BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

SENIOR PERSONNEL:

[NAME], Principal Investigator

Two months summer salary is requested for 2014. The PI will organize, coordinate and conduct interviews in New York City and surrounding school districts each summer period to discuss how conflicts surrounding teachers’ use of new media have unfolded. [NAME] is an experienced ethnographer and field researcher. She will commit 100% effort to this project throughout the summer period, which will include archival research as well as conducting a wide range of formal and informal interviews.

Course release for spring 2014. Fall 2013 the PI will be on sabbatical leave.

TRAVEL:

PI travel to Research Sites

PI travel is required for (1) conducting interviews and (2) conferences and workshops. When location is known, airfares are mid-priced fares from Expedia, 2012. Lodging, meals, & incidental expenses (LMIE) are based on US General Service Administration (GSA) rates. Costs are estimated in cases in which conference dates and locale are unknown.

Note: I am not presenting research at these conferences. The conferences are my research sites. These are the conferences in which school principals and education lawyers discuss new policies and ramifications of recent court decisions, including the legal implications for social media use.

**Year 1** - Total $11,120
(Flights are round-trip between New York City and conferences).

**New York City for ethnographic research.** Airfare, $480. Ground Transport: $200

**Education Law Association 2013** (November 13-16, 2013, Nov. 12 is a travel day) Westminster, Colorado. Registration, $525. Airfare, $490. Ground Transport: $200. Lodging + MIE @ $215/day x 5 days = $1075

**National School Board Association Conference**
Registration, $895. Airfare, $600. Ground Transport: $200. LM&IE: $297/day x 5 days = $1485

**NSBA Council of School Attorneys’ School Law Practice Seminar**
Registration, $633. Airfare, $600. Ground Transport: $200. LM&IE: $297/day x 5 days = $1485

**New York State School Boards Association Annual Convention**
Rochester, NY. Registration, $798. Airfare, $225. Ground Transport: $200; LM&IE: $147/day x 4 days = $588

**NSBA Policies and Resolutions Committee Meeting**
Washington D.C. Airfare, $350; Ground Transport: $200; LM&IE: $297/day x 3 days: $891
Supplies

The PI requests Atlas.ti software for processing transcripts and fieldnotes. Atlas.ti Corporation website lists it at $650 for 1 user (educational purposes). Indiana University has no licensing agreement with Atlas.ti.

I will require digital recorders to tape interviews. An Olympus VN702-PC - $60 on manufacturer’s website.

Total: $710
In March 2011, a first-grade teacher in the New York metropolitan area posted a status update on her Facebook profile: “I am not a teacher – I am a warden for future criminals!” She had selected privacy settings for her profile, and so this message was only visible to her 300 Facebook friends. Many teachers make similarly exasperated comments all the time, but the media one chooses to voice frustration matters a great deal. This teacher’s current principal was not a Facebook friend, but her former principal was. When her former boss saw what she had posted, he sent an email alerting her current principal that he had a problem on his hands. During the flurry of exchanges that followed, parents of the teacher’s students were also informed. Parental protests led to a media outcry, the teacher’s dismissal, and a subsequent lawsuit for wrongful dismissal. The judge decided that a “private” Facebook posting constituted public speech, and that the teacher’s words could indeed harm her students. The judge ruled in the school board’s favor; the teacher lost her case and her job. In some respects, this case is unusual because it was brought to court. Many similar cases are resolved through arbitration or informally with only principals, teachers, and school boards involved. In 2011, sixty-nine teachers were investigated for alleged misconduct involving new media in New York City, cases which were mostly resolved out of court. In order to understand the dynamics of these different kinds of cases, as well as the stakes involved, I am proposing this new ethnographic project on how ethical standards are created for teachers’ new media use through hiring and firing. Underlying this issue of standardization in the workplace are questions about how new media and contemporary capitalism affect the ways specific communities grapple with paradigmatic shifts in public and private communication.

Theoretical Background: Discussions surrounding hiring and firing often reveal people’s varied and conflicting ethical expectations for using new media. For anthropologists of media, this situation raises three key questions: First, how do different groups decide what counts as ethical use of new media? Second, how do legal decisions and school board policies align with and/or regulate people’s moral expectations? Third, when people craft ethical guidelines for new media in today’s workplace, how do these expectations become widespread across a profession?

This project focuses on teachers as workers in order to investigate how communicative rules surrounding a profession emerge and become prevalent under neoliberal capitalism. As historians of media have shown, under Fordist capitalism, widespread social norms for technological use were a hard-won achievement which resulted from sustained pedagogical efforts on the part of companies, schools, and government initiatives (Fischer 1992, Marvin 1988). For example, when Edison and Graham Bell debated how to answer the telephone (Edison suggested “hello”; Bell preferred “ahoy”), each company coached users on the preferred greeting (Gitelman 2006). This is a small example of larger scale efforts by businesses to create a standard etiquette for technological innovations. Similarly, linguistic anthropologists have interrogated how certain linguistic features come to be widely accepted as standard, while scholars such as Benedict Anderson has argued that this standardization occurs under a particular capitalist formation (Anderson 1983; Jaffe 1996; Kroskity 2005; Silverstein 2005).
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In a neoliberal environment, struggles over the use of Facebook and other social media sites differ in a key way. Unlike earlier forms of capitalism, the primary emphasis for neoliberal corporations is not to standardize social practices, but rather to regulate intellectual property and re-work privacy rights. While Fordist capitalism was concerned with developing homogenous, universal practices which could create standardized markets, neoliberal capitalism is far more concerned with treating knowledge as a commodity while fostering flexible labor and flexible design. As a consequence, current practices often emerge in an ad hoc fashion and are specific to the particular community of practice at a given workplace (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998). On-site training in education and many other fields now involves learning what new media practices are expected in a specific workplace. Yet professions often require widely accepted rules of communication. Without companies and government bureaucracies introducing standards of etiquette, how do communicative rules become established? To what extent do courts and the workplace play central roles in standardizing through employment practices, and in particular, hiring and firing? These questions have become urgent ones for teachers in the recession-era workplace as school boards, unions, and courts increasingly debate the role of social media in deciding whom to employ and whom to terminate.

Historians of media have been restricted to archival sources when tracing the establishment of social norms surrounding media use. Drawing on prior historical studies, this project will use ethnographic methods to analyze the different regulatory mechanisms designed to promote standardized new media practices. To examine these social dynamics, this project draws on the analytical frameworks developed by linguistic anthropologists and media scholars for understanding how a medium can structure communicative interaction. (Baym 2010, Bauman 2004, Goffman 1974, 1981; Hutchby 2000, Warner 2002). Such an approach will help create a dialogue between the growing science studies literature on how standards become widely established (Busch 2011; Star 1999; Star and Lampland, ed. 2010) and studies of new media and work (Garsten and Jacobsson 2004; Garsten and Wulff 2003, Gregg 2011).

Ethnographic Background: Teachers provide an illuminating case study of the development of workplace ethics. In the United States, teachers stand at the center of moral anxieties over how best to educate future citizens. Teachers in the United States have historically been expected to serve as moral role models, both in and out of the workplace (Perrillo 2004; Rousmaniere et. al., eds. 1997). In addition, they must interact with members of divergent communities of practice: children, parents, co-workers, consultants, and school administrators. They consciously choose both with whom to interact and also what media to use while trying to anticipate social expectations surrounding communication. Teachers have long developed techniques to avoid public scrutiny. Yet some techniques are now undermined by new media formats which enable teachers’ actions outside of the workplace to be more public than ever before. This project explores how teachers juggle all these complicated moral expectations and emerging communicative rules, and investigates the consequences of different strategies.

Potential Impact and Broader Significance: Asking about new media practices becomes a lens into understanding how neoliberal policies are affecting people’s daily
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experiences of employment. U. S. school boards and state legislatures are currently developing social media policies without sufficient data on how these technologies are used in teacher-student and teacher-parent relationships, or any employment situations. This research will offer ethnographic data that can guide U. S. school systems, courts, and state legislatures when making decisions about teachers’ media practices, and provide an overview of solutions nationwide. To disseminate the data to the public, I will create a one-day workshop suitable for school principals and teachers on interpretative practices and social media policies. In the final stages of my project, I will also design a website for school administrators, teachers, and union representatives that will compile social media policies in education institutions.

As my earlier research on new media demonstrates, many questions about the ethical use of new media practices are unresolved. An ethnographic study conducted now will offer valuable insights into how ethical interpretative practices emerge around new media when so much is in flux. This research will shed light on how moral domains become widespread through negotiations between different communities and legal and educational institutions during rapid changes in available technologies.

Methods and Work Plan: I plan to devote three years to this ethnographic research, with the final two years spent researching schools of education. I will be seeking additional support from the Spencer Foundation as well as NSF for the next phase. I am applying to the New Frontiers to support fieldwork in the New York metropolitan area alongside my sabbatical. I have IRB approval for this project, and for the past year, I have undertaken extensive preliminary preparation for this research. I have conducted initial interviews with teachers and education law professors locally in Indiana. I have analyzed the relevant legal cases involving teachers and digital media, and collected all available social media policies that school boards have developed across the country. To date, I have given two conference presentations on this material. In addition, I have established relevant contacts so that I will have access to various school communities in New York and New Jersey during 2013-2014. The New Frontiers fellowship would supplement my sabbatical leave, and provide research funding.

There are several compelling reasons to locate the first phase of the project, the year-long ethnographic study, in New York metropolitan area. As home to the largest school district in the country, New York City has approximately 1,700 schools, 75,000 teachers and 1,500 principals. Mayors of New York City, and Mayor Bloomberg in particular, are engaged in long-standing conflicts with the United Federation of Teachers. Partially because of New York City’s history of strong union support for teachers, many of the court cases involving teachers’ use of social media currently occur in New York City, although school districts in New Jersey also face a similar situation. Moreover, the NYC Department of Education instituted a social media policy in spring 2012. I will observe how a recent social media policy is being implemented and inquire into the ways in which school administrators and teachers negotiate these guidelines in daily practice.

I will record oral histories during 2013-2014 on how various elements of the social media policy came to be put in place. I will focus on the following rules: 1) teachers should not connect on Facebook with students and 2) teachers should maintain separate professional and personal new media presence (including separate email accounts and online profiles). I will also interview school administrators about how they decide to hire new teachers, and the role new media plays in the hiring process. In
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addition, I will conduct research on recorded cases in which either school boards or courts have had to adjudicate cases involving social media, schools such as: Murray Bergtraum High School, Camden School board, Hopatcong High School, Paterson School board, Brooklyn’s PS 203 and Bronx’s PS 70. When possible, I will conduct oral history interviews about specific events involving new media. I will also interview teachers, school administrators, and parents about their uses of new media and observe their media practices whenever possible. Finally, I will monitor ongoing developments in mainstream media, state and district policies, and legal cases as relevant. All of this data I collect will be analyzed within the context of the larger restructuring of teachers’ employment conditions in the current recession.

Timeline: The fieldwork will be conducted over three years, with ongoing organization, analysis and writing up of findings throughout the full three-year period.
• July 2013- August 2014: ethnographic research in New York City and New Jersey school districts – including interviews and observations in schools, school board meetings, legal education workshops and conferences
• September 2014 – May 2015: the research focus will shift to how schools of education are instructing prospective teachers to use new media. This period will include attending legal education conferences and workshops. Data organization, preliminary analysis, and preliminary writing up of findings will begin.
• June-July 2015: follow-up interviews conducted in New York City (2 months)
• August 2015 – May 2016: research on schools of education will continue, alongside conference attendance, data collection, organization and analysis. Write up of findings into book chapters and reports for dissemination will begin.
• June-July 2016: follow-up interviews conducted in New York City (2 months)

Other Potential Granting Sources: I intend to apply to the Spencer Foundation as well as the NSF Law and Society Program and the NSF Science, Technology and Society Program for the second phase of my research.

Goals: In the humanities, a core question is how one develops ethical responses to social quandaries. As historians of media have pointed out, media innovations often require communities to agree upon appropriate practices in response to the ways these technologies re-configure communication. This project is innovative in providing an ethnographic answer to this historical question of how communities of practice develop ethical expectations when digital technologies transform familiar distinctions, such as a division between public and private. In addition to the workshop and website already discussed, I plan to write a book accessible at all university levels as well as comprehensible to a general public. I will also write several academic articles addressed to scholars in anthropology, American studies, media studies, and science studies. The book should appeal to various constituencies in the U.S. educational system as well as to a public concerned with how new media is changing workplace conditions. I used the same publishing strategy with great success for earlier research on emergent moral domains surrounding new media practices.
Reviewer: 1
Rating: ____4 (of 4)

Strengths: ambitious, timely and important

Weaknesses:

Reviewer: 2
Rating: 4 (of 4)

Strengths: A very well conceived and written proposal to research a fascinating and very timely and relevant subject, or subjects, since his/her research covers labor relations, freedoms of speech, public education, and the ethics of new media uses (and abuses). This from a scholar with a very strong record of disseminating his/her research through publications. His/her external reviewer makes it clear that those in his/her field anticipate that this project will result in a third monograph. Also laudable is that ___ will also disseminate his/her findings through professional conferences as well as a website intended for the use of teachers and administrators. His/her budget and timetable appear reasonable, as New Frontiers will support an initial round of IRB-approved interviews in the New York City area and his/her attendance at four conferences in this field of legal education (although exactly why his/her attendance at these conferences is necessary for the research is not clearly explained).

Weaknesses: Among that only weaknesses of the proposal is the effort to tie his/her analysis of capitalist modes of production (Fordist vs. neo-liberal) to specific standards and ethics of communication. It is not entirely clear how this all relates to new media uses in public school systems. It might also be worthwhile to explain how cases related to public school teachers are either unique or may be applicable to others workplaces. Also, why New York City’s might be the largest school system in the US, some may also wonder just how unique or representative the case may be. Finally, some of the budgeting for the four conferences does not add up correctly. It is also unclear why he/she does not know when or where the conferences will be held, when it is clearly listed on their web page (http://annualconference.nsba.org/program).

Overall, this is a strong proposal but ranks more like a 3.4 compared to others I ranked at 4.

Reviewer: 3
Rating: ____4 (of 4)

Strengths: It deals with a current issue, which could lead to immediate application. Historians of media rely on archival material for analyses and conclusions; this proposal will use ethnographic methods to analyze how communities of practice develop ethical expectations that will help formulate rules and standards.

Weaknesses: A multi-year project...

Outcome: Committee discussion included lengthy consideration of the travel component of this project. While committee members noted that normally, a travel budget this extensive would not be funded, in this instance they found the argument for funding compelling, and recommended full funding. Final award amount: $32,829.