

G.T. Marx - job talk to administrative staff University of California, Santa Cruz for position as Dean of Social Sciences, May 1988

Reflections on a Possible Career Change

In a few months I will be fifty years old. The greying temples, forgetting names, slower jogging and reading glasses are daily reminders. But so too is a desire for occupational change, or at least broadening. It is now a commonplace of the gender and mid-life literatures to note that just as many women are becoming more individualistically career oriented, many men are becoming more nurturing and communally oriented. After two wonderful decades of pursuing my own research and writing career I want to give something back. I want to contribute in a different way to an institution which has been my sustenance and which I care strongly about.

I also want to use skills which have been underutilized. In high school and college I was very active in leadership roles. I enjoyed them and did well. I was a good listener, with a good memory for names and details. I could see connections that others often missed and had lots of innovative ideas. I communicated a sense of caring about others and learned that a major institutional resource is honesty and trust (an insight strengthened by spending a decade studying deception). Al Capone was correct when he said you can accomplish more with a kind word and a gun, than with a gun alone.

As an academic I have missed the daily contact with a wide range of people and situations, and the tangible results and daily challenges involved in the administrative role. Concrete problem

solving and putting together puzzles offers an immediate sense of satisfaction that is lacking in the scholarly role, with its longer term and more abstract character. On occasion working on departmental, school, university, foundation, and professional committees, and with interest groups and policy makers, I have had such experiences and used the requisite skills. Yet I would like to use my administrative and political skills in a more formal and sustained way.

I realize it would be an adjustment to go from vast stretches of discretionary time focused on one research issue, to having one's life organized in hour and half-hour segments around a variety of issues. Yet I also know how exhilarating, stimulating and informative the latter can be and how lonely and isolating the life of quiet contemplation can become. As in so much in life, the answer may lie in balance and movement between polarities. As a student and observer, I have no illusions about the complexity of organizations, nor the barriers to institutional change. Administrators face enormous constraints, particularly in social structures such as good universities. Yet I also believe that individuals can make a difference, that half a loaf is better than starvation, and that as an aspiring Olympian said "you have to shoot for the moon and that way, if you miss you might still grab a few stars."

I have not been a department chair (although I was acting chair at Harvard for a brief period of time). In my department at M.I.T. the chair is always a person with a planning degree and one strongly identified with the planning profession. Being in such a

department I have learned a considerable amount about politics, budgets, forecasting, intended and unintended consequences of interventions and the diversity of ways of knowing and approaching the social world. It has been an education for social science citizenship and has strongly impressed me with the legitimacy of the various approaches and the gains from communication across disciplines.

I am capable of, and interested in, playing a broader role beyond being a professor in one discipline. I have been privileged to have a number of experiences which have given me breadth. I began in the Social Relations Department at Harvard and have been in an interdisciplinary department for the last 15 years (which is really a kind of mini-social science college organized around issues of the city and industrial society). Other broadening experiences include having all my courses at M.I.T. cross listed in political science and co-teaching with colleagues there, lecturing at most major American universities, teaching or being a visiting scholar or researcher in 15 separate institutional contexts including departments of sociology, psychology, political science, and criminal justice, in the U.S., France, England, Belgium and Germany. I have belonged to the American Political Science Association and am still a member of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues which is a part of the American Psychological Association. Over the years mail has sometimes been sent to me c/o the political science or psychology departments. I am active in several interdisciplinary scholarly organizations such as the Law and Society Association and the American Society of Criminology. My work with policy

makers, the mass media, and foundations has similarly brought experience in wider contexts. I have been involved with four interdisciplinary research centers: the Survey Research Center at Berkeley, the Harvard-M.I.T. Joint Center for Urban Studies, The Harvard Law School Criminal Justice Center, and the Brandeis Gordon Center for Public Policy.

I have had extensive experience in evaluating social science: serving on many journal editorial boards, reading manuscripts and proposals for publishers, serving on hiring and promotion committees and advisory boards, serving as an outside referee to evaluate candidates for hiring and promotion in many universities, serving on review panels for grants and prizes, editing my own books and special issues of journals, and convening conferences and sections of scholarly meetings. As a result of such experiences, I think I have sound academic judgement. I can separate the chicken salad from the chicken shit.

If the position at Santa Cruz was simply one of a highly routinized caretaker role, it would not hold the same attraction. But in fact the campus is destined to grow significantly in the next decade. Three new colleges are being added. There may be 40 new ftes in social science. It would be a great challenge to help shape the social science environment.

I haven't thought beyond the five year period the job entails. My expectation is that I would return to being a professor full time, although I realize that persons sometimes have difficulty doing that. While I have just finished a major

decade-long project, I am not burned out or tired of research. I love what I do and I have a file drawer full of projects in various stages of completion. Writing has become almost as natural as breathing. The position permits spending some time on research and has a provision for research assistance. Since I often work on weekends and am involved in projects with co-workers, my research would certainly continue, although at a greatly reduced rate. I also would want to give at least one course.

There is also a sense in which being a dean for a period of time would be continuous with what I have done and consistent with my intellectual interests in higher education, bureaucratic reform, the professions, and politics. I have written on the professorial role and would like to be able to broaden my knowledge of other aspects of higher education. I view the position as adding to my professorial role, rather than detracting from it. It also offers a chance to apply my professional knowledge of bureaucracy and social reform. A dean whose professional concerns have involved the study of organizations, social change, politics, stratification, social control and the professorial role may have some advantages over someone whose specialty is unrelated to the tasks of being a dean.

A change at this time is also consistent with a pattern that has characterized my career. Roughly every 5 or 6 years I have undergone some type of significant career change or elaboration—whether in geographical environment (Berkeley, a year traveling around the world, Cambridge, France and England, San Diego,

Albany, Stanford) —methods (quantitative to qualitative) —
research focus (basic to policy) —substantive areas (race and
ethnic relations to collective behavior and social movements to
law and society).

In choosing a dean from the outside there are some obvious
advantages with respect to freedom from prior restraints. Yet the
same may apply in choosing someone who has not had extensive
administrative experience. Such an individual may be fresher and
more open. They are neither scared, nor scarred, by the past and
have not sunk into the greater rigidity and more authoritarian
manner that sometimes develops among occupants of leadership roles.
Being a chair may also not help much in the specifics of being a
dean. The latter involve much more external relations —
representing the division to the university, other deans and the
outside community and reviewing departmental decisions.

It would be premature and naive posturing to suggest what I
would do as dean. But I can speak to six broad values or
concerns that would direct my actions: advocacy, tolerance and
equity, inter-disciplinary cooperation and comparative research,
affirmative action, participation and openness, and helping guide
the development of the social sciences.

Those who sit on top of mountains have an obligation to
describe the earth to the Gods. In the first instance I would see
myself as a representative of the social science faculty and seek
to create a resource rich environment in which scholarship
thrives and excellence is rewarded. Being a social scientist at
M.I.T. where such work is sometimes poorly understood and not

always fully appreciated, has been good training for this. But realpolitik requires acknowledging the reverse as well—explaining the Gods to the earth. Here, as Mose Allison sings, one must "let your conscience be your guide". As bridging persons, deans share something with the workers promoted to fore-man/woman positions in industry made famous by introductory sociology texts. I would like to believe that there is no necessary opposition here—that there are over-arching values which can, and indeed must, bind faculty and administration. When that isn't the case it's time to leave. You need to know when to when to fold, when to hold and when to be bold.

A dean should know the social sciences and feel confident offering broad intellectual leadership, help link the university and the division to broader developments and resources in society and strengthen bonds across faculties. But the role must be one of being a tree shaker rather than a jelly maker.

The experts are in the departments. If we have chosen our faculty wisely they will exert the real leadership and to do this they need support. As a management strategy and as a value, I am drawn toward decentralization. Vitality and tactics can not very well be imposed from above. Expertise apart, I know from my studies of the workplace that if you want people to behave responsibly you have to give them responsibility.

But in viewing the role as primarily involving faculty advocacy, I am not naive about the fact that department chairs as advocates, also try to shape a dean's perceptions. It is important to look critically at communication from any source and to be sure that standards of excellence and fairness are applied. There

may be times (hopefully very rarely) when the dean's role is best performed as an advocate of an individual faculty member denied a fair hearing, or as a questioner of a departmental decision favoring an individual, when the facts would call for a different outcome. One aspect of the role is to protect the university's standards and image. A dean must create good will and the confidence that he or she is fair-minded and strongly committed to academic values, in an academic setting above all, this calls for considerable humility and wide consultation, while at the same time maintaining independent judgment. The dean must be able to learn what is going on and to have the courage of his or her convictions to take actions that seem right. But my tilt is to trust and respect my colleagues. I can not imagine being a dean in any other setting.

I think the dean has an important role to play as a conduit for faculty information and education and to aid in the faculty's professional development. Faculty should be made aware of the ever changing professional opportunities for grants, new data bases and archives, and even something as basic as new bibliographic library resources. We greatly underutilize the new search capabilities that computerization has brought.

I think it is important to establish the legitimacy of the social sciences on their own terms and as disciplines that stand mid-way between natural sciences and humanities. We should copy neither, but as appropriate, draw from both. This is a cause for celebration, not remorse. Therein lies part of the fascination and power of the social sciences. We can have highly precise

quantitative measures and experiments and also be moved by the spirit of a personal narrative and the pottery designs of an ancient group.

A second value concerns tolerance, fairness and an ecumenical approach to our disciplines. I would be scrupulous in allocating resources according to public and universalist criteria. In neither politics nor intellectual endeavors is imperialism attractive. Whitehead's call for "humility in the face of the incredible complexity of the world" is an apt beginning for any social science dean. This is particularly important in the social sciences, whose subject matter can be so strongly affected by history, culture, consciousness, and a degree of voluntarism. Reading in the sociology of knowledge and my experiences in the last two decades have overcome the parochialism of my graduate study. The story about the blind people touching different parts of the elephant and reaching different conclusions about what it was applies very clearly here. A related elephant story also applies. A cognitive psychologist asks a random sample "what is an elephant." She gets a variety of answers: "it's grey"; "it's a mammal"; "it's big".

In general the various social science disciplines and methods deal with different elements of reality. Different questions and concerns require different approaches. The natural science model is appropriate for many issues in psychology, just as a more humanistic model is appropriate for many issues in social anthropology. The quantitative methods necessary for understanding poverty trends will not be helpful when we seek "thick description" of what it is like to live in poverty.

Laboratory and natural experiments can be highly informative, but so too can the analysis of archival data and participant observation. A researcher in education can ask fundamental questions about how children learn to read or can evaluate the results of educational innovations for their practical implications. Rightness and wrongness regarding social science approaches, levels of analysis, methods and goals must be viewed within particular contexts and not as inherent properties.

As an administrator my approach would be pluralistic. To argue for pluralism and tolerance is not to argue for indifference, license or a weak-kneed suspension of judgement. Rather it is to say that work must be judged by the highest standards, but in the doing, not a priori by attitudes toward a method or discipline. I would like to see lots of flowers bloom. But I would also like to see cross-fertilization and some broad direction.

One great challenge is to encourage diversity, while at the same time to try to get people to learn from each other and to enrich understanding via inter-disciplinary approaches. An important goal would be to encourage linkages among faculty with shared intellectual concerns and to help make knowledge production more cumulative. There must be mechanisms for letting people know what others are doing and resources to encourage interaction. Beyond the research gains, this is especially important for undergraduate education. Simple devices such as an occasional newsletter for the social sciences, faculty study groups, and encouraging persons from different disciplines

to teach and do research together can help this. Two themes in my own research -race and ethnic relations and technology and society -lend themselves well to such linkages across faculty. These are areas in which Santa Cruz has strength.

A related aspect would be my strong support for comparative research. This can be an important factor in explanation and causal analysis. Familiarity with other societies and their researchers is enriching and broadening. We have much to learn and also to give. Through publishing in foreign journals, participation in international conferences and comparative research I have an extensive network of colleagues in Europe, Asia and Latin America. Where appropriate I would encourage faculty cooperation and exchange.

Diversity of course refers not only to subjects and methods but to the character of the faculty and student body. If current projections are accurate by the year 2000 approximately 50 percent of students in grades K through 12 will be Black, Hispanic or Asian (it is now 42 percent). It has become a truism to note how national borders are shrinking and how ever-more interdependent the world economy, technology and culture are becoming. As E.T. said "we are not alone." A major national imperative must be to create a more just, open, tolerant and understanding American society. Our policies with respect to personnel, admissions, curriculum, and quality of campus life must reflect this. Morality as well as pragmatism requires it.

I have a strong commitment to the letter and spirit of affirmative action. The longer statement about my career offers more detail. Much of my research has involved studying race and

ethnic relations. I have worked with a large number of agencies and organizations, including the Anti-Defamation League, Urban League, Congress of Racial Equality, Police Foundation, Ford Foundation, Justice Department, Congressional Committees, American Civil Liberties Union, Civil Service Commissions, and state and local governments. I worked on the Kerner Commission report and at Harvard in 1968-69, I was a very active member of the Rosovsky Committee that brought Afro-American Studies and increased minority enrollment. The Committee's report was widely circulated and had impact on many other campuses. I worked with the Mass. Civil Service Commission in its efforts to integrate police departments. A research article I recently wrote with a colleague about how police departments can more effectively respond to racial and ethnic violence and harassment has been widely cited and used. Since 1973 I have been in an urban studies and planning department that partly defines its mission around creating equality of opportunity. Each year approximately half of our incoming master's students are minorities and women. In my work on the council of the American Sociological Association and on the council of its Section on Race and Ethnic Relations I worked on and was a strong supporter of the ASA's PHD scholarship program for minorities, efforts to avoid language with racist and sexist implications and efforts to increase minority participation in the ASA. I have written about the subtle and not so subtle aspects of racial and ethnic discrimination and have studied processes of change.

Through my research and practical experience I know it is

necessary to 1) create conditions at the undergraduate and graduate level which will expand the pool of minority and female PhDs. 2) conduct aggressive and sensitive searches that seek out qualified minority and female candidates 3) create an environment in which, once hired, minority and female professors can develop to their full professional potential. There are certainly no easy answers here. Values can conflict and there are trade-offs. But I know we can, and must do better. Leaders not only provide resources, they set a moral tone.

Participation is another important value. One doesn't have to have been at Berkeley or Michigan in the 1960s to appreciate the moral and pragmatic advantages of this. In a collegial environment it is all the more important. I would seek advice and input as widely as possible. I would adopt an open office hour policy. Where at a specified time I would talk to whomever called or came by. One can not have genuine participation without openness.

Communication must go both ways. My social science research on secrecy and deception has strengthened my belief in the value of openness. Justice Brandeis was surely correct when he wrote that "sunshine is the best disinfectant." Of course privacy and openness, confidentiality and disclosure may conflict. There is no moral imperative to always show your aces, especially in the opening round. Nor unfortunately can civility eliminate the occasional role played by latent coercion. Any leader must reflect on the meaning of Robespierre's observation that "virtue without terror is meaningless". I also do not equate openness with acquiescence. But it is important to listen before making major decisions and once a decision is reached, it must be

clearly explained. Leaders need to be explicit about what they stand for and courageous in asserting it. The skepticism of the scientist and knowledge about the social construction of reality can be vital tools in developing policy. But as a farm boy I know there comes a time when one must stop cutting bait and fish.

The Confucian wisdom implores us to look outward as well as inward. A dean is in a good position to see developments, trends and needs across the social sciences and to help create a national climate which understands and supports them.

Conversely a dean can help shape the social sciences to better serve society. Universities, and particularly state universities, are ever more interdependent with the broader society. Social science has an enormous amount to contribute and with the exception of economics, is surprisingly underutilized. My work with the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment has offered good insights into some of the kinds of questions that need to be asked with respect to technical change and the ways that social science can contribute to public policy.

Being at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences this year has been particularly instructive in learning about issues that cut across the social sciences and about the national infrastructures that support them (e.g. I was able to observe the activities of foundations, N.S.F. N.I.M.H., National Academy and other working groups). I welcome the chance to learn more about the social sciences in general that being a dean would offer. I hope that I might use that knowledge in a modest way on the campus, and beyond, as both an ambassador and a

strategist to help them grow and develop.

An important and exciting function of a dean in a period of resource expansion must be to help articulate a vision of the future. One plan would simply be to allocate new slots according to the boards on a conventional basis. But before automatically doing that, I would want to ask a series of questions through a broad consultative process: how can the unique values involved in the founding of Santa Cruz be best combined with contemporary realities? How well are we serving our students, science and society with the current organization of knowledge? What will the contours of social science knowledge likely be in the next decade? Can we find ways to combine the advantages of disciplinary specialization with those of subject based approaches? How can we best have a rich intellectual life in the colleges with interactions that involve colleagues across environments? Are we moving into an age where the academic profession will move more on the word processors and telephones of innovative persons who share substantive interests, than on the basis of what the disciplines do? What does the current vitality of fields such as political economy, law and society, semiotics and feminist, peace, and environmental studies tell us? What emerging interdisciplinary patterns can be identified? What foundation funding opportunities are available to develop innovative programs? What major social trends might serve as a focus for some of our resources (e.g. the aging of the population, genetic and biological engineering, the joining of computers and communications, space colonization, increased ethnic heterogeneity within the nation-state and world interdependence).

I don't know the answers to the above questions, but they are the kind that I would ask of faculty, students, staff, alumni and those concerned with the university, in seeking to develop a vision to guide the development of the social sciences.