seen the difference between simple and complex comparisons. Comparisons have proven to be a way to make practical choices, illustrate values and beliefs, and create a space for critical thinking. *This assignment emphasizes using complex comparisons to illustrate values and beliefs. It asks you to identify the values that shape two views of education and to then relate them to your own ideas about the purpose of education.*

Now:

Read the two essays below. Each writer has a specific idea about the purpose of education, about who education serves, and other issues. Sometimes, these ideas are not directly stated, but you can figure out what they believe by reading critically and using your TAQ Sheets.

After you have understood what each writer has to say, develop a comparison that discusses the differences between how each author looks at education. Then, go deeper into the assignment by addressing the "So what?" Are there any categories of student or purpose for education that either or both have ignored? If so, what do you make of this? What does this say about the prevailing attitudes toward college education? How do their ideas match up (or differ) from your own ideas about education?

The Danger of Telling Poor Kids That College Is the Key to Social Mobility

By Andrew Simmons

Matt Rourke/AP Images

A 12th-grader wrote a college admissions essay about wanting to pursue a career in oceanography. Let's call her Isabella. A few months ago, we edited it in my classroom during lunch. The writing was good, but plenty of 17-year-olds fantasize about swimming with whales. Her essay was distinctive for another reason: Her career goals were not the highlight of the essay. They were just a means of framing her statement of purpose, something surprisingly few personal statements actually get around to making.

The essay's core concerned the rhetoric that educators had used to motivate her and her peers—other minority students from low-income communities. She'd been encouraged to think of college foremost as a path to socioeconomic mobility. Since elementary school, teachers had rhapsodized about the opportunities that four years of higher education could unlock. Administrators had rattled off statistics about the gulf in earnings between college graduates and those with only high-school diplomas. She'd been told to think about her family, their hopes for her, what they hadn't had and what she could have if she remained diligent. She'd been promised that good grades and a ticket to a good college would lead to a good job, one that would guarantee her financial independence and enable her to give back to those hard-working people who had placed their faith in her.

Thankfully, Isabella decried this characterization as shortsighted and simplistic. My guess is that only students like her ever have to hear it.

Related Story

[What It's Like to Be the First Person in Your Family to Go to College]

The black and Latino kids I teach live in Inglewood and West Adams in Los Angeles. Their parents are house-cleaners, truck drivers, and non-union carpenters. When administrators, counselors, and teachers repeat again and again that a college degree will alleviate economic hardship, they don't mean to suggest that there is no other point to higher education. Yet by focusing on this one potential benefit, educators risk distracting them from the others, emphasizing the value of the fruits of their academic labor and skipping past the importance of the labor itself. The message is that intellectual curiosity plays second fiddle to financial security.

While Isabella's essay acknowledged her lack of economic advantages and portrayed with sensitivity her parents' struggles, she was eager to focus first on nurturing her intellectual passion. She detailed how her curiosity about sea urchins and other marine life had led to a passion she wants to sustain through college and a subsequent career. College will ferry her to her intellectual destiny, not a financial windfall. She'll make her life's work what she wants to do, not just what she is able do.

My students are understandably preoccupied with money. They don't have the privilege to not worry about it. They fantasize about what their future wealth will permit them to enjoy. They dream about specific models of cars in certain colors and gargantuan houses in particular neighborhoods and opulent meals at their favorite restaurants any time they wish. Many swoon over the East Coast liberal arts colleges they visit on the special trips that my school is thoughtful enough to arrange. Colleges like Swarthmore and Haverford fly students like Isabella out during college applications season. A few are accepted but most attend state schools, which, especially in California, can provide excellent educational opportunities. The irony, though, is that many of these students aspire to go to a liberal-arts school but don't necessarily understand its significance. They're drawn to sleepy quads, weathered brick, and cascading ivy, but they are resolutely pre-professional in spirit.

In contrast, at the private school I attended for the last two years of high school, my classmates thought about what they wanted to learn in college, not only what they wanted to become. Some knew medical or law school loomed in the future, but they thought about the work in a different way. My privileged classmates enjoyed money, from what I could tell. A few reveled in their cars and clothes, but most appeared to take it for granted. They didn't talk about it. Instead, a future doctor talked about working at the CDC to fight public health epidemics. A future lawyer envisioned starting a defense firm to provide a service to the hometown community. Most of us wanted to do something special.

My students' fantasies of the actual work they'd do in a well-paid professional capacity are vague by comparison—practicing law without knowing the difference between civil and criminal litigation or how to prepare for law school, doing business without an understanding of the nuts and bolts of entrepreneurship. While the vagueness stems from the lack of models in their communities, it also comes from the lack of imagination with which mentors have addressed their professed college plans. Students hear that being a doctor is great because doctors can make money, enjoy respect, and have a great life. They don't hear that being a doctor is great because doctors possess the expertise to do great things.

The rhetoric echoes the oft-cited work of Jean Anyon, an education researcher who died in September. Studying elementary schools, Anyon looked at how schools can condition kids for positions in life. She saw that schools teaching the children of affluent families prepared those kids to take on leadership roles and nurtured their capacity for confident self-expression and argument. Schools teaching children from low-income families focused on keeping students busy and managing behavior. A middle-class school deemphasized individual expression and in-depth analysis and rewarded the dutiful completion of specified rote tasks. In each case, according to Anyon, a "hidden curriculum" has prepared students for a future role in society. Some students learn to take orders and others learn to chart a course of action and delegate responsibility. School can either perpetuate inequity through social reproduction or have a transformative effect and help students transcend it.

The rhetoric Isabella has heard about the purpose of college has a hidden message as well. When school environments casually yet consistently deemphasize the intellectual benefits of higher education, students become less imaginative about their futures. According to ACT's College Choice Report from November 2013, 32 percent of students pick a college major that doesn't really interest them. The same study suggests that students are less likely to graduate when they do this. As high school educators know, good students have less trouble getting into selective schools than they do graduating from them – especially first-generation minority college students like Isabella and her classmates.

College should be "sold" to all students as an opportunity to experience an intellectual awakening. All students should learn that privilege is connected to the pursuit of passions. People are privileged to follow their hearts in life, to spend their time crafting an identity instead of simply surviving. Access to higher education means that your values and interests can govern your choices. It makes sense that privileged 18-year-olds who have already learned that lesson gravitate to liberal-arts colleges. I would prefer not to live in a country in which rhetoric about the purpose of college urges kids from privileged backgrounds to be innovators and creators while the poor kids who do very well in school are taught to be educated, capable employees. Isabella figured it out on her own – much as she's managed to ace her classes without academic help outside of school. To achieve this goal more broadly, though, we need to proactively teach our most marginalized students that honing an intellectually curious frame of mind is as essential to leading an invigorating working life as ambition and work ethic.

This article available online at:

http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2014/01/the-danger-of-telling-poor-kids-that-college-is-the-key-to-social-mobility/283120/

TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION, THE INTERNET, GADGETS, AND MORE.

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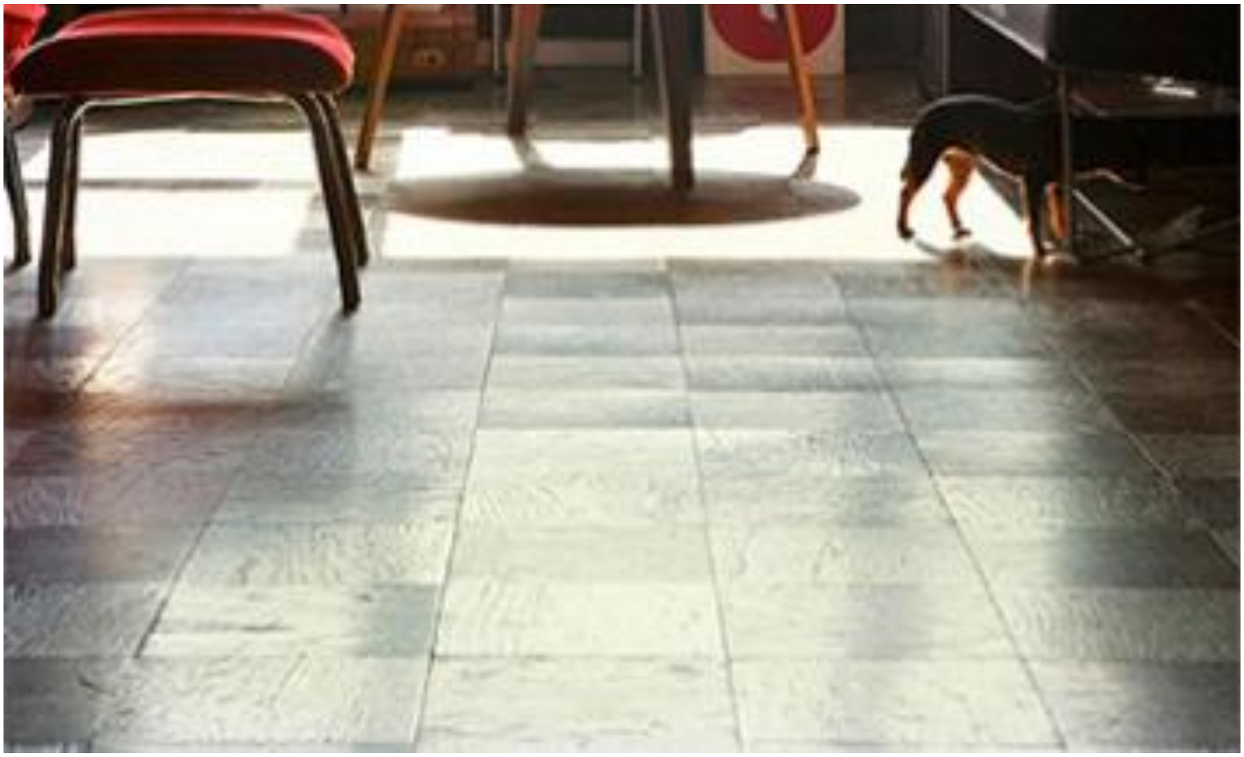
In the Name of Love

Elites embrace the “do what you love” mantra. But it devalues work and hurts workers.

By Miya Tokumitsu



The DWYL-inspired apartment of designer Jessica Walsh.

Photo courtesy Mario de Armas/design*sponge

"Do what you love. Love what you do."

The command is framed and perched in a living room that can only be described as "well-curated." A picture of this room appeared first on a popular design blog and has been pinned, tumbl'd, and liked thousands of times. Though it introduces exhortations to labor into a space of leisure, the "do what you love" living room is the place all those pinners and likers long to be.

There's little doubt that "do what you love" (DWYL) is now the unofficial work mantra for our time. The problem with DWYL, however, is that it leads not to salvation but to the devaluation of actual work—and more importantly, the dehumanization of the vast majority of laborers.

Superficially, DWYL is an uplifting piece of advice, urging us to ponder what it is we most enjoy doing and then turn that activity into a wage-generating enterprise. But why should our pleasure be for profit? And who is the audience for this dictum?

DWYL is a secret handshake of the privileged and a worldview that disguises its elitism as noble self-betterment. According to this way of thinking, labor is not something one does for compensation but is an act of love. If profit doesn't happen to follow, presumably it is because the worker's passion and determination were insufficient. Its real achievement is making workers believe their labor serves the self and not the marketplace.

Aphorisms usually have numerous origins and reincarnations, but the nature of DWYL confounds precise attribution. *Oxford Reference* links the phrase and variants of it to Martina Navratilova and François Rabelais, among others. The Internet frequently attributes it to Confucius, locating it in a misty, orientalized past. Oprah Winfrey and other peddlers of positivity have included the notion in their repertoires for decades. Even the world of finance has gotten in on DWYL: "If you love what you do, it's not 'work,'" as the co-CEO of the private equity firm Carlyle Group put it to CNBC this week.

The most important recent evangelist of DWYL, however, was the late Apple CEO Steve Jobs. In his graduation speech to the Stanford University Class of 2005, Jobs recounted the creation of Apple and inserted this reflection:

> You've got to find what you love. And that is as true for your work as it is for your lovers. Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do.

In these four sentences, the words "you" and "your" appear eight times. This focus on the individual isn't surprising coming from Jobs, who cultivated a very specific image of himself as a worker: inspired, casual, passionate—all states agreeable with ideal romantic love. Jobs conflated his besotted worker-self with his company so effectively that his black turtleneck and jeans became metonyms for all of Apple and the labor that maintains it.

Do what you love. Wear what you love.

Photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

But by portraying Apple as a labor of his individual love, Jobs elided the labor of untold thousands in Apple's factories, hidden from sight on the other side of the planet—the very labor that allowed Jobs to actualize his love.

This erasure needs to be exposed. While DWYL seems harmless and precious, it is self-focused to the point of narcissism. Jobs' formulation of DWYL is the depressing antithesis to Henry David Thoreau's utopian vision of labor for all. In "Life Without Principle," Thoreau wrote:

> … it would be good economy for a town to pay its laborers so well that they would not feel that they were working for low ends, as for a livelihood merely, but for scientific, even moral ends. Do not hire a man who does your work for money, but him who does it for the love of it.

Admittedly, Thoreau had little feel for the proletariat. (It's hard to imagine someone washing diapers for "scientific, even moral ends," no matter how well paid.) But he nonetheless maintains that society has a stake in making work well compensated and meaningful. By contrast, the 21st-century Jobsian view asks us to turn inward. It absolves us of any obligation to, or acknowledgment of, the wider world.

One consequence of this isolation is the division that DWYL creates among workers, largely along class lines. Work becomes divided into two opposing classes: that which is lovable (creative, intellectual, socially prestigious) and that which is not (repetitive, unintellectual, undistinguished). Those in the lovable-work camp are vastly more privileged in terms of wealth, social status, education, society's racial biases, and political clout, while comprising a small minority of the workforce.

For those forced into unlovable work, it's a different story. Under the DWYL credo, labor that is done out of motives or needs other than love—which is, in fact, most labor—is erased. As in Jobs' Stanford speech, unlovable but socially necessary work is banished from our consciousness.

Think of the great variety of work that allowed Jobs to spend even one day as CEO. His food harvested from fields, then transported across great distances. His company's goods assembled, packaged, shipped. Apple advertisements scripted, cast, filmed. Lawsuits processed. Office wastebaskets emptied and ink cartridges filled. Job creation goes both ways. Yet with the vast majority of workers effectively invisible to elites busy in their lovable occupations, how can it be surprising that the heavy strains faced by today's workers—abysmal wages, massive child care costs, etc.—barely register as political issues even among the liberal faction of the ruling class?

In ignoring most work and reclassifying the rest as love, DWYL may be the most elegant anti-worker ideology around. Why should workers assemble and assert their class interests if there's no such thing as work?

* * *

"Do what you love" disguises the fact that being able to choose a career primarily for personal reward is a privilege, a sign of socioeconomic class. Even if a self-employed graphic designer had parents who could pay for art school and co-sign a lease for a slick Brooklyn apartment, she can bestow DWYL as career advice upon those covetous of her success.

If we believe that working as a Silicon Valley entrepreneur or a museum publicist or a think-tank acolyte is essential to being true to ourselves, what do we believe about the inner lives and hopes of those who clean hotel rooms and stock shelves at big-box stores? The answer is: nothing.

Yet arduous, low-wage work is what ever more Americans do and will be doing. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the two fastest-growing occupations projected until 2020 are "personal care aide" and "home care aide," with average salaries in 2010 of $19,640 per year and $20,560 per year, respectively. Elevating certain types of professions to something worthy of love necessarily denigrates the labor of those who do unglamorous work that keeps society functioning, especially the crucial work of caregivers.

If DWYL denigrates or makes dangerously invisible vast swaths of labor that allow many of us to live in comfort and to do what we love, it has also caused great damage to the professions it portends to celebrate. Nowhere has the DWYL mantra been more devastating to its adherents than in academia. The average Ph.D. student of the mid-2000s forwent the easy money of finance and law (now slightly less easy) to live on a meager stipend in order to pursue his passion for Norse mythology or the history of Afro-Cuban music.

The reward for answering this higher calling is an academic employment marketplace in which about 41 percent of American faculty are adjunct professors—contract instructors who usually receive low pay, no benefits, no office, no job security, and no long-term stake in the schools where they work.

There are many factors that keep Ph.D.s providing such high-skilled labor for such low wages, including path dependency and the sunk costs of earning a Ph.D., but one of the strongest is how pervasively the DWYL doctrine is embedded in academia. Few other professions fuse the personal identity of their workers so intimately with the work output. Because academic research should be done out of pure love, the actual conditions of and compensation for this labor become afterthoughts, if they are considered at all.

In "Academic Labor, the Aesthetics of Management, and the Promise of Autonomous Work," Sarah Brouillette writes of academic faculty, "[O]ur faith that our work offers non-material rewards, and is more integral to our identity than a 'regular' job would be, makes us ideal employees when the goal of management is to extract our labor's maximum value at minimum cost."

Many academics like to think they have avoided a corporate work environment and its attendant values, but Marc Bousquet notes in his essay "We Work" that academia may actually provide a model for corporate management:

> How to emulate the academic workplace and get people to work at a high level of intellectual and emotional intensity for fifty or sixty hours a week for bartenders' wages or less? Is there any way we can get our employees to swoon over their desks, murmuring "I love what I do" in response to greater workloads and smaller paychecks? How can we get our workers to be like faculty and deny that they work at all? How can we adjust our corporate culture to resemble campus culture, so that our workforce will fall in love with their work too?

No one is arguing that enjoyable work should be less so. But emotionally satisfying work is still work, and acknowledging it as such doesn't undermine it in any way. Refusing to acknowledge it, on the other hand, opens the door to exploitation and harms all workers.

Ironically, DWYL reinforces exploitation even within the so-called lovable professions, where off-the-clock, underpaid, or unpaid labor is the new norm: reporters required to do the work of their laid-off photographers, publicists expected to pin and tweet on weekends, the 46 percent of the workforce expected to check their work email on sick days. Nothing makes exploitation go down easier than convincing workers that they are doing what they love.

Instead of crafting a nation of self-fulfilled, happy workers, our DWYL era has seen the rise of the adjunct professor and the unpaid intern: people persuaded to work for cheap or free, or even for a net loss of wealth. This has certainly been the case for all those interns working for college credit or those who actually purchase ultra-desirable fashion-house internships at auction. (Valentino and Balenciaga are among a handful of houses that auctioned off monthlong internships. For charity, of course.) As an ongoing *ProPublica* investigation reveals, the unpaid intern is an ever-larger presence in the American workforce.

It should be no surprise that unpaid interns abound in fields that are highly socially desirable, including fashion, media, and the arts. These industries have long been accustomed to masses of employees willing to work for social currency instead of actual wages, all in the name of love. Excluded from these opportunities, of course, is the overwhelming majority of the population: those who need to work for wages. This exclusion not only calcifies economic and professional immobility, but it also insulates these industries from the full diversity of voices society has to offer.

And it's no coincidence that the industries that rely heavily on interns—fashion, media, and the arts—just happen to be the feminized ones, as Madeleine Schwartz wrote in *Dissent*. Yet another damaging consequence of DWYL is how ruthlessly it works to extract female labor for little or no compensation. Women comprise the majority of the low-wage or unpaid workforce; as care workers, adjunct faculty, and unpaid interns, they outnumber men. What unites all of this work, whether performed by GEDs or Ph.D.s, is the belief that wages shouldn't be the primary motivation for doing it. Women are supposed to do work because they are natural nurturers and are eager to please; after all, they've been doing uncompensated child care, elder care, and housework since time immemorial. And talking money is unladylike anyway.

* * *

Do what you love and you'll never work a day in your life! Before succumbing to the intoxicating warmth of that promise, it's critical to ask, "Who, exactly, benefits from making work feel like nonwork?" "Why *should* workers feel as if they aren't working when they are?" In masking the very exploitative mechanisms of labor that it fuels, DWYL is, in fact, the most perfect ideological tool of capitalism. If we acknowledged all of our work as work, we could set appropriate limits for it, demanding fair compensation and humane schedules that allow for family and leisure time.

And if we did that, more of us could get around to doing what it is we *really* love.

This piece is adapted from an essay that originally appeared in Jacobin *magazine.*