

### Interview Summary Log

<b>Date/Day of week:</b> Mon., Feb. 7, 2005 12:45 – 2:05	<b>Name of Observer/Interviewer (circle method)</b> Interviewer	<b>Pseudonym of site/setting</b> Provincial High School	<b>People involved and their role/position</b> Assistant Vice Principal of Instruction /	<b>Method of recording (audio/video/notes)</b> Audiotape
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**Observer/interviewer positionality** (i.e. known subjects, knowledge of purpose by subjects, circumstances of interview/observation): Originally, I contacted the Admission Officer at Provincial High School (single-sex, Catholic girl's high school in \_\_\_\_\_) via email to request access for observations and interviews (whom I had been exchanging emails with in regard to my daughter's application but have not met). The Admissions Officer forwarded my request to the Assistant Vice Principal of Instruction (AVP) to seek permission and make my arrangements. The AVP replied with an email inviting me to contact her assistant to schedule an appointment. When I contacted the assistant, she seemed to not know about my project and was hesitant to make the arrangements without further consulting both AVP's. The assistant indicated that she would inquire and call me back. After two days with no reply, I sent a follow up email to the original AVP I had been put in contact with to confirm the procedure for gaining access. Apparently, I had misunderstood and she had intended for me to make an appointment with her through her assistant and during that appointment other arrangements would be made. After this scheduling misfire, we spoke on the phone to discuss my goals and timing needs for the assignment and she scheduled my visits – selecting the classes for my observation and recruiting the student for the interview.

We had discussed two different dates during the phone conversation and finally agreed to January 28<sup>th</sup> and February 7<sup>th</sup> for observing and interviewing respectively. Later, she followed up with an email agenda, which indicated that the observations would occur on January 28<sup>th</sup> (as we had discussed) and the interviews on January 31<sup>st</sup> (one of the two days considered, but not the date I had thought we agreed upon). So, I observed on the 28<sup>th</sup> as planned and returned on the 31<sup>st</sup> for interviews based on the agenda, to find that the student was not available and that the email was incorrect. The AVP seems a bit scattered and was slightly embarrassed by the second scheduling misfire. I returned again on February 7<sup>th</sup> to complete both the student interview and the staff interview (which follows).

**Description of context/setting:** Janet (AVP) retrieves me from my student interview, which has run a bit long, in the Publication room and guides me down the hall to the faculty lounge. Several male and female adults (presumably faculty) are seated at long tables, getting lunch from a cafeteria-style cold case (buffet), and coming and going from the room. Janet looks into the cold case and selects two deli sandwiches from the case, which also includes a salad bar. She inquires about the soup, but it seems we have arrived too late for soup – it is all gone. I had brought my lunch since the email agenda was unclear in regard to what was available for lunch. Janet did not introduce me to any members of the faculty and seemed eager to get her meal and to return to the Publication room to eat and be interviewed. It struck me as odd that we returned to the Publication room, since it is fairly utilitarian, noisy and lacks privacy – since the AVP appears to have a fairly pleasant office which would afford more privacy and less distractions. (see student interview description of Publication room).

Counter	Interview content	Commentary
603	Discussion of term of position and previous educational employment – here for two years and previously a public high school English teach and several K – 8 Catholic school teaching experiences. Hold a credential in English and science and has taught both.	
610	Asked Janet about differences between private all-girl high school experience and her previous experiences. She jokingly notes the obvious, “no fellas” and then proceeds to describe the unique sense of community and support system offered to the She claims that this support system enables the girls “greater freedom to explore different areas” that they might otherwise be “inhibited” from in a coed setting.	Freedom/lack of inhibitions
628	She notes tendency of girls in coed environments to “dumb themselves down” and social norm preventing girls from excelling academically, noting specifically math and science subject areas.	“Dumbing down” – key term literature
634	Claims that once girls get used to no boys they “assumed all the traditional male	Wider range of roles –

	roles” such as student leadership, athletics, class clowns, computer geeks.	assuming male roles – another theme from gender equity literature
642	After experiencing this wide range of roles, Janet claims that the girls leave high school better prepared and confident to live in “a man’s world” taking on a variety of roles since they have experience. This gives them “an edge”	Competition
660	I inquire about roles – any missing or any new roles developed in this setting that differ from coed school student roles. Janet claims girls are “friendlier” since not competing with each other for boy’s attention – less “cattiness” or “cliquishness” in all-girl environment. Further, the girls are less “self-conscious about their appearance for obvious reasons” and often “literally roll out of bed” to come to school. Cites “freedom” again and says “they can just be who they are” and repeats moments later “be more themselves”, thus they can relax socially.	Presumes heterosexuality  Freedom of expression – presumes “authenticity”
703	Argues against claim of “artificial world” critique of single-sex schools by claiming that “maybe it’s a better world environment.” Provincial provides students “as much ammunition as-as we can possibly provide them to succeed in that real world.”	Odd militaristic metaphor
	I attempted to have her further develop and focus on known critiques of single-sex schools – artificial environment and potential lack of social skills with males, “pro-academic” family backgrounds, and lack of diversity. Ask Janet to address these critiques which attempt to explain disparate results between private SS and public coed schools.	
722	Janet challenges diversity issue first and claims that Catholic schools are often more diverse than public schools due to wide draw from diverse feeder schools [private, Catholic elementary and middle] compared with racially segregated public neighborhood schools. Claims only 30 percent of Provincial students are Caucasian.	
738	In terms of economic diversity notes that most students come from middle-class backgrounds and that private schooling is “a sacrifice” for all families. Attributes family dedication to education and financial choice based on priorities. Claims parents share “respect for education and a great desire to see their daughters excel” – more involved in child’s education. Notes challenge of involved parents for staff with slight laugh.	Type of parent  [Switch side of cassette – lost a bit of data in dead space on start of second side.]
010	As Catholic school, Janet claims school has “an obligation to take care of the poor” and gives scholarship funds to those families that could not afford tuition. Claims that ability to pay is not part of the application/admittance policy. “No girl who is accepted at [Provincial] is turned away because of tuition issue. We find the money for them. And we take them before we ask them if they are able to pay. So we just make it work.” Then notes that there is still a level of commitment since “high school is expensive” listing extra-curricular, sports, uniforms, books, etc	Strikes me as in conflict with application form that requires recognition of costs and signature accepting financial burden by parents. No mention of scholarships appears on the application.
019	New line of questioning – what do you hope students accomplish between application process and graduation?	
022	Goals cited are critical thinking, confidence, awareness of “unique talents and abilities,” sense of service and “obligation to serve” others, to lead and serve their community. Jokes about “how we raise ‘amazons’ around here” in seeking to develop “the complete package.” Cites strong academics and sports specifically. Then notes the arts program as a recent “drawing card for us in terms of student applications . . we give them . . lots of opportunities to not just be a scholar but to really grow as an individual”	Goals seem esoteric – what are the “real” goals and measures of success for the administration?

037	When asked if there has been any change in the mission since her arrival, Janet notes that there had been an “image problem” as “that college prep school.” Does not discount academics but notes mission to serve Diocese feeder school and challenges of student preparedness. Goal to accept 100 percent of applicants from Catholic feeder schools despite competitive application process. “we accept a fair number of students who you wouldn’t typically consider to be college prep material.” This poses a challenge to the school to provide support and “still be a college prep program”	Feeder schools – academic diversity  College prep material? Does this change goal/curriculum or does this mean elevate girls not yet prepared?
054	When I inquire about support strategies to assist students who are less prepared, Janet explains “little changes” in program and requirements for “students who come in under an academic probation” to attend summer program focusing on literacy. Next year the school hopes to develop a year-long course with similar literacy emphasis – reading, writing and critical thinking skills	“Academic probation” status awareness/stigma?  No focus on math or science remediation?
066	I suggest concern for isolation, really leading to concept of tracking to probe this further and Janet says school philosophy ‘does not track’ – specifically mentioning tracking. Notes that there are AP and Honors courses, but do not “want to warehouse lower students” and instead “keep them in the mix” with access to peer mentor as inspiration – “positive peer pressure.”	Well versed on literature – seems a bit “scripted” What does she mean by “in the mix”? – access to AP and honors based on test performance may preclude/track
075	I probe regarding “structured peer mentoring” and Janet claims that “it comes and goes”. She explains that the California Scholarship Federation had a requirement for peer tutoring and many participated but since the requirement was eliminated “it is more difficult for us to find peer tutors for our students because they are teenagers and they get busy”. Working on different ways to “make that happen” such as a “buddy program” linking upper class students with those in freshman remedial “enrichment” program.	Dependant on CSF requirements to support tutoring? Do girls only participate in those required things? Motivation for service/peer support? Seems to justify student’s lack of interest in mentoring since “busy” – contradicts “community” and “service” aims
091	When I ask about “common challenges” the incoming girls face, Janet claims the students tend to “overload themselves” and calls it a “weird kind of peer pressure”. I probe with the word “overachiever” and she laughs and says that parents call and send email complaints when the administration won’t allow students to take a nine or ten period day with no lunch break. Attempting to solve this problem by “being a little more hardline on our policies.”  Mentions stress as a key challenge for the girls and yet notes the contradiction between surveys of students complaining about high levels of stress along with demands for more AP courses and challenge.	High demand parents and students seeking challenge and maximum courseload – grapevine suggesting aggressive requests – need to be “hardline” suggesting haven’t always been – pressured by influential “clientele” for academics?  Quite a contrast to the underachieving and less prepared. How do the parent groups differ in high and lower achievement?

	I ask where the stress and pressure is coming from and Janet claims it is a combination of peer group and home [family/parents] but she thinks it is mostly from peer group. She jokes that girls share grades and compares girls behavior to guys who “grab a report and shove [hide] it.” Notes “constant cloud” over student’s heads for college admissions.	Peer pressure due to social norms? High communication levels typical of females makes competition visible? High stress environment? Again, which students?
125	I probe further into other ways to redirect student – drama, art, etc. and Janet claims that students “aggressively seek out those courses” and claims that taking too many extracurricular courses is part of the problem. Students take the core curriculum and several challenge levels within academics, sports, music, dance, art, etc.	“Challenge level” code for AP /honors  Given choice of academics or arts/sports it seems as if Janet presumes academics more important
134	Shifting topics again, I ask about “gender norms” and gendered behavior – is it discussed in faculty meetings. Janet says that not much discussion focuses on gender – concerns about freshmen who don’t have self-confidence in math and science need to have confidence developed – not necessarily skills, just belief in own ability. Janet notes her own educational/research interest in gender and how elementary schooling affects confidence gender gap in math and science.	[I find out later that she is working towards an Ed. D concentrating on gender]
153	Discuss faculty/staff interactions and communication in general – staff meetings by department, faculty advisory committees, community rituals such as eating lunch together. Talks about her efforts to encourage teachers to call the homes/parents of students who are struggling.	Lunch seems to be provided as part of the routine/compensation to encourage talk.
175	When I ask about student communication to teachers when there are collective concerns, Janet explains that no formal process exists but that “teachers are pretty receptive” and she doesn’t think the “girls are shy about expressing their thought and their concerns” She goes on to explain some problems with the Sophomore class this past year with student bullying and claims that the administration “spent quality time in the sophomore classes” and administered a survey. She says she got better and more information by talking with the students than through the survey and suggests girls may have feared writing about problems on paper or only provided “generic” responses	Bullying – counter “community” talk – need to explore relationships/cliques  Questions of power – how does paying for education alter power dynamics?
190	When I ask about the advice Janet would give to a girl or her parents who are considering applying to Provincial, Janet stresses that they should “trust the process” and “pay attention to what your daughter is doing”, ask questions and get involved in the community as a form of “keeping tabs” [surveillance] on daughter’s social life. She describes the best processes for contacting teachers – email rather than phone – since they are having some technical difficulties with phone lines since the remodel	Janet is aware that my daughter is in the application process. Dynamics of interview seem to be influenced by my potential role as “client”
205	Janet returns to issue of school policy – says “policies are there for a reason” and yet offers that she sometimes waives policies based on compelling reasons or individual circumstances. I was not clear what policies she was referring to so probed and she detailed concerns about personality issues/communication problems between students and teachers and requests for transfers to different courses. She noted that special treatment/policy waivers can “open a can of worms” and comments on some parents who go directly to the principal with concerns. She jokes that these parents who go directly to the top often “get kicked back” to her to handle and that she is tasked with the most challenging cases since others are resolved prior to being elevated to her.	Parents/politics/power/influence needs further development – interview parents? What is the procedure for addressing/resolving disputes?

210	End recorded portion of interview with thanks for her participation and help in arranging other interview and observations.	Interview has felt “staged” – seems less forthcoming than I had hoped
	After the recorder was turned off, we continued to sit in the Publication room and talk for about half an hour. Janet asked about my program of study and shared that she is attending an East Bay university seeking her Ed. D concentrating on gender equity. She attends classes all day on Fridays and Saturdays. She is curious in her research about the concept of high school receiving “damaged goods” in relation to girl’s confidence level in science and math from their elementary and middle school experience. She clearly believes in SS education for high school and seems to advocate SS for younger students in public schooling for some subject areas (science and math). We talk briefly about Title IX and the challenges to researching in a public school environment. She comments that her work offers a terrific case study for her education.	My sense that her responses were “programmed” somewhat explained by her current educational ambitions and awareness of gender equity literature/research  Interesting language choice - “Damaged goods” –strikes me as “production” oriented rather than humanistic
	Another topic/concern that Janet expressed after the tape was turned off is the ownership/power dynamics/influence of the Diocese. Since the school is owned by the Diocese, Janet claims that there is increasing pressure to admit students from feeder schools (private Catholic elementary and middle schools) despite their frequent academic shortcomings. The Diocese seeks 100% admittance of Catholic school applications – currently they accept about 95%. Janet notes the diversity of schools and preponderance of low SES in the inner-city schools. The previous discussion of remediation as an issue and admittance under “academic probation” seems to be linked to this increasing pressure. Janet claims that public schools are “kicking butt in math” over the K-8 Catholic schools in the region and that Provincial is predominantly a language arts school. She also explains that while the school has been a “college preparatory” institution, some of the students entering recently may not considered “college material”	Interesting area for development – when did this pressure increase? What has been the impact on the staff, other students, parents, and incoming students who are less well prepared? How is this shift being received? What conflicts have emerged? It is not clear whether the goal is to create “college material” or to offer other future routes for these “non-traditional” students? Further, calling the institution “college prep” and not focusing on math and science seems to lead to specific college paths – majors/disciplines that are gendered.

**Diagram of setting – Publication Room**

