

**Rebecca K Morton**  
**to graceffa.m, r.porter, ja.stellar**  
**1/12/07**

Jim, Maria, and Rick,

Hello all! I hope the holiday season was wonderful and that you are getting back into the swing of things without too much trouble. I just arrived in California today, and I am eager to start co-op and our research project. The time difference is a little strange (3 hours earlier here), but I'm living in a wonderful neighborhood with what seem like two great roommates, so everything is going well so far! I have a meeting at Global Exchange with my supervisor, June, tomorrow at 2 pm. The meeting is to get me acquainted with the office and set up my schedule for the next few months. My first real day will be Tuesday, January 16, and I can't wait to get started.

Anyway, I just wanted to check in and let you know what is going on. I will write more after I meet June tomorrow!

Becca

**Rebecca K Morton**  
**to graceffa.m, r.porter, ja.stellar**  
**1/12/07**

**Reply**

Jim, Rick, and Maria:

I stopped into the Global Exchange office this afternoon to meet my supervisor and get acquainted with the office. I was expecting a typical office: desks, chairs, people behind computers, a busy, but not necessarily lively place. However, as I walked in I was greeted with brightly painted walls, plants, posters, the organization's many campaign ads, bumper stickers calling for freedom and peace slapped onto door jams and window panes. There weren't many people there (many were on lunch or out of the country) but the office was still so warm and friendly, exceeding the expectations I had. June, the head of the Speakers Bureau and the department I will be doing most of my work with, then took me around the building, introducing me to some of the other members of Global Exchange (or GX, as it is commonly abbreviated...). As she talked to her coworkers about campaigns, meetings, and a vast amount of people and places I had never heard of, the nervousness that the friendly atmosphere had helped to offset, finally started settling in. Looking back, I guess I'm not nervous about

being welcomed into the organization or about the tasks I am assigned to: I know I can do this job, I know I can set up speakers with requesting groups, I know I can sit at a computer and fill in data. What I am nervous about, or perhaps more what I am waiting to see is my ability to master the aspects of this job that aren't necessarily organizational: the sort of "language" of GX I guess you could call it... the type of mentality that they share. Its hard for me to explain. Basically, it is a knowledge that I can't read up on or study for... and after being there for an hour, I can already tell you, I have a lot to learn. But it is this language and mentality that I am eager to learn and that I am here to learn.

My first full day is this Tuesday, (I will be working Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 9 AM to 5 PM), but I can't wait to get back in there, to start working at not just getting my feet wet, but totally submerging myself in this job and this experience.

Look forward to hearing from you,  
Becca

**R.Porter@neu.edu**  
**to me, graceffa.m, ja.stellar**  
**1/13/07**  
**Reply**

Becca;

That's a great start!  
I look forward to hearing of your progress in learning "the mentality they share".

Rick

**ja.stellar@neu.edu**  
**to me, graceffa.m, r.porter**  
**1/13/07**  
**Reply**

Becca, (cc to Maria and Rick)

As I said in my other e-mail, the books are on the way. I added Amanda and Joe to that other list, but not here. That reply was our undergraduate research team. I see this e-mail is about our agreement to talk to you about your job and see if we could learn things from your interaction with your employer. If you want to include Amanda, I do not mind, but that is not my decision. It is yours.

In terms of content, I want to comment that this kind of nervousness you report is something that we have looked at in the past as a key feature of the learning that derives from the coop. It takes you out of your comfort zone. So, while no one likes a negative emotion, it is thus a good phenomenon. What comes next over the next few weeks is your response to that which drives you to engage with your employer, learn, and build a positive cycle where you meet a challenge and then get an expanded role and then meet that challenge. In this cycle-building, we think reflection is a key. Hence mentoring is important. We are not your mentors here, but we can reflect with you. However, our goal is to learn more about coop through your experience. Then we agreed to continue the learning as you go on your service project in Africa. You agreed to be the anthropologist and observe yourself.

Comments anyone?

-Jim

**ja.stellar@neu.edu**

**to Rebecca**

**1/13/07**

**Reply**

Becca,

This is my third e-mail to you. I hope you do not think I am harassing you. This one is just between us as mentor and mentee. As such, I felt it was too personal to do with the group.

First, I wanted to say that I think your overall approach is great. You seem to have adjusted well to being in California. You are starting your job on the positive. That is good, but I want to offer myself as a non-parental adult, if you ever need to talk about issues of homesickness, adjustment, etc.

Then, I also just wanted to say that I am sure you are up to the challenge. You do not see yourself from the outside, like I do. From my perspective, you are one amazing person. Not only are you one of our academic stars (a 21st Century Scholar), but have all these other wonderful attributes of a high EQ, a desire to do good in the world, etc., to go with that high IQ. So go at the challenges and write to me on any level, personal or part of a team. I will respond accordingly. Because I do think that you are a mentee, I will occasionally write you individually, unless you object.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton**  
**to ja.stellar**  
**1/14/07**  
**Reply**

Jim,

I appreciate your help with everything, and definitely intend to keep in touch as mentor and mentee. I am pretty homesick at the moment. Waiting for work to start and sort of having nothing to do is the hardest part. Once I am busy and start meeting people through work and other activities I'm sure I will be fine, but I miss the family and sense of belonging I had finally found for myself at Northeastern. At the same time, this is an experience like no other and I am completely grateful to be here. It is great to have you as an adult mentor that isn't my parent and still has confidence in me, it really does make me feel better about being here and jumping into all of this. So thanks a lot! I will definitely be in touch through the group and individually.

-Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu**  
**to me**  
**1/14/07**  
**Reply**

Becca,

It is one of those sad realities of life that the comfortable situations in which we find ourselves tend to change. Children grow into adults and leave the house (my oldest - an anthro-psych major - is 22) and there is a loss on both sides. So

one looks for a compensation and it is just what you said - growth. I think we all have a destiny to grow. What is even better is if we can then apply the power that we gather in knowledge and maturity to do some good for the world. You are on a rapid and most excellent growth curve. You are also one of the very special people in this world I would want to have power and be a leader. So, I think you are doing exactly the right things and it is just a pleasure to watch you and help wherever I can.

But it is also important to take care of yourself. You are in a great part of the planet now. It may not be Africa (that will come). So, go out and explore. I am sure you already are. Use some of that negative energy from homesickness to continue your own positive growth. That is my advice. That is what I did when I was your age. In different ways, I do it today.

Keep writing me as you have time.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton**

**to ja.stellar, graceffa.m, parker.ama, r.porter**

**1/21/07**

**Reply**

Friday was actually full of excitement for me. My best day yet, I would say. During the morning I did the usual jobs- updating the website and the database, following up with a few people, etc. For lunch Medea Benjamin, a co-founder of GX, the founder of CodePINK Women for Peace, and a large name in non-profits just returned from a rally at Guantanamo Bay. Her talk was extremely moving and eye-opening. She got the chance to rally against the harsh treatment of prisoners alongside families of Guantanamo Bay prisoners, and a former prisoner who was recently released. Again I was amazed at the work those at GX devote their life to, and I am honored to be a part of it. On Fridays a couple people usually stay after work and talk for a while, a sort of casual get together for people who can stay after for a while. At first I was going to catch my train and go home, but I decided to stay and I met a few other people. It was actually a really nice experience, I felt like I was getting to know people on a more personal level, and it gave me insight to why the office seems so close. I think it also helps that they are all interested and driven by similar ideas and beliefs. Their casual conversations seemed similar to those issues that they work with

everyday. They are definitely a group of people who have found ways to get by on doing something they love and feel empowered by.

In terms of additional responsibilities at GX, I was given my first real assignment on Friday. June assigned me the task of researching different types and different costs of video conferencing. It may not sound that exciting, but it is a huge step in GX's communication with speakers and groups all over the world. To think of the strength of a speaking event that could connect students from various universities with experts on a cleaner environment who are located all over the world without using any carbon emissions is really exciting for the organization. I feel like they are assigning me what could become a great task and responsibility as the organization dives deeper into new technological possibilities. I am a little nervous, but I feel up for the job, and I already have a few contacts I am pursuing.

Jim, just as a side note, do you know if Northeastern has large scale video conferencing ability? And if so, would you happen to know a contact I could speak to about their capacity? GX wants me to connect with universities and see what they use, as they would be a large group that we would be working with when trying to organize these speakers. Thanks!

Also, I received Wenger's "Communities of Practice" in the mail yesterday and after I am done with this e-mail plan to get comfy in a coffee shop and start reading. I'll let you know when I am done with it, anything I should pay particular attention to?

I'll be in touch,  
Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu**  
**to me, Maria, parker, R.Porter**  
**1/22/07**  
**Reply**

Becca (all),

Sorry for the delay. I have been traveling.

Great experience with Medea Benjamin and to follow that up with some casual/personal conversation is the "icing on the cake.". Keep looking for these experiences as well as the data/details/skills. At least that is my idea.

I will get you some video conference connections at NU. I know of systems in SPCS and Engineering. Thanks for including us.

What the Wenger book should do is get you thinking about GX as a community. I see a lot of that in your e-mails. What you may not appreciate as much is how they naturally define knowledge in their area and how they create meaning (you do seem naturally to get that). As part of the undergraduate research team, I want us to think about how to maximize this other type of learning (about meaning) that ivroy-tower college curriculum can not teach. Once we observe enough of your experience here, I am hoping we can tie this back to the concurrent reflection project and Rick's and my non survey experience with Amanda Maraden (our other Amanda). Then the Descart's Error book should arrive and makes the background point about emotional intelligence/gut logic, which takes that meaning from experience. This we tie to the classroom to educate a student completely. So we need to think about that integration too. Just some ideas.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton**

to ja.stellar, r.porter, graceffa.m, parker.ama  
1/17/07

**Reply**

Jim, Maria, Rick, and recently added Amanda,

First I just want to say thanks to Amanda for joining, and I'm excited to have her on the team.

Today was actually less eventful than I thought it was going to be. In some ways, I feel like this happens on the first day of any new time in our lives: we're nervous and excited because it is the big first day, but because we don't know anything yet, it usually turns out to be rather uneventful.

Naturally, I was anxious about my first day in the office, but once again after I got there, it was easy to become relaxed in the welcoming environment. June immediately began prepping me on one of my jobs over the next six months: to update the event calendar on GX's website. It is a simple task of filtering through e-mails about the Bay area's upcoming events and placing them on their community calendar. Although it doesn't seem like a huge assignment, I feel that her ability to assign me something so quickly is a good sign that I will have a

fair amount of responsibilities over the next months. The rest of the morning I worked on the calendar individually and explored GX's website. (Actually, if any of you want to look at that to see what kind of organization you are reading about, the address is: [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org)).

In the afternoon, I was invited to sit in on a meeting with a few campaign leaders discussing GX's role in the upcoming US Social Forum. Although it seemed like a brainstorming meeting and it was slightly unorganized, it was good to be able to see (and meet) some of my other co-workers and how they work with each other. In some ways, the organization seems like a large family: they know each other's styles, opinions, interests and work habits. It will be interesting to see how I fit into this as time goes on. Right now it seems as if I am the new baby in a way; everyone is nice and gentle with me, all smiles and shaking hands. As I get more responsibility, I wonder how this will change.

There was, however, a moment of panic on my part. I had found a repeat on the event calendar and wanted to delete one of the postings. So I highlighted the posting and clicked the delete button. Thinking the page would pop up with all of the other postings still there, a wave of horror washed over me as I stared at the blank page on the screen. The three seconds it took for the event page to refresh felt like a life time, and I saw my co-op experience flash before my eyes. Thankfully, the page came back up with only that one posting gone. My horror turned into humor and I got back to work. Needless to say I'll be a little more cautious next time I need to delete something. :)

Talk to you soon,  
Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu**  
**to me, graceffa.m, parker.ama, r.porter**  
**1/17/07**  
**Reply**

Becca,

This is going to be fun. I suggest we use a mixture of reply-to-all, and direct feedback to Becca to continue this experiment from all sides (Becca is an experimenter too) in reflection. For this one, I used reply-to-all.

You are entering what one of your book authors, Wenger, and what Rick referred to as a "Community of Practice." In that community it is interesting to factor out what is really common knowledge and what is common experience. In my lab (another community of practice) we refer to something as being "salt or milk" - when making scrambled eggs one must add the milk before (to make them fluffy) but one can add the salt before or after and not alter the product. So, in certain lab procedures if you do not do some things in the right order it is ruined. Others one can be casual about. But it is hard to tell sometimes which is which, especially if folks are all friends and information flows freely. Yet in another dilemma for a new learner, we all appreciate a casual environment. We solve this problem by having manuals or written documentation of procedures that must be followed correctly. So, does GX you have any such manuals? What kind of formal orientation are you getting besides the opening talk or is it all shadowing and learn while you go.

One other item about which I was curious was the group dynamics. It seems like the core organization is very small and you are the youngest. Yet they seem welcoming. That could be perfect environment for you to get a mentor. Is there such a person. A mentor would be particularly helpful when you want to really learn the theory behind some of the things you are doing and not just how to do them (e.g. how to delete). Any comments on mentor-seeking in your organization. I know it is early days yet.

-Jim

**Maria S Graceffa**  
**to ja.stellar, r.porter, parker.ama, me**

**1/17/07**

**Reply**

Becca, that really cracks me up. I think we have all had an experience that incites momentary panic, at least I know I have! I am glad everything worked out! When those situations arise, I have learned to imagine the very worst case scenario. Usually, even the worst result is manageable. I calm myself that way, because 99% if the time, the actual outcome is not even close to the worst!

What's the social aspect of work like? Do you work with people who you will be likely to spend time with after hours? Do you go out to lunch with people in

your office? I hope the professional-social side of your job develops, too, because I think it will enhance your productivity and satisfaction with your position.

Maria

**Rebecca K Morton**

**to ja.stellar, graceffa.m, parker.ama, r.porter**

**1/18/07**

**Reply**

In response to Jim:

My orientation to the office seems to be mostly show and go. As of yesterday, I am trained in the basics of what will be my responsibilities (I can update the website and the database, send out e-mails, and make phone calls). I think in terms of the website and the database it is mostly noticing what needs to be updated and taking the initiative to do so. As I am assigned things to do, there will be people that need to be contacted and followed up with and I think my tasks will grow as I make contacts and conversations with various people.

On the topic of a mentor, as of now I think June would most likely take such a role. As I am assigned to more specific topics, or perhaps start working closely with another campaign, the mentoring available may change or shift depending on who I work with.

To respond to Maria, the social aspect of work is also pretty laid back. I have yet to lunch with co-workers (sometimes it's good for me to take 20 minutes and just get out of the office for a bit), but I definitely see that happening. In terms of spending time with people outside of work, I haven't found anyone yet who I think I would necessarily spend time with out of work. However, it is still early in the game and there are many people who have just graduated college and seem to be relatively my age.

As for my second day, things went smoothly. I went into the office, checked e-mails, made phone calls, and updated the events calendar until early afternoon. Around lunch time GX hosted a group of students from St Mary's College to listen to one of our key speakers, Chie, speak about her work in sweatshops and the role she has taken in her life to make working conditions better in factories. From what I gathered, the students were part of a class on globalization (not too different from Global Markets and Local Cultures which I took with Professor Hindman this past fall). Chie's talk was amazing, to hear from someone first

hand who has worked in a sweatshop, it really puts your life in perspective. She urged the students to find the exact location and conditions under which their college clothing was made, and told them ways to get their clothing made under fair working conditions. Immediately I was interested in trying to do this at Northeastern.

I think that is what I am going to love about this job and the organization it is in. Not only am I going to learn about working in an office and a team, but I learn things I can do after I leave this job. So many doors are going to open in my future, so many opportunities and things I can do in the world are going to present themselves, and I honestly can't wait.

I have off today but I go into the office tomorrow. I'll fill you in when I get back. Which reminds me, do we want me to write everyday I go into work? Or should I write when I feel something important has happened? Or, once a week, plus important issues? I can write as often as the team would like, I just want to nail down what we are looking for.

Talk to you soon,  
Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu**  
**to me, graceffa.m, parker.ama, r.porter**

**1/19/07**

**Reply**

Becca,

This is good stuff. I particularly like what I hear about the blend of the laid back atmosphere with your getting psyched about topics. Feeling comfortable releases negative emotions that can hold you back from trying stuff. Having a passion propels you forward. The combination is powerful. And we are only at day 2. I do think that as your work unfolds, you should talk to June about topics and build that relationship more and more.

I say write when important stuff happens or something we said or something else moves you. Also, I have never done this in a group before. So we all have to

learn how not to spam. We will figure it out. This has to make you (and us) happy and not be a burden.

-Jim

**R.Porter@neu.edu**

**to ja.stellar, me, graceffa.m, parker.ama**

**1/20/07**

**Reply**

Becca;

This indeed good stuff.

I would be interested to hear a bit of what others in the office do and how your work connects (if at all) with their work.

Rick

**Rebecca K Morton**

**to R.Porter, ja.stellar, graceffa.m, parker.ama**

**1/21/07**

**Reply**

Rick,

In terms of other people, GX is broken up into many departments and different campaigns. How the Speakers Bureau works with them is if a campaign wants a speaker at an event, we set them up with the correct people, helping to plan the event, set up honorariums for speakers and so on. Those in my department are June, my supervisor, and Kate, June's assistant. We also work with the outreach and development offices when planning tabling at events and so on. All of the offices and campaigns have a tendency to overlap (economic situations on non-fair trade farms effect migration and peace, etc...), so sometimes it is hard to decipher who should be working on what. I hope this answers your question, let me know if you want me to elaborate more.

Becca

**R.Porter@neu.edu**  
**to me, graceffa.m, ja.stellar, parker.ama**  
**1/21/07**  
**Reply**

Becca;

Thank you for your note; it helps me to have an understanding of the context in which you are working. This also fits in with the book on Communities of Practice, so I would be interested as you read the book in hearing about how the text fits or doesn't fit your own experience as you observe and enter the community of practice at GX.

Rick

**ja.stellar@neu.edu**  
**to me**  
**1/22/07**  
**Reply**

Becca,

This is fun. Again do tell me if we are being a pain to you. I worry. Last time I did this, it was 1-on-1 and I just knew. I am enjoying this interchange. I just want you to be OK.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton**  
**to ja.stellar**  
**1/25/07**  
**Reply**

Jim,

This is no bother to me at all, I really enjoy being in touch with you all. Not only does it force me to think about the work I am doing, but it also feels like I am still in touch with home. It honestly makes me a little less homesick, and I like the sense of community that we are creating in this. But thanks for checking, I'll let you know if it gets overwhelming, and you guys let me know if I am ever not in touch enough.

Thanks,  
Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu**  
**to me**  
**1/26/07**  
**Reply**

Becca,

Thanks. Frankly, I am having such a great time talking to you and to you all that I just wanted to be sure that was not masking some stress we were putting you under. Let me know if we do start pesting you and feel free to pace our conversation by replying when you can.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, Maria, parker, R.Porter**  
**1/25/07**  
**Reply**

Hey all,

I am also sorry for the delay, life just got a little busier here, but its a very good thing. Work is about the same, I haven't had too much new responsibility but I am definitely settling into my daily routine and tasks. Yesterday I was able to go into the office before June, because I knew what I had to get done and needed a little extra time. I'm starting to feel a little less dependent on direction, and I am able to show and take my own initiative to get tasks done. It is a good feeling. Tuesday morning we had a staff meeting. It was a great opportunity to see how people interacted when they were all together. It was a pretty small group, as a lot of people are out of the office for the World Social Forum or a delegation in Kenya, but they will be back by next Tuesday and I am looking forward to a large interactive meetings. It will be interesting to see how much more will be expected and assigned to me as I visibly settle into the office. I hope June knows I can handle, and would enjoy the work. I think I have proven myself thus far (also a good feeling), but we will see where it all goes.

I am still working on Wenger's book, but Descartes' Error came in the mail, and I am looking forward to that one as well. Thanks again for providing me with these, I think they are going to be great tools.

Also, since my co-op is unpaid I had to get a part time job and I was just hired today at a local shoe store. Do you think this should be included in research? I know it isn't connected to my academics, but it might be interesting to compare the two on some levels- how I might work differently in jobs that I am working for different reasons? How our different goals define where and how we work? Just an idea. Let me know what you think. I start there on Sunday.

Hope you're all well,  
Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, Maria, parker, R.Porter**  
**1/26/07 Reply**

Becca,

As you settle into the routine and get to know the people, you will be able to see more of the social and intellectual structures that drive and direct the operation. That is when you really get the deeper feeling about what elements of this work you think you could do for 5 years if you were, for example, to take a job here or in a similar place after graduation. To me, those are the really important feelings. They create that meaning (Wenger) by acting on your emotional logic systems (Damiano). This is that heart-head conversation that shapes a life's direction. This is the real conversation I want us to road test as a team (and thank you again for letting us). Keep writing.

I think the shoe store job does provide contrast. But already know about the routine world of work. I assume, like me, you had a few jobs growing up to make extra cash. I knew before I took them that it was not my life like you know you are not intending to sell shoes for a living (some people love it). So, please include it, but I am not sure how much it affects the heart-head conversation I was discussing above. Maybe you have thoughts on this idea. You are the anthropologist.

It is very cold in Boston today. We all wish we were living in your neighborhood today.

-Jim

**R.Porter@neu.edu to me, Maria, ja.stellar, parker  
1/26/07 Reply**

Becca;

Thank you for your update.

I--for one--would be very interested in your comparison of your experience

in your co-op job and your work in the shoe store.

If you are into Wenger's book, you could compare the two communities of practice: the differences in the roles you play (co-op vs shoe store) and differences in your level of membership in those communities.

Rick

**Maria S Graceffa to me, ja.stellar, r.porter, parker.ama  
1/28/07 Reply**

Hey Becca,

I am very happy for you because everything seems to keep falling in place! Now that you have more of a routine at work and a source of income at the shoe store, you can begin to establish some normalcy. What are your hours at both jobs? Will you ever have to bounce between them in one day?

I hope you have a good schedule because it really does make learning a new job more fun AND more manageable. I bounced between two jobs during my last co-op, and even though I liked both very much, I was all out of sorts on days that I worked twice.

Let me know how it goes over these next few weeks! I may have some ideas for easing the transition between two jobs.

Maria

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, Maria, parker**

## 1/30/07 Reply

Hey all,

I'm not going to lie, today was not my favorite day at work. Perhaps I was tired, or run down (the last two days were my first at the shoe store, and although a pretty relaxed job, every first day can take it out of you), but I don't know, I felt like I didn't want to be there, and that is disappointing to me. The weather was a little dreary today as well, and no one else seemed to be that talkative either, maybe it was just one of those days. June was also in interviews most of the day, and she does bring a warm dynamic to the office. I was productive, and got all of my assignments done pretty early, and then I felt like I was sitting around because June wasn't there with any other tasks, and I had taken all the initiative I could to go ahead and get things done that I knew she had approved. The office may have also seemed a little down because the past two days I have been in a completely different atmosphere. Where the relationship at GX is a very tight community, I feel like the relationship at the shoe store is more of a close, small family. There are only 4 other employees there, and they are all good-natured and fun, and the sun shines through the front windows, so the store is also very homey and almost comforting to be in. I do feel this in the office, but perhaps being in the store for a couple days got me used to the laughter, and the moving around, and the one-on-one interaction with customers. Wenger talks of identities being shaped in communities of practice, and how in each of our communities, our identity will vary. Perhaps I unknowingly brought my shoe store identity into a community that is not naturally supportive of that identity (and not necessarily in a bad way, there is just less time for talking and walking around when phone calls need to be made, e-mails need to be sent, etc.). Perhaps that is far fetched, but I am hoping it is something along those lines, and that once I get used to going from an active sales atmosphere to an office atmosphere, I will enjoy my time at both. In the mean time, I plan on getting some extra sleep tonight, and going into the office fresh tomorrow, we'll see what happens.

On another topic, a form of identity that I saw today was rather interesting. I was in Tuesday's weekly staff meeting this morning and people were reporting back on the events of the World Social Forum in Kenya. Someone brought up that oil companies were advertising with slogans for a cleaner environment (I forget the specific example), but as expected, the staff didn't take this very well, many sighed and rolled their eyes, as if oil companies advertising a greener world was a sell out to the organization, blasphemous to their cause. I saw this disappointment as an identity of GX, they were let down not only individually but as an organization. But Kevin, a co-founder of GX, spoke up, pointing out

that as the fight between oil companies and greener environment was playing out, this could actually be a good sign. The oil companies had to advertise in our goals to get their name out there. Although it isn't necessarily a great thing and the oil companies are doing this for a profit, and not necessarily for the reasons we would, it is a step forward. They are now on our playing field. As Kevin explained this, others put in their opinions, but you could see in the room the nodding of heads and the acknowledgement that Kevin had a point. I saw this as a reshaping of the communities identity, or ideas. They had participated in an event that may have reshaped some of our thinking, and will probably reshape the way we deal with the oil companies and advertisements from here on out. Although it was a mere five minute conversation, I think you could see an identity start to shift a little.

To touch upon comments from last time we were in touch...

Maria, I am actually working separate days at the store and the office. Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday I am at GX and Sunday, Monday, and Thursday I will be at Village Shoes. I'm thankful I don't have to do both in one day, as mentioned before I think I am already starting to confuse the two, so it will definitely be better on separate days. Even though mine are on different days, it would be interesting to hear about your experience, if it relates to anything I described above, or if you were just burnt out. I can imagine it would get tiring to work two shifts in a day!

I had brought up discussing the store in these e-mails as well. I guess I will bring it up when I think it is important, (as I think Rick suggested) when it helps me explain what goes on in the office (like today), but I guess there might not be a need for it otherwise. Let me know what the rest of you think.

I think that is it for today. Hopefully tomorrow will be a little better. I hear its supposed to snow in Boston tonight, I am crossing my fingers for a snow day for you all!

Becca

**R.Porter@neu.edu to me, Maria, ja.stellar, parker**  
**1/31/07 Reply**

Rebecca;  
Nice reflection!

Raising the question of whether may have you brought your shoe store identity into the GX community and whether that fits or clashes is great. Kevin's movement of the "community" to a different way of thinking about actions by oil companies I think is worth paying attention to. Communities can often take on (and implicitly expect from members) standard ways of thinking. The ability of a community to challenge its own thinking and move to a new or adapted approach, I see as a vital life-sign of the community.

Rick

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, Maria, parker, r.porter**  
**1/31/07 Reply**

Becca,

I am sorry I do not have more time to comment. This is a GREAT e-mail. Thank you for writing.

I find the idea of jumping in and out of communities really interesting. Contrasts have always been interesting to me as I feel I learn some much when I see things from different perspectives. What I am seeing from different perspectives is you. Does this make sense? After all, your perspective is different. I can see you have been reading Wenger.

I have seen a down day about now as a as a reaction to the up beginning of a new job that starts well (yours did). You get the opposite sometimes when the first few days on the job are really stressful. What will be telling is what happens over the next week. The greatest gift of coop (and so much else) is self-discovery. That takes time. It is why this record of our conversation will be so valuable when we look back on it from Spring.

The snow missed us.

Maria,

I would not mind hearing your comments on the phenomenon of shuttling between two jobs, even if yours are more similar (I think). What does it teach you?

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, Maria, parker**

**2/4/07 Reply**

I can't believe its already February! Time goes so fast. I am glad to report that the last two days at work were much better than Tuesday. Maybe it was the weather, maybe it was just a funk, but I felt a lot more accomplished on Wednesday and Friday of this past week. I think I also had more to do, and more assignments that seemed to be accomplishing something. Instead of just sitting at the computer researching (which yes, is very important) I was booking flights, hanging flyers, and interacting with people. I think the interaction helps me feel like I am a part of something, while sitting at the computer researching by myself can leave me feeling isolated. I will have to find a way to interact while researching.

My relationships with other people in the office are also growing. There is a lot of laughter between June, Kate, Deb and me (the four of us that are in the same room). I'm starting to understand the inside jokes (they all tease June for interrupting people and talking too much, they send Deb alerts on her computer calendar to water the plants, etc), and Kate tells me about things going on in her life outside of work. It is nice to start feeling like I am on the same level. Also, Deb, the person incharge of Bike Aid, got an intern on Friday who will be in the office and sharing my work space. I think about what Wenger says about new comers and the changes around them in the office. Also, I can't lie, I'm excited to not be the new girl anymore. I will gladly move out of that spot for someone else to take (also relates to Wegner, as new people come in, and others get pushed up and out). Another new comer to the office is a volunteer named Patti. She is a high school student who usually helps in the online store, but who June wants to have more hands on in the office work of the organization. I have been appointed to teach her how to use the e-mail, database, and web-updates. It is exciting to be trusted enough to have been moved to what I see as a mentoring position. Again, it will be interesting to see what type of dynamic this brings to my work and the office.

Lastly, the office is most likely going to undergo some physical changes. We are moving downstairs (everyone in the organization, not just the people in my office) and the physical organization is going to shift drastically. Now there are a lot of open doorways and walls, noise travels, and as people walk by, interaction is easy. In the new space (I have not seen it myself yet), there are offices that are more separated, with closed doors and full walls. Even after three weeks, I

already feel attached to the warm atmosphere, the casual interactions. June seems a little sad about the move as well, shes attached to her place, the wood floors, the walls she painted, the home shes made for herself at work. But, as she and I talked about, I guess you get used to any new space, and find new things to enjoy about it. I will definitely pay attention to the changes the potential move has on the people in the office, including myself. As of now, I think I'm going to miss the orange walls that I felt so comfortable with the minute I walked into the space.

That is all for now. I work the next two days at the shoe store, and go back to the office on Tuesday. I'll be in touch. :)

Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, Maria, parker, r.porter**  
**2/4/07 Reply**

Becca,

I like the way you are integrating your Wenger reading with your experiences. One of the key responsibilities (not being new shows that) is when you get treated like you have more and more real responsibility. That not only allows you to enter the community of practice more fully, but it does something to you that calls out the responsible person inside you. Now that this is happening, I would be interested in opportunities you have to look back on your academic career so far (including high school). As an anthropologist, what transformations do you see in yourself? I would be interested in observations now and then again 2-3 months later. Finally, I will be really curious to see what are your "limbic reactions" to coming back to campus and re-entering the world where it is possible to be infantilized as we take care of everything (nice syllabus in the course, lectures where you learn by listening and not by doing, etc.).

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, Maria, parker**  
**2/13/07 Reply**

Hey All,

Today was my first day back at GX. Thanks for understanding about the time off, I'm very glad I went home to be with Cory, it was the right thing to do.

Anyway, it was a little weird to go back to work today. I had just started to get into the swing of things, and then after a week out of the office, it feels a little foreign again. But I'm sure by the end of the day tomorrow I will get back into it. I don't feel like much happened today. I was kind of out of it in the morning, almost like culture shock. I felt out of place and tired, and almost awkward. I took an early lunch and called my dad for a reality check, something to ground me a little bit. After lunch I felt a little better, so I assume it is just coming back after the time off. Sorry this reflection isn't all that great, maybe I'm still in the funk. I will write more tomorrow.

Becca

PS. Jim, I was a little confused as to what kind of changes you wanted me to reflect on when you last wrote? Could you clarify that a little for me? Thanks!

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, Maria, parker, r.porter**  
**2/15/07 Reply**

Becca,

Sorry to fall behind a day in e-mail. I have those re-entry problems sometimes after vacations. Do you think the fact that you just started made it worse or better? No matter. You are back.

The changes to which I was refreshing are any changes in you since you have become comfortable with your coop (your community of practice). I was asking for a little introspection. You do not have to respond.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, Maria, parker**  
**2/16/07 Reply**

I think I realized today that the real reason I've been down lately is that I am scared. I think this whole process is a lot harder for me than I would like to admit. I think I am frustrated with myself that I have been here a month and I still don't feel settled in. I'm still lost sometimes at work, I don't have as big of a social life as I thought I would by this point, I'm not where I want to be financially, and I'm already starting to get nervous about my next big step in life-Africa.

One of my biggest fears in life is failing. Actually, it is my biggest fear. And right now, it's as if I am walking on a line, the line of new beginnings, and on one side there is success- projects coming together at work, new friends who I feel comfortable calling even if I don't have a good reason, feeling settled, knowing who I am to others and where I stand with myself. And on the other side of that line is failure- messing up at work, being alone a lot, feeling uncertain. I think I am so scared of stepping off the line and ending up in the failing category that I am almost too scared to take the risks that might place me in the success category. For instance, today June invited me to a party that Todd (someone who works in development) is having for his birthday. And immediately, without even thinking, I started with excuses not to go: I have to work the next morning, and all next week, I have things I have to do at home, grocery shopping, etc. My fear had made me actually believe that I had things to do (which I do, but would probably take me all of two hours). On the way home I realized that I had to go, that I needed to stop sitting around in my little lonely comfort zone and go to the party, I would probably have fun and how else am I really going to get to know people from work? But it is amazing how I reacted to the realization... my stomach started to hurt, I wanted to cry, I got tired, and that's when it hit me...I'm just so scared of the unknown, and it's holding me back. I'm scared that if I put myself out there, I'll get pushed down- people won't like me, I'll feel left out, or even when I get there, I'll be shy and introverted and it will have all been a waste of time. But I can't let myself think like that anymore, I have to step up to the plate and just go for it. I only have 4 and a half more months here, I don't have any time to lose on being scared.

It turns out I can't go to the party anyway, it's a dinner party and then they are going out to bars later, and I don't get out of work until pretty late from the shoe store and I'm not old enough to join them later. Oh well, maybe next time. I'm just glad the whole process made me realize that I can't hide anymore. Life isn't going to come to me, I'm going to have to step out there and get it. And I've already stepped out this far- come to California, got two new jobs, signed up to go to Africa- so what is a little more reaching out?

I am almost done with Wenger's book, and have started Damasio's. Sorry it's taking me so long, Wenger's writing style is really hard for me to get through, but I think that Damasio's is going to keep my attention a little better and go quicker. I haven't gotten very far in, but it sounds like what I am going through now might be clarified by him a little bit- how our emotions are used to make

decisions (being scared making me want to stay in)... let me know of any connections you all see.

I'm at the store all weekend and on Monday, and back to GX on Tuesday. Hopefully I'll get a new attitude towards the situation and go in there with a new outlook. I hope you all are well, I heard Boston finally got some snow! It started to rain out here, but spring is on the way for all of us!

Becca

**R.Porter@neu.edu to me, Maria, ja.stellar, parker**  
**2/17/07 Reply**

Becca;

Recognizing that fear may be driving your actions or inaction is a big step. Sharing that recognition with others is huge. Good!

Rick

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me**  
**2/18/07 Reply**

Becca,

This is a more personal reply that I did not want to share with the others.

I first wanted to say that I think you are really a wonderful person. I am glad I got to meet you in this life and I hope we can be friends for the rest of mine.

I would not be telling the truth if I did not say that I feel a father's desire to protect you when you say you are unhappy in any way. I wish I could appear at your office and take you out for a nice long dinner. Your ability to inspire this kind of personal connection is a great compliment to the fine mind you have and the training and credentials you are pursuing. It really does take both the heart and the mind to grow. In my opinion, not one in 1,000 has the combination you have and the growth potential you have to really re-shape this world for the better. But that same wonderful attribute of having a heart also can make you hurt. So, as senior friend, a mentor, and maybe a pretend-dad, I want to be

available to talk to you. Managing the hurt the heart sometimes brings to you is key while never making yourself invulnerable, distant, aloof, or any of the other defensive things I have seen people do when they are vulnerable. That is a real challenge, especially when you play it out over years.

Feel free to write me individually. We could even talk on the phone if you wanted. Hang in there.

-Jim

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, Maria, parker, r.porter**  
**2/18/07 Reply**

Becca,

This is completely natural. It takes years to settle in. Ask my friends. I am still doing that. But by now I expect it. In my mind you are not only progressing rapidly, you are a model for that as an NU student. So, my suggestion is to keep your eyes on your own growth. Now is the time to nurture that as you define yourself. Of course, you will keep growing for your whole life. Smart people like you (all of you) do that. In fact you have already grown beyond your age and that is why they felt comfortable inviting you to an over-21 party. It is a compliment you deserve.

So hang in there. I also have to say you are really writing a lot about the intersection of the personal and the professional. I believe that this is where the action is for all of us even though we have you in focus at the moment. So, thank you again.

Today was a little warmer in Boston, where only a day with no melting can feel like spring is coming...and it is.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar**  
**2/19/07 Reply**

Jim,

First I just want to say thanks for all your support. Sometimes it's just good to hear that people have confidence in me in all of this. It reminds me that at some point I showed them that I have confidence in myself. (This is a good reminder when all I want to do is shrink back into my shell, which at times, I am all too good at.) But I am actually feeling a little better about the situation. I went out Saturday night with my roommate and her friend, and then had dinner Sunday with another friend, so I feel a little more confident in my friendships. I think I feel lonely sometimes because they are on such a different schedule than I am, and its hard to get together. I'm sure there will be times when I slip back and feel a little uneasy again, but right now I am feeling much better. I will see how the week at GX goes, I have a couple of events that I have to volunteer at, so hopefully the busyness will keep me occupied and around people.

Also, I just want to add that I am very glad to have this correspondence, not only with the group but with you individually. It is good to check back with people, to be forming these relationships. I feel like I am getting a better look at myself than I would have been able to if I had ventured out here without you all to check back with. The reflection process is such a large part of learning, and I think sometimes we may forget to look back at the experiences and the changes that we are going through and have gone through, and then apply them to the now. Writing these e-mails really helps me do that, and it is amazing how much more I am aware of myself on a day to day basis.

So again, thank you. For everything. For helping me to have this opportunity, for having confidence in me, and for checking in as a friend/father-figure/mentor when you see that I am in need of a little guidance. I really appreciate it.

Talk to you soon,  
Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me**  
**2/22/07 Reply**

Becca,

I feel really good about supporting you and I enjoy our exchanges, public and private.

I just do have great confidence in you. You have earned it by impressing me more and more the longer I know you. It is a great sign and one I have seen in my very best students over 30 years (going back to my Harvard days).

The real trick is for us to do as we are doing and think together about how to get you productively accomplishing things that you can then look back on. Talk about a confidence builder.

I too think reflection is important. To me it goes back to the quote from Pascal - "The heart has reasons of which reason does not know." You need that head-heart conversation (or cognitive - emotional [Damiaso]) to make meaning (Wenger) out of your life.

Keep writing me, especially when you feel the need.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, Maria, parker  
2/22/07 Reply**

All,

I am happy to say that this week was better than the last. I have been busy at both jobs, working every day for about the past week and a half. But I get a day off this Saturday, and I can't wait for it! I got out a little bit this past weekend, spent time with my roommates and some of their friends. Again, I was reluctant to go at first, but I pushed through that, went out, and had a good time. I think to overcome this fear of the unknown and of failing, I'm just going to have to keep pushing against it. I think most of the time I will succeed, and when it comes to failing, I think I just need to know how to fall. When I was little, I could never learn how to ride a bike without training wheels. My dad tried EVERYTHING, but I just couldn't do it, I was too afraid to even take the risk of falling. My mom's boyfriend finally taught me how when I was about 7 or 8. He realized that I knew how to ride a bike- you peddle, it's easy. But what I didn't know was how to fall off. So, he taught me how to put my foot down if I was falling over, how to get back up. After that, I was riding in no time. I feel that is similar to now... maybe, if the time comes, I just need to know how to pick myself back up when I fall. Having confidence in my ability to keep going through something, no matter what the outcome, could be the solution. Because

I have been a good student, have had a lot of success so far, I feel that is something that I might not know too well. And yes, the need to succeed is what pushes me to do better, but I need to teach myself that in the risks I take, it is okay to fail. Even in failure we learn. And learning is what life is for, no matter how we go about it.

Last night I had an event directly after work. Former Congresswoman, Cynthia McKinney is in the Bay Area giving talks and last night we co-sponsored an event where she spoke before the screening of American Blackout- a documentary that focuses on her trials and the national voting issues over the past few years. It was a very informative experience, and I am glad that I volunteered to go. It was also a good opportunity to get to know a couple other people who are in the office but not necessarily around me. Carlos does Reality Tours, Nancy is a CODEPink organizer, and Todd works in development. It was interesting to talk about GX and see how different our experiences are with the organization. The knowledge and information we focus on is similar, but details are different, our education and backgrounds are different, and yet we are all a part of the same place. All completely different pieces of the same machine. It was just interesting to me.

Tomorrow I go back into the office and then a lot of people from GX are going to do what is called "Critical Mass." Critical mass is when tons of bikers ride together on the streets of San Francisco so that they, instead of the cars, are the "critical mass" on the roads. I guess it happens the third Friday of every month, but the Bike Aid department is organizing for some of us to go. It sounds interesting and fun, but I need to see if I can borrow a bike. That is what I love about this job... not only am I experiencing and expanding on my own life, but I feel by going to these events I am a part of something bigger... I have experiences at GX, and then GX has experiences in the world. It's hard to understand and to explain. But whatever it is, I like it.

Well, I'm off to dinner. I hope you all are well.

Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, Maria, parker, r.porter**  
**2/23/07 Reply**

Becca,

I am happy things are better.

This analogy to your learning how to ride a bike - how to trust yourself - is vintage coop benefit. We should keep this statement on file. Nu is taking good students outside their comfort zone (Rick Porter words) where they see they can handle it. Now you really have something Good student + confidence in the field. Now you can do anything. You are using the "other lobe of your brain" now.

Who would have thought GX was into biking? But you are right in that these surprises are the icing on the cake. The cake is the connections you are making that allows you to see and work the main project ... GX's mission.

-Jim

**Maria S Graceffa to me, parker, ja.stellar, r.porter  
2/26/07 Reply**

Becca,

You are really one of the most insightful people I have had the pleasure "talking" with in a long time. It's wonderful that you are able to connect the past with the present.

Here are my thoughts:

After you learn to fall, AND get back up again, try to transition your insight into prospective preparedness. See if you can more keenly observe situations with regards to the likelihood of falling. You may be less hesitant in new experiences if you train yourself to evaluate and predict rather than just respond. If you evaluate the situation, and decide that the chances of falling are unlikely, you might step outside of your comfort zone with more ease. Conversely, if you know the probability of falling is high, prepare your response and continue forward. Don't let falling be a deterrent to moving ahead or you'll end up "stuck", and you're stronger than that. Theoretically, your preparedness should serve to lessen your anxiety.

Don't get me wrong, it's important to be able to respond, but don't plateau there. That's part of the "keep pushing" attitude. Of course, it's much easier said than

done. I know you must be thinking, "that Maria, she's at NU inside of her comfort zone, what does she know??" and I don't blame you. I am trying to make suggestions that piggy back on your wonderful introspection and bravery.

I spent my last week deeply engrossed on clinical work, so I read your most recent email wearing my psych hat. I hope you don't mind; I am an action planner. I like to take people from where they are in their own experience with themselves and help facilitate forward movement. Of course you are not nearly in the same position as the traumatized population I work with, but I do think some of the principles are the same. Calculated risk taking with external support can be empowering and therapeutic.

Keep up the great work!!!

-Maria

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, Maria, parker  
3/2/07 Reply**

I can't believe it is already March. It seems that so much time has gone by so quickly, yet I am still at the beginning of this experience.

Sorry I haven't written in a while, I feel like not much has gone on with me over the past week. Work has continued to go well, and it is getting busier all the time. June and I were looking at the calendar and she said that March is usually similar to February- not much going on, but April is crazy. We are going to have speakers in the area all four weeks, which means not only setting up events (like we do around the country) but attending and hosting them ourselves. Although it all sounds a little hectic, I'm eager for it. I notice that my enjoyment in my work increases if I feel busy. There is less time to get anxious, less time to worry about what comes next. It all happens in such a succession that by the time I am done I know I have accomplished a lot, and I am happy with that.

We got news on Wednesday that we are moving the office to the second floor of the building we are in now. I'm assuming this will have a pretty large effect on the dynamic of the office. Depending on space, I might not even be in the same room as Kate and June anymore. And we definitely won't be sharing our space with Deb who runs BikeAid. It will be weird not being around June and Kate, but that isn't for sure yet, so I guess we will cross that bridge when we come to it.

I had a dream I was in Africa the other night. I took it as proof that although I'm trying not to be too consciously anxious about it, subconsciously I'm freaking out a little bit. Well, maybe freaking out is a bit strong- I know I am going to have an amazing experience, I know everything is going to be fine. What is the worst that could happen? I miss home? I can't communicate well with the people who live there? But at the same time, I'm nervous, which is to be expected I guess.

I think outside of work, I am getting a little bored. Now that work isn't so new anymore, I think I need something new to look forward to during the week. Right now I come home, run errands, go to the gym, make dinner, talk with my roommates. I love it here, but its getting a little monotonous. I used to dance in high school, and I miss it terribly. I think I will try and look for a place to take a class. I need something to look forward to during the week. Something I don't need to be stressed about, something where there is no pressure, something that is on my schedule, but its relaxing and fun.

My dad was in the hospital this past week. He had a blood clot in his lung, but he is fine now, and now that they know about the issue, he shouldn't have trouble with it again. I wanted to go home so badly. Selfishly, I think it was just as much to comfort myself as it was to comfort him. I wanted to see him and give him a hug, to laugh at his stupid jokes that are only funny because he thinks they are. But I couldn't be there, so we talked on the phone every day, and I know it was comforting to both of us. At first I regretted being so far away. I told myself that if I were back at school I could have been there for him. But I think it is a lesson that I am going to have to learn, that if I want to take my life all over the world, there are going to be times when I can't go home just to comfort myself. If it was anymore serious, I could and would have been home in an instant. But we are all okay, and Dad got through it. So I will not let myself regret being here. We can't wait around at home, just because something might happen. It is the risk we have to take when we expand our lives in different directions- sometimes I'm just not going to be able to be there physically, and I am starting to get used to that.

I guess that is all for this week. I hope you all are well!  
Becca

**Amanda R Parker to me, ja.stellar, r.porter, Maria**  
**3/2/07 Reply**

Hey Rebecca,

This is Amanda, whom you haven't met and I haven't commented at all...For awhile I have been content with just reading the conversations you all have been having but this letter really touched me and I wanted to drop you a little note...

What you said about your Dad really is perhaps one of the most difficult parts of growing up sometimes. When I look at people I know from high school that have stayed in state(NJ--a fairly small state) and only go home on vacation from school, I realize just how much of a life I really have developed by forging out on my own a little. I don't mean socially, being busy going out with friends, but a life. Your own routine, job, errands, friends, familiar sights and sounds...Hopefully you are beginning to have those things out in CA, b/c that is comforting. But family is a part of that too. That is what I think is most difficult about being away from home and loved ones while at school or studying abroad--we are so much in between things in our lives right now. There are so many wonderful things out there to discover and to "own" in a sense, but in order to reach them we have to be strong enough to leave the comfort of what we already know and love...that is VERY scary.

Perhaps that is part of what is making you anxious about Africa, but you are taking baby steps, and maybe that is the best way to handle it. The dreams may be telling you something about your thoughts, but I think you're still a few steps ahead of the game if you have the presence of mind to realize it...:)

I hope to meet you when you get back on campus,

Amanda Parker

PS-It just began to snow as I wrote this, so boston still has some winter left in it:)

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, R.Porter, Maria, parker**  
**3/2/07 Reply**

Becca,

About the job, now may be the time to interact with June about getting more responsibility. You do not have to say you are bored, just ask if you can do

more. Of course the move will be exciting, but it will not fix this common problem of mastering the starting job. You are right in general in that you need to be challenged and you now are in charge of that.

About the family, I was touched by your struggle with wanting to return. As a father myself of daughter who is a few years older than you, I can say that it is a balance and it sounds like you achieved that balance with the strategy of calling on the phone vs. traveling.

Like your judgements about the career path (making meaning), the personal judgements one makes are also examples of emotional logic (Damiaso). I also think Amanda has a point about this time in your life. Many folks older and younger live in a family structure, but you are leaving one and making a new life for yourself, which can be scary.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, parker, Maria**  
**3/8/07 Reply**

I just wanted to drop you all a line, its been a week since I last checked in. :)

First, I wanted to say thanks to Amanda for writing, it was great to hear from you, and I am grateful for your words about forging out into our own lives... separation from what we know is scary, but it is what makes us grow. I think this is what helps me overcome the initial fear of leaving, knowing that great experiences and challenges lie ahead. I believe that life is too easily wasted when we do not challenge ourselves.

In response to Jim, and also on the subject of seeking challenges for myself, I would like to say that as the months get busier, I still feel that I am being introduced to new things, new tasks and skill level, more responsibility. When I am done with what I need to finish, June is always good at giving me more to do. Her assignments are usually broad, they tend to open up to more responsibility and tasks. This is one thing, among many others, that I really respect about June and Kate- they always have things for me to do, always trust that I can do them, but at the same time, are always positive and informative when I need their help or reassurance. As the pace of the events picks up over the next months, I am sure my responsibilities will continue to expand. If I do get bored at work, I will be sure to ask for more responsibility, and I am confident that if that happens, June and Kate will provide me with more.

About this week... I got home about 20 minutes ago from another wonderful event. We went to a talk with Chalmers Johnson, a well-known author and professor who writes about the American Empire and America's changing situation and changing power in world affairs. Again, I am so grateful for these events, they just pile on the experience for me... each one gets me motivated to do something on campus when I get back, to read another book, to become informed on another topic. It is amazing the wealth of knowledge and information I have become more aware of since I arrived at Global Exchange. I am so glad I decided to get myself here, if for no other reason than the amount of doors my experience has opened for me.

Nothing else is really jumping out at me for things to write about. I feel like my responses have been limited lately. Tell me if you agree... any areas I should think about or pay more attention to? Any questions you have? I love having this ongoing conversation with you all, so please say or ask whatever you wish.

Talk to you soon,  
Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, Maria, parker, r.porter**  
**3/8/07 Reply**

Becca,

If you read the book the "Hero's Journey" about how student's handle the study abroad experiences, you will see that the place you are now on co-op (i.e. confident, happy, growing, challenged, motivated) is the place one wants to get in an sustained experience. Who knows what the future holds? I just wanted to congratulate you now on really capitalizing on your coop experiences. I think all of you co-correspondents helped and I would like us to note this moment when we do something with our analysis of Becca's experience as a team - perhaps write it up, or at least incorporate it into our thinking.

In what I would like to call the second phase of your growth on this co-op, it is time for you to focus on becoming a leader. Perhaps that leadership blooms back on campus after you return from your total experience or even later, but I think now is the time to learn those lessons for your future. Moral and constructive leadership is not only the obligation of people with

power (and one Maria and Amanda have taken up), but it is the an opportunity to continue your growth in a different way. By the way, these cycles have a way of repeating, almost like a video game where you master level 14 and then it is on to level 15 ... but you still keep getting better in general. Maybe your next level is Africa. Maybe it is right where you are.

Enough of my rambling. I just want to say how please I am to have gotten this message and to be privy to this terrific interaction between all of you. I feel like I am learning a ton. Thank you all.

-Jim

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, parker, Maria  
3/21/07 Reply**

Hello All! It has been quite a while, but I feel the recent developments at work are relevant to our discussion, and wanted to check in. :)

Last week I decided to talk to June, to check in with my work at Global Exchange, get some feedback, see what more I could be doing. Overall she said I was doing fine, and a great help to the organization. She also gave me more responsibility, and once again, I'm a little freaked out. I got assigned to a speaker that is new to our bureau. His name is Earl Kingik and he is from Alaska, and speaks out on climate change, the harmful effects of oil drilling on indigenous populations and the environment. The past week has been spent getting bio information, setting up e-mail blasts for outreach, and learning the ropes of setting up my own speaking tour. The tour is to start around Earth Day and go to mid-May, depending on how popular he is with the outreach. Even in the first few stages, its been a little stressful, a little nerve wracking. Usually tours have much more time to develop, so we are pressed for time, which doesn't do much to help the situation. However, I am reminded of how I felt when I first came to Global Exchange, and the contrast of how I felt just last week, before the added assignments. I had gotten used to the work load, used to the process. I must remind myself that once again, I will go through those steps. I will ask for help along the way, June and Kate will be supportive as always, and at the end it will be yet another bridge I have crossed. I am excited for this new opportunity, and I hope that Earl's tour is a success (we don't know of an environmental or cultural group that may be interested in hosting Earl at Northeastern, do we? It would be great to tie all of this back to NEU.)

On other subjects, I find myself missing the school atmosphere at times. I walk through Berkeley campus and I am reminded what an amazing culture, college is. It is funny that even at a foreign campus, I find myself remarkably at home with the academic setting, the clusters of students, people studying on the grass- sometimes I think you can feel the potential for growth on a campus. Although I am loving my time here, I am looking forward to getting back to the books, expanding on the knowledge and new ideas that have been planted thus far. I can't believe I am only 2.5 months in. It feels like I have been here forever, but at the same time, I feel like I time is going so fast. Life can be such a weird contrast to itself sometimes.

Speaking of campus and academics, one of my most amazing friends from NEU, Jessica, is graduating in May and I have decided to take some time off from work, and surprise her by coming home for her graduation. I will most likely be in Boston from May 5th to May 12th. Its Friday to Friday. Will you all still be on campus? Should we plan to get together? It might be nice to check in in person, go over next steps, and I would love to meet personally meet Amanda! I will also be in Boston from July 10th? (still up in the air) to the 19th, when I fly out for Africa, just FYI, in case we want to meet.

I hope you all are well! I feel like I haven't talked to you all in a long, long time. It would be great to hear how you are all doing, even if it has no relevance to our ongoing discussion.

Talk to you soon,  
Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, Maria, parker, r.porter**  
**3/22/07 Reply**

Becca,

These stages are so typical and your reaction shows what Psychologists call meta-learning, basically learning to learn in a context. It sounds exciting and I would be interested in hearing how you meet this new challenge. Also, as one meets increasingly difficult challenges, one begins to notice that jobs that others (who you respect) do seem comparable.

At that point, you will realize in your gut what we older people have already realized about you (about all three of you), and that is that you have everything

you need to develop into leaders in whatever domain you choose. Older people can see that by looking backwards through their own lives at the starting conditions they faced and then fast-forwarding back to the present. It is 20-20 hindsight of course and it is about our lives, not yours. That is why intergenerational mentoring really requires a healthy dose of co-mentoring as the team (us here) tries to see if whatever insight is being discussed fits in the next generation. In fact, I have to say that I think this is a remarkable team, composed of peer and intergenerational mentoring at the same time. Enough of my rambling.

I love your insight about the college campus. In fact I liked it so much, I never left. I love the organization dedicated to personal growth of all of its members, particularly (of course) its students.

Do keep us posted. In a very real way, you are our group leader as we talk and learn together.

-Jim

**R.Porter@neu.edu to me, Maria, ja.stellar, parker  
3/22/07 Reply**

Dear Becca;

It is good to hear you are crossing another bridge.

I expect be around May 5 to 12 and it would be great to get together with you and the others you have been writing to.

Rick

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, parker, Maria  
3/29/07 Reply**

Hello all,

I know I had mentioned being nervous and a little apprehensive out about my new responsibility at work, but I think that this time I am adjusting much quicker to the changes. June helped me do a ton of outreach for Earl, the speaker I am setting up tours for, and at first it didn't seem like people were going to pick up on it, and those who had couldn't afford to fly him from where he lives in

Alaska. But yesterday I spoke to a woman from Stanford University setting up speakers and educational pieces for Stanford's upcoming GreenWeek (the week after Earth Day), and it looks like she can find enough funding to bring Earl! Just knowing this is a possibility has set me at ease. Now I can concentrate on getting him more gigs when he is in town that week, and it will be much easier to fly him around the continental US after he is brought here from Alaska.

Sometimes I have trouble juggling the things I have to do- I want to concentrate on finding gigs for Earl, but all of my other tasks are still there too. I actually got a little internally frustrated with Kate the other day, she asks me to do miscellaneous tasks sometimes and usually it doesn't bother me, but I had just sat down at my desk and was trying to sort things out for the day, so I felt a little overwhelmed. All she did was ask me to fax something for her, but it was funny how I suddenly didn't want to be treated like the typical "intern" anymore. It was as if I had more important things to do, and I felt like it would take her two seconds to fax the thing and she should just do it herself. I didn't say anything to her, it was all a very quick moment, and once I sorted my to do list for the day, I felt much better, but it is funny how as our responsibilities get bigger we easily push our old, seemingly less important ones, aside. Now I regret feeling that way... Kate has way more to do than me and I am happy to help her in anyway I can, but I just thought it was interesting what I felt in that moment. The more I think about it, the more I realize that I am slightly disappointed in myself for feeling that way actually. Just because I have more things to do at work, a couple more issues and events to think about- it does not mean that I am any better than the work I did three days ago. I must remember that although I have passed certain steps in this process, I am not above them now, they are what got me to today. I don't know how to explain it... do you know what I mean? Perhaps, in a way, this experience is a reflection of something we all must remember... to not think too much of ourselves, for we are all learning, moving, growing, and what happens today would not be possible if it weren't for the experiences of yesterday.

We have about reached the half-way point in this co-op experience, and from what I see, I think that the second half may be shaped a lot differently than the first. April is supposed to be a busy month at Global Exchange... many events, not only around the country, but around the Bay Area. There will be mailings to be sent, contracts to be signed, preparations to be made for hosts, reservations made, etc... but I am looking forward to this experience- a little hectic, yes, but also a chance to test out the skills that I have learned, to see if I have practiced enough that some of what I have done here becomes second nature, while even

more opens up into yet another learning experience. May brings my short trip back to Boston and I absolutely can't wait. To see the people I love there again, just to be on campus, maybe catch a Sox game, it is going to be great. In the office, May and June are pretty slow months. The end of May is the Human Rights Awards, an amazing event put on by Global. I will have to help out with that, but it isn't put on by the speakers bureau, so it will be interesting to branch out and get to work with some other people in the office a little bit more. In June the Bureau is getting two more interns for summer. I am sure I will be spending some time with them, perhaps helping them out while they get used to things, but the office is also going to be a little crowded with all of them around, so I might take a few days off to travel, or work in the Fair Trade retails store that Global Exchange has. So the last two months should be a little more relaxing, some time to wind down, I am looking forward to them.

I guess that is all for now. I hear the weather has been nicer, hopefully you get time to go out and enjoy it.

I will be in touch, but let me know about May. I know Rick said he would be around, but how about everyone else? If it is too busy of a time, we can always hold off.

Talk to you soon!

Becca

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, Maria, parker, r.porter  
3/30/07 Reply**

Becca,

I will be here in May and am looking forward to seeing you. The sooner we set up a time the better, but no real rush just now.

I have two reactions to your work story.

1) Obviously, these little struggles and the feelings generated from such office interactions are a normal part of the complex social organization of group work. They present learning opportunities to you and, as usual, you seem to have done that. Most people don't. This is the value of reflection in which you readily engage to your credit. What may be less obvious here is that these little incidents can have persisting effects in the social network, especially if they somehow fit with or confirm something about you. In my case, I am often a bit scattered and that can occasionally disappoint on a specific task when I forget something or fail to follow through. The trick to keeping the basic interactions healthy over the long term is to do something to counter that potentially

lingering little negative effects which could sum up to something bigger. That counter could take the form of saying something to Kate ("I hope I was not short with you the other day. I was under a lot of pressure.") or just doing something nice for her that may be unexpected (like offering to get her a Starbucks coffee when you go out for some). Of course what really matters is the team work that generates real value and provides a positive context to any small negative interactions. I have now probably written more than this incident warranted.

2) More importantly, it is clear that you have passed out of the start-up stage. I am now very interested in the next phase where you settle in, now comfortable with your mastery. What I am curious about is how your thinking about yourself (your Dimaiso emotional logic) refines as you interact with this community of practice (think Wenger) as an accepted member. Maybe in future writings you could reflect on what you are learning that can inform your ongoing internal conversation about your long-term career development. This pace of growth in this next phase may be a bit slower, but I think it is the most important phase.

The weather in Boston is lightening up and with it our spirits. It will be even better when you get back for your visit. Write when you can. Thank you again for allowing us the privilege of working with you like this.

-Jim

**Maria S Graceffa to me**  
**4/2/07 Reply**

Becca,

DON'T feel bad about feeling "put out" by "intern-duties". This is what happens when you attend NU. We get such great worke experience tha we function as, or if not better than, professional employees. I have had the exact same experience, and it does pass. I think it's good to feel that way (once in a while) bc it reminds you of the quality work you put forth.

Take care!

Maria

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, r.porter, Maria, parker**

**4/15/07 Reply**

Hey everybody,

Sorry I haven't written. I sat down to write this e-mail a couple times and nothing would come out, I feel like I was at a stalemate for a little bit. I still feel as if I am unsure of what I should write about, what the next step is in this whole experience.

I told you I had been put in charge of finding Earl Kingik events in the Bay Area, and the past two weeks have been dedicated to outreach, finding funding, etc... Stanford University had decided that they would fund Earl's fight from Alaska, but when I sent them the contract for the final amount, the contact I had there stopped getting in touch with me. She had been out of contact for a week, and finally on Friday, after a lot of persistence and pestering, she wrote to me and said that she needed to cancel the event because she didn't feel like they had the time to plan. I can't begin to tell you how frustrated and disappointed I feel. I know it isn't my fault, but I feel responsible for the events not going through. I know Earl was looking forward to this opportunity: ten days of spreading awareness on his culture and his cause. Some times I feel like I should have done more, but June and Kate reassured me that there was nothing else I could do. We looked for funding elsewhere, but since Stanford cancelled so quickly, we just don't have the time to find funding and get his tickets before he was scheduled to fly out on the 19th. It is out of my hands, and out of my control, and that is what frustrates me most: that I can do nothing to change the situation. I think that is one of the things that bothers me most about the Speakers Bureau- we are always the middleman... negotiating between speaker and host, and as much as we put our efforts in, it isn't up to us. Perhaps in the future, I would like a job/internship/co-op where I have more direct control over situations, where I don't always have to depend on someone else coming through. I don't even know if that is possible, we all have to rely on others at times, but it will be interesting to see if my experience in Africa, reflects these wishes, as I am working more one-on-one with people.

Again, I will be in Boston May 6th-11th. Please let me know what day we should meet up, any day is fine with me, as long as I know ahead of time.

Talk to you soon,  
Becca

**R.Porter@neu.edu to me, Maria, ja.stellar, parker**

**4/15/07 Reply**

Dear Becca;

Thank you for the update. It is unfortunate that Stanford cancelled on you and Earl. As you suspect---"depending on someone else to come through"---is generally in the mix at some level in most situations. I will be interested in hearing whether this comes up in the next leg of your journey. One possibility in Africa---who knows---is that you will indeed depend on others to come through but the situation will be different than with Stanford because you will be interacting with on whom you depend on a regular basis. It would be great to see you when you are in Boston. I will be out of town on May 7, 8, and 9, but back on the 10th---it would be good if we could all (those on this e-mail) get together sometime on the 10th. I could do anytime between 7:30 in the morning and 1:30pm or between 2:30 and 3:30.

Rick

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, R.Porter, Maria, parker**

**4/15/07 Reply**

Becca,

I followed on Rick's e-mail. I could meet on the 10th of May when you are back. How about if we all meet for breakfast (my treat) at 7:45 at Au Bon Pain? Does that work for folks. Of course we can and probably also will meet separately. I think we have all bonded with Becca and each other over this experience. I know I have.

I agree with your frustration and it is always the case to some extent as you have to depend on others. The trick is to manage the general situation so that such things do not happen most of the time and in your job, I do think you are vulnerable. Like Rick, I am eager to get your reaction to Africa. We read the book "Mountains beyond Mountains" with the freshman in the fall and I think you and I talked about it (but maybe not). In that book, the hero, Paul Farmer, talks about narrating Hattie by which I remember him meaning the angst-filled conversation you have in your own head when you try to make things work in a

difficult place against all kinds of setbacks and troubles. I see a bit of that everywhere, certainly in your writing this time.

This was a nice letter. The fact that you are struggling a bit to write shows that you are to a point where we need to advance our conversation beyond your adjustment and perhaps more into content. If we are in anthropology, it could be there. If you were climbing the corporate ladder, it could be about that. I think we should talk about inventing a new project where we together start to write up what we are experiencing as something to be published as a brief paper. That would provide a kind of content that, at least I would support. Maybe we talk about it face-to-face when you are back. It is something we would all need to discuss. Also, Rick and I have another paper to finish up with Amanda Marsden that we began a year ago. There is much exciting work to do.

-Jim

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me**

**4/15/07 Reply**

Becca,

Again a personal note just to say how delighted I am every time you write, but don't let that be a burden. You know what is the right thing to do, when to write. So, no pressure from me, just an open invitation to contact when you need it.

-Jim

**Maria S Graceffa to me, parker, ja.stellar, r.porter**

**4/16/07 Reply**

OOhh Becca, that is so infuriating! The way I see it now, it doesn't matter what happened, it only matters how you respond to it. Try not to dwell on the disappointment; instead, let it work for you. Emotions of any sort translate into energy. Some people turn it into intense focus and stare at a TV for 6 hours a day, but others are able to make use of the focus, or any other energy it produces.

Honestly, I wouldn't blame you for sulking a bit. But after you're through with that, channel your (frustration/annoyance/powerlessness ???) energy into your next project. It doesn't have to be momentous or even work related, but try to make it tangible. Chances are, this is not the only time reliance on others falls

through (like Rick alluded to). As I have learned, it's better to make the lousy experience work for you in some way, or else you spend too much time ruminating about lost effort.

I really look forward to seeing you in May! Take care!

Maria

**Rebecca K Morton to ja.stellar, Maria, parker, r.porter**  
**6/6/07 Reply**

Hey All,

It was great to see you last month in Boston, I had a great trip home, and it was harder than I thought it would be to go back to Berkeley. I thought I would write because as things start to wind down here I'm starting to feel a little weird. It is funny to get to the end of an experience, to look back at it and realize that I've met all those people I worried I wouldn't (great friends, mentors, contacts for future work etc...), I've done all those things I was afraid I wouldn't be able to (make friends, get involved, be capable of planning my own speaking events for work), I suddenly feel so at peace here, so content, and all now I have to leave. I guess the correct term for it all would be "bittersweet." Here I am again at the closing of one chapter, and an opening of another. In the past six months I have done so much I can barely remember, and yet it feels like it all happened in a week. It feels like when I get back to Boston, it will all be the same, as if time stood still when I was gone. But it is going to be so different, and I am a little worried about that. It is also a little strange, that after this, I am not even really going back to what I'm used to. Instead, I'm off to Tanzania, a trip I thought was so far into the future that I didn't have to worry about it for a while. But its here now, and I'm starting to worry a little bit! I got my vaccinations Friday, and I'm mailing in my passport tomorrow for my visa. I haven't learned nearly as much Swahili as I should have, and I have to find a hotel room for my first day there. I know it is all rather trivial, its just a hotel room, and there is no doubt that I will learn more of the language when I get there, but still, its a large source of anxiety at the moment. So I guess just all of this emotion (happiness about where my experience is at the moment, sadness that it is going to be over soon, anxiety of the next big adventure) is all mixed up in my head and I just felt like I needed to get it out a little bit... and I guess the best people to get that all out to is you all! :) Anyway, I have to get to work (it is summer intern orientation day today... its going to be a little funny to see so many other people in the position I was six months ago... nervous, on their best behavior, trying to be over outgoing and

meet people...) but I would love to hear from you all. It always seems a little strange when I don't have much to write, I had gotten so used to your advice and responses.

Again, thanks for the meeting in May, it was nice to check in. I'll be in Boston July 15-19 (I leave the evening of the 19th for Tanzania), if we wanted to have another meeting before I leave. I don't know if you all will be around then, but maybe we can work something out.

I hope you all are well, I heard its raining like a typical Boston spring time!  
Talk to you soon,  
Becca

**R.Porter@neu.edu to me, Maria, ja.stellar, parker**  
**6/7/07 Reply**

Becca;

Thanks for your note.

To me it seems that you had much to write and I am honored to be among those to whom you "get it out a little bit".

I expect to be around the week of July 16 through 19 (though not on Wednesday the 18th). It would be great to get together with you, Maria, Jim, and Amanda sometime that week.

If you have a time that week to suggest, let us all know and we can arrange to meet.

Rick

**ja.stellar@neu.edu to me, R.Porter, Maria, parker**  
**6/7/07 Reply**

Becca,

I copied on to Rick's reply so that they would cumulate. I too feel it has been an honor to have been able to talk to you like this. Thank you for letting us in. I also feel it has been a great pleasure working on this with all of you as a team. I feel a little weird that our experiment is ending. I hope our friendships never do.

Again, I feel your reactions are natural. Even though your experience is unique there is a grammar to this business of putting yourself out there. I see it in the steps in a book called "Charting the Hero's Journey" by Linda Chishom that was adapted to study abroad that was adapted from another book "The Hero's Journey" by Joseph Campbell. I reprinted below from this web site (<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/smc/journey/ref/summary.html>) the part about Return. I thought you might enjoy reading it. You are now the Master of two worlds (soon to be three), so take the freedom to live that the balance gives you. Just a thought.

## Return

### 1. Refusal of the Return

So why, when all has been achieved, the ambrosia has been drunk, and we have conversed with the gods, why come back to normal life with all its cares and woes?

### 2. The Magic Flight

Sometimes the hero must escape with the boon, if it is something that the gods have been jealously guarding. It can be just as adventurous and dangerous returning from the journey as it was to go on it.

### 3. Rescue from Without

Just as the hero may need guides and assistants to set out on the quest, often times he or she must have powerful guides and rescuers to bring them back to everyday life, especially if the person has been wounded or weakened by the experience. Or perhaps the person doesn't realize that it is time to return, that they can return, or that others need their boon.

### 4. The Crossing of the Return Threshold

The trick in returning is to retain the wisdom gained on the quest, to integrate that wisdom into a human life, and then maybe figure out how to share the wisdom with the rest of the world. This is usually extremely difficult.

### 5. Master of the Two Worlds

In myth, this step is usually represented by a transcendental hero like Jesus or Buddha. For a human hero, it may mean achieving a balance between the material and spiritual. The person has become comfortable and competent in both the inner and outer worlds.

### 6. Freedom to Live

Mastery leads to freedom from the fear of death, which in turn is the freedom to live. This is sometimes referred to as living in the moment, neither anticipating the future nor regretting the past

I would be very happy to get together in the period when you are back. I expect to be here that week. How about we all gather for a breakfast on the 16th at Au Bon Pain at 8:00?

-Jim