# Notes

## NEW LIGHT ON AN APPROACH TO DOCTORAL DISSERTATION NOMENCLATURE RELEVANT TO COMPUTER-ORIENTED RETRIEVAL SYSTEMS AND THEIR PRACTICAL EFFICIENCY: VERBIAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT

Xerox Corporation through its DATRIX II makes accessible some 430,000 dissertation titles for researchers. You might be shocked to learn that, despite the glut of Ph.D.s, half of whom graduating in the next decade or so (as things now stand—and they may get worse) will not be able to find employment in the specialties for which they have been trained, dissertations are coming out at the rate of more than 30,000 a year in the United States. A survey of friends who never completed (or never will complete) their doctoral dissertations might seem to indicate that this figure cannot be real, but it is.

At any rate, readers may be interested to know what is in fashion among dissertation writers when it comes to confecting those long-winded and thoroughly-academic titles for their doctoral research. In my day "Some Aspects of . . ." was in slight disfavor, presumably as sounding insufficiently inclusive. "New Light on . . ." was considered suitable only for certain kinds of literary articles. There was a salutary movement away from the dissertation title that impressed without informing, especially those with obscure (or semi-obscure) literary references which had to be followed by an explanation which lapsed into specifics. Examples: "The Frost on the Fir Tree: a Re-evaluation of the Poetry of T.S. Eliot," or "The Search for Love: the Non-Dramatic Poetry of T.S. Eliot," etc. This style has survived, especially among those who wish to baffle semi-literate deans who weigh publications for promotion, and among certain of the trickier and more erudite contributors to the learned journals. I have been guilty of it myself on occasion. I can claim, however, that (unlike some of my colleagues) I have never given an article a title that was obscure until the article had been read (or even after that).

But back to dissertation titles. The words that seem to crop up most often are, presumably in the Humanities: Ability (1,821 times), Academic (2,009), Achievement (3,959), Action (2,339) and Activity (2,660), Administration (2,477) and Administrative (1,335) and Administrators (626), American (7,240), Analysis (18,483—I suspect most of these are scientific), Application (3,622) and Applications (1,509), Approach (2,674), Area (2,327) and Areas (1,005), Art (1,489) and Arts (1,286), Attitude (1,442) and Attitudes (3,884), Biography (415), Black (931), British (1,329), Change (2,726) and Changes (3,132) and Changing (764), Character (637) and Characteristics (4,487) and Characterization (1,633) and Characters (500), Children (6,509), College (6,885) and Colleges (2,535), Comparative (4,677) and Comparison (4,422), Concept (3,048) and Concepts (1,659), Contemporary (1,117), Control (4,758) and Controlled (518), Counseling (1,456), Critical (4,181) and Criticism (1,001) and Critique (515), Cultural (1,161) and Culture (1,250), Current (1,098), Curriculum (1,957) Decision (1,606), Design (2,010—mostly scientific or related to plans, not objects), Development (12,526) and Developmental (910), Disadvantaged (492—a euphemism of the 60s and later), Discrimination (1,165—often in a pejorative sense), Drama (930), Ecological (686) and Ecology (978), Educable (404) and Education (11,862) and Educational (3,803), Effectiveness (2,311) and Efficiency (860), Elementary (4,616), English (3,601), Environment (1,053) and Environmental (1,102), Evaluation (5,467) and Examination (1,329), Factor (1,507) and Factors (8,341), Families (451) and Family (1,479), Federal (1,279), Feedback (721—largely in the fad sense which dates from the early 70s), Fiction (1,055), Field (2,715, including the jargon of "in the field" of practical application) and Fields (1,013, including scientific meanings), Foreign (1,660), Form (1,167) and Formal (433) and Formation (2,828), French (2,094), Freshman (420) and Freshmen (654), General (2,312) and Generalization (472) and Generalized (696), Government (1,405), Grade (3,325) and Grades (941), Growth (4,873), Guidance (1,018), Historical

(1,885) and History (5,485), Human (2,311—many scientific items), Image (707) and Imagery (455), Impact (1,599—often jargon for "influence"), Improvement (875), Influence (5,209) and Influenced (470) and Influences (599) and Influencing (1,096), Information (1,582), Inquiry (724), Inservice (520—jargon of educationalists), Instruction (1,957) and Instructional (1,237), Intellectual (610), Intelligence (930), Interaction (2,618) and Interactions (1,563, both in the soft as well as the hard sciences), Interpersonal (830, another fad word), Interpretation (1,245), Involved (562, often in the jargon sense of "concerned"), Issues (432), Jewish (433), Knowledge (1,035), Language (1,876), Latin (731, more often related to the so-called "Hispanic" than the classical), Leadership (990), Learning (4,118), Level (2,426) and Levels (1,707—often with "Kindergarten" 435 or some such education adjective), Life (3,293—"life style" is just beginning to appear), Linguistic (400), Literary (1,519) and Literature (1,893), Local (1,450), Major (1,001), Male (1,110), Man (1,117—mostly scientific studies), Management (1,766), Meaning (757), Measure (627) and Measured (612) and Measurement (2,427) and Measurements (1,497) and Measures (950), Media (1215), Medieval (422), Men (634) and Women (1,441—surprise!), Mental (1,205) and Mentally (970), Method (3,840) and Methodology (400) and Methods (3,563), Model (3,855) and Models (1,351, often in such cases as "Model School," etc.), Modern (1,496), Movement (1,819) and Movements (510), Music (2,056) and Musical (47), National (1,692) and Nations (498), Negative (920), Negro (1,410—still far outnumbering "Black"), New (8,290), Nonlinear (1,358, given jargon currency by Timothy Leary in the 60s), Novel (927) and Novels (1,336), Objectives (580), Occupational (957), Optimal (1,024) and Optimization (497, a word?) and Optimum (533, but Best does not score 400 and Ideal gets only 435), Organization (2,450) and Organizational (965) and Organizations (538), Orientation (908, a fad word the Army seems to have originated), Origin (1,056) and Original (552) and Origins (562), Parameter (430) and Parameters (821, creeping out of Mathematics into social sciences, etc.), Pattern (810) and Patterns (2,709), Performance (4,237), Personality (2,988), Phase (1969, and not always in the physical sense), Phenomena (791), Philosophical (547) and Philosophy (2,004), Planning (1,600), Plays (882), Poems (408) and Poetry (1,818), Polarization (573, a scientific term used loosely in politics, etc.), Policy (2,739) and Political (3,458) and Politics (1817), Potential (1,502) and Potentials (486), Practice (1,252) and Practices (2,218), Problem (3,356) and Problems (4,451), Procedure (603) and Procedures (1,348), Production (3,066), Program (5,463, often in the computer sense) and Programming (785) and Programs (3,200), Protestant (486, but Catholic does not reach 400, nor does Jew—avoided wherever Jewish can be used), Public (6,975), Pupil (897) and Pupils (1,191) Radical (583) and Radicals (443, some of which are mathematical), Reading (2,883), Relation (4,736) and Relations (3,023) and Relationship (6,868) and Relationships (3,527), Religion (738) and Religious (1,687), Research (1,289), Resource (490) and Resources (514, often in the work of these capable of describing teachers as "resource personnel"), Retarded (1,143), Rhetorical (431), Roman (608), School (15,635) and Schools (6,871), Secondary (4,400, most often with "schools," while "Primary" scored only 1,061), Service (1,589) and Services (1,065), Shakespeare (490), Skills (825, often from people who use this word for the 3 Rs), Social (7,624) and Society (877) and combinations with Socio- (746) and Sociological (515), Sources (1,092), Spanish (1,344, running behind German 1,742 but far outdistancing Italy and Italian, which did not score 400), Special (3,782, often in euphemisms such as "Special Education"), Speech (1,218), State (7,280, sometimes in its scientific sense) and States (7,143), Statistical (1,245), Status (2,072, a status word these days), Student (3,728) and Students (5,863, outdistancing Pupils, etc.), Studies (20,101) and Study (51,662, obviously hinting at the formula: "A Study of . . ."), Style (963), Superintendents (412, presumably the administrative rather than the janitorial staff, in most cases), Survey (1,911), System (6,318) and Systematic (503) and Systems (6,520), Teacher (4,214) and Teachers (6,014) and Teaching (4,608), Test (2,913) and Testing (665) and Tests (1,280), Text (1,940), Theatre (684), Theological (471) and Theology (734, the number of such items is surprising until one realizes how many and comparatively how easily gotten the D.D.s are), Theoretical (1,567) and Theories (1,028) and

Theory (8,495), Training (3,099), Translation (684), Trends (646), Undergraduate (437), Universities (906) and University (3,589), Urban (1,506, while Rural was only 1,084), Validation (435) and Validity (474), Value (1,875) and Values (1,242), Vocabulary (449), Vocational (1,865), Washington (780, including both the person and the place), Word (584), Works (1,682), Writings (650), Young (1,079) and Youth (575) (against Adult 1,376 and Age 1,682).

The scientific studies indicate that there were more studies of rats (Rat 2,972 and Rats 1,315) than other animals (except Man), that there was a great interest in measurement and variables and Properties (6,392) and Flow (3,266) and such; that Experiment (656) and Experimental (5,609) and Experiments (716) naturally ranked high; and that Stochastic (638) and Vitro (918) ranked surprisingly high as against expectables such as Sex (1,112) and Role (5,708).

Since the doctorate was first awarded (University of Bologna, Civil Law, end of the Twelfth Century) dissertations, at first not required in the modern sense, have proliferated. In the century or so that doctorates have been granted in the United States, dating more or less from the Teutonization of American education from the Kindergarten on up, the fields of study have multiplied and in this day of Hamburger U. and other odd bastions of so-called "higher education" the dissertations have become odder as well as more numerous.

A study of the titles of dissertations will probably reveal that far too many are related to Ed.D. degrees. Certain key words from the jargon of the silliest education courses (which I once defined as "starting with nothing and spending all their time reviewing") turn up with discouraging frequency, as the figures above amply demonstrate. So far the dumbest doctoral dissertation which I personally have encountered—it is by no means atypical—deals with the selection of furniture for certain elementary education purposes in classrooms on Long Island. To save the perpetrator from further disgrace than the addition of Ed.D. to her name, I shall not give the dissertation title exactly.

There must be some intelligent dissertations in (let us say) elementary education and urban sociology. I should be pleased to hear of them from interested readers. Most, however, clearly specialize, as the key words in their dissertation titles reveal, in the two areas that most interest the Ford Foundation (the magic words are "urban" and "disadvantaged") and content themselves with measurements and methodology. A typical one would echo in its title the psuedo-scientific tone of its elaborate and unnecessary charts and inflate its language as it has inflated its findings.

In linguistics and literature, my own special interests, I regret to say that key words too often indicate that attention has been focussed on tasks formerly consigned to Germans and nuns and now performed by computers: counting up images, discovering parallel passages to be used as the shaky basis of source and attribution studies, and performing stylistic analyses with machinery, not taste and (now a bad word) discrimination. Quantifying is all.

The examination of the key words above will reveal a desire to make Humanities studies appear more scientific by the use of certain prestigious words, often faddish and fuzzy ones (Interrelationships, Parameters, Factors, and so on). Patterns of popularity will emerge as fads come and go ("Anti-poverty" is a word of recent charisma with a mystique that is unique) and there is a clear tendency of dissertations to become less speculative and more mechanical—counting things without explaining why this is significant (meaningful) or what it (hopefully) shows, for instance, at this point in time now. Amateur psychologizing is also "in."

Apart from the fact that onomastics does not rank very high among topics for doctoral study—Tobacco (456) and Attitudes (3,884) and Attitude (1,442) are there, but Onomastics or Names are not—what can the student of surnames, place-names, etc., learn from this DATRIX II material? For one thing, those interested in names will learn that the name of a dissertation, if it is to be "retrieved" in this way by computer, ought to be chosen with far more care than is expended now. If key words are not chosen with care, the researcher of the future will be inundated with data which is totally irrelevant to his inquiry. The scientist who wants Oxidation (1,610) or Oxide (1,420) or Oxides (417) or even Oxygen (1,748) will surely be in a better position to use this retrieval system than the poor student who is looking for the gem of purest ray serene buried in the dark unfathomed

caves labeled "Meaningful Inter-Relationships in Special Education Assessment Situations Relevant to Inner-City Disadvantaged Recipients. . . ."

Every director of a doctoral dissertation ought to see to it that the title of the work finally approved concretely, concisely, and unmistakably makes clear the contents and (shall we say?) approach of the study it heads. Anything else is Non (4,238) Productive.

With names as with everything else, the rule for computers is: Garbage In, Garbage Out.

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## ADDENDUM: CHASING A GHOST

Since working out the manner in which Shakespeare probably formulated the name of Othello,* I found myself up against a very curious problem. G.L. Kittredge, in his introduction to his edition of the play, referred to an article entitled "A Byzantine Source of Shakespeare's *Othello*" by A.H. Krappe as particularly "interesting" (p. viii). It appeared in *Modern Language Notes*, vol. 39 (1924). Krappe's note, in turn, was found to contain a footnote that stated that "neither the Italian original nor the French translation mention the names *Othello* and *Iago*; but it has been pointed out that the poet took those from a contemporary work entitled *God's revenge against Adultery*" (p. 156). Careful research, however, convinced me that this work was most probably a ghost. It is not mentioned in the *Short-Title Catalogue* or in any of the standard bibliographies of the period, nor is there an entry for it in The Folger Library Catalog. Watt's *Bibliotheca Britannica* mentions only one work under the subject of "God" that might possibly be related: *A Wonderful Judgment of God upon Two Adulterers* . . . (1583), but the book is by a minister with whose work Shakespeare would hardly have been acquainted. Nonetheless, though none of the standard editions of *Othello* (the New Arden, New Cambridge, London, Riverside) cite the work mentioned by Krappe, it must have achieved a certain recognition. Francis Griffin Stokes, in *A Dictionary of the Characters and Proper Names in the Works of Shakespeare* (New York, 1949), states, under "Othello": "With regard to the origin of the name nothing definite is known. Its occurrence in nearly contemporary writings may be due to the play" (pp. 240-1). Was Stokes thinking of *God's revenge*? F.N. Lees, in his note on "Othello's Name," which was written 12 years later, affirms, however, that E.K. Chambers claimed in 1930 that "it is not known where [the name] Othello came from." Since "Ottoman" (or "Othoman") is mentioned in the play, moreover (Act I, scene iii), Lees' view that "Othello" somehow derives from "Othoman" has a factual basis.

It occurred to me that *God's revenge* might relate to John Reynolds' *Triumphs of God's Revenge against Murther and Adultery* (1622), but the dates did not fit. Finally, I chanced to find a reference which linked the work cited by Krappe to Reynolds and suggested that the scholar who first referred to the work was the noted editor of Shakespeare, Steevens, who stated: "It is highly probable that our author met with the name of Othello in some tale that has escaped our researches; as I likewise find it in God's Revenge against Adultery, standing in one of his Arguments as follows: She marries Othello, an old German soldier. This History, the eighth, is professed to be an Italian one. Here also occurs the name of Iago."

Othello the name of an old German soldier! Though the connotation of "-hell-" sounds better in

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* "Lear's Learned Name," *Names*, 22:4 (December, 1974), 184, n. 8.

German than it does in English (*hell* being German for "bright"), Steevens' contribution is suspect. In examining an early edition of Reynolds' work, I found no reference to either Othello or Iago in the eighth history he recounts or indeed in any part of the book. And my research has been preempted by a former student of Brandl's who examined all the editions of Reynolds' work up to 1708 and found no such references. Her industriousness is cited in Eduard Engle's note "Zur Urgeschichte des Othello," in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*, Vol. 35 (1899), pp. 271-3 (listed in the S.A. Tannenbaum bibliography on *Othello*). Engel concludes that Steevens' allusion is fraudulent: "Diese Angabe von Steevens ist seitdem von allen Herausgebern und Erklärern des Othello nachgeschrieben worden. Sie ist zweifellos ein Schwindel, eine der nicht seltenen bewussten Irreführüngen, die Steevens sich zu schulden kommen lässt." (P. 272) The odd thing is that such a fraud was overlooked by Kittredge, Krappe, and Stokes. Even more fraudulent is the notable fact that Krappe insists that Shakespeare "took" the names of Othello and Iago from *God's revenge*, whereas Steevens' statement does not imply that at all: it simply claims that the work may be roughly contemporary with *Othello*, not that it was published previously, as Reynolds' work certainly was not. Perhaps the best conclusion is a diverting one. When I confronted a Shakespearean at Cornell University with the problem of locating a work called *God's revenge against Adultery*, which was surely not a play since it was not mentioned by W.W. Greg, he responded with appropriate double-entendre: "It certainly sounds ghostly!"

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