I Am Better Than Them With(out) Blackboard:
Technology (Dis)Adoption as Identity Regulation By University Faculty

By

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Abstract

Technology adoptions are often assumed to be explainable mostly by a technology’s characteristics, a potential adopter’s exposure to it, and his/her external communication with people about the technology. However, adopted technologies also allow users to construct their identities at work. These technologies enable users to express what they know, what they value, how they work, and their work capability in relations to others. Analysis of 13 in-depth interviews finds that faculty (dis)adoption of Blackboard is a form of identity regulation. Faculty discursively (re)construct the ‘self’ as good and better than the ‘others.’ The ‘others’ are discursively constructed as unmotivated, less capable, and less intelligent than the ‘self.’ By (dis)adopting Blackboard in their teaching, faculty discursively reveal how they are better than other technology (non)users.

Keywords: technology adoption, identity regulation, organizational communication, and Blackboard.
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Blackboard is an easy-to-use online course delivery and management system. Using Blackboard's graphical point-and-click interface, instructors can incorporate learning materials from word processing, audio & video, spread sheets, and presentation files without ever learning HTML.

-- The description of Blackboard taken from the Instructional Technology Services website at ABC University (December 1, 2006)

This description on the Instructional Technology Services website at ABC University welcomes its faculty to Blackboard, an online course management system that support online class announcements, mass email distributions, online threaded discussions, virtual interactive chats, class materials storage, student grades report, distributed online testing, and many other instructional related tasks. Online course management systems are often assumed to be adopted to facilitate information dissemination and communication exchange between faculty and students in order to improve teaching and learning outcomes. However, in addition to supporting faculty’s teaching, the adoption of online course management systems allows faculty to express what they know, what they value, how they work, and their technological and teaching capability in relations to others.

Research looking at information and communication technologies (ICTs) in higher education has found that institutional adoptions of university-wide online course management systems, such as Blackboard and WebCT, has increased dramatically across the U.S. and the world (Pittinsky, 2003). Financial investments in such systems rose from $3.3 billion in 2001 (Olsen, 2001), to $4.8 billion in 2003 (Cappelli, 2003) and $7.0 billion in 2006 (Market Data Retrieval, 2007). Although several barriers still exist (Beggs, 2000; Butler & Sellbon, 2002), the availability of computers in faculty offices and campus classrooms, wired/ wireless infrastructure and broadband internet access on campus, along with support and workshops by instructional technology service enable faculty to adopt and implement ICTs in their teaching. With the increased availability of ICTs, institutional support, and broader experience with them, it is not surprising to find that faculty are adopting ICTs and bringing their teaching online to meet the expectations of the their students, colleagues, and administrators.
Online course management systems blur the boundaries between personal websites and centralized intranets. A personal website requires specialized skills in designing, coding, programming, and transferring HTML files to an online server in order to display a public website. However, it allows owners to have full control over the infrastructure, design, and content of their sites for the consumption of a public. On the other hand, a centralized intranet only requires basic skills of pointing and clicking in order to operate and put content in an existing online platform. However, it gives users no control over the fundamental infrastructure of the site, limited control over the design of the site and formats of the content, and full control over the content of the site with some degree of limitation for the consumption of the tuition fee paying public we call students.

Although online course management systems bring many faculty online, they make faculty conform to the technological standards of a centralized platform, thus putting constraints on faculty’s creativity and personal expression by making every course site relatively alike. At most institutions of higher education, there are little to no standardized and centralized mechanisms that structure how faculty work on a daily basis. Teaching evaluation is a standardized and centralized mechanism that occurs only once and at the end of each semester. In other words, a centralized online course management system could be framed as a form of standardization by a university over its faculty. Drawing on the case of Blackboard online course management system as an exemplar, this paper examines the ways in which (dis)adoption of a centralized online course management system can facilitate organizational resistance/conforming through faculty’s discursive identity regulation. The next section will build a theoretical framework for the analysis. Narratives drawn from interviews with faculty conducted at the university in this study will then be drawn on to demonstrate how identity regulation and organizational resistance/conforming function at this particular institution of higher education in America.

**Literature Review**

**Identity Regulation as Organizational Resistance/Conforming**

The argument of identity regulation as organizational resistance and conforming was first advanced by Alvesson and Willmott (2002) in their seminal monograph *Identity Regulation as Organizational Control: Producing The Appropriate Individual*. They propose a discursive,
reflexive, and processual model of organizational communication based on three key components: identity regulation, identity work, and self-identity. First, identity regulation is discursive in nature. They define identity regulation as “the more or less intentional effects of social practices upon processes of identity construction and reconstruction” (p. 625). This may include aspects such as professional affiliation, coherence, distinctiveness, direction, social values, and self-awareness. Second, identity work is interpretive. They explain that “people are continuously engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (p. 626). Third, self-identity is narrative. Borrowed from Giddens (1991), they argue that self-identity is a reflexively organized narrative, “derived from participation in competing discourses and various experiences, that is productive of a degree of existential continuity and security” (pp. 625-626). “It is the self as reflexively understood by the person… self-identity is continuity (across time and space) as interpreted reflexively by the agent” (Giddens, 1991, p. 53, as cited in Alvesson and Willmott, 2002).

In their model, Alvesson and Willmott (2002) emphasize the concept of identity regulation as a topic of theoretical and research significance. They further expand on identity regulation as “discursive practices concerned with identity definition that condition processes of identity formation and transformation” (p. 627). They argued that identity is a key dimension of, and identity regulation is an important modality in, organizational resistance and conforming. They also identify nine ways identity is influenced, regulated, and changed (i.e. modes of regulations) within work organizations (pp. 629-632): (1) defining the person directly, (2) defining a person by defining others, (3) providing a specific vocabulary of motives, (4) explicating morals and values, (5) knowledge and skills, (6) groups categorization and affiliation, (7) hierarchical location, (8) establishing and clarifying a distinct set of rules of the game, and (9) defining the context. Collectively, these nine modes of regulations frame (a) the employee [1 & 2], (b) action orientations [3, 4, & 5], (c) social relations [6 & 7], the scene [8 & 9]. These nine modes are important because they are useful for identifying organizational communication in actions through identity regulation. The process of identity regulation reveals the desire to engage in democratic approach to social organizing, where people have a voice and choice in how they live their lives.
Technology Adoption

Researchers and practitioners have been studying the issue of technology adoption for several decades and with different theoretical models. Three of the leading theories to explain and predict technology adoption include the Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 2003), the Technology Acceptance Model (Bagozzi et al., 1992; Davis et al., 1989), and the Social Information Processing Model (Fulk, Schmitz, & Steinfield, 1990; Fulk, Steinfield, Schmitz, & Power, 1987). Diffusion theory argues that technology adoption can be explained by five factors: the relative advantage of a technology over other options, its relative compatibility with adopters’ existing habits and work environment, the complexity of the technology, the opportunities for triability before adoption, and the observability of the technology in a social system. The acceptance model argues that a technology’s usefulness perceived by a potential adopter and the ease of operation explain adoption decisions. The social model maintains that communication with people, such as colleagues and friends, in a potential adopter’s social environment influence adoption decisions. These perspectives assume that technology adoption is influenced by the characteristics of the technology (i.e. advantageous, compatibility, complexity/ease, and usefulness), a potential adopter’s exposure to the technology (i.e. triability and observability), and an adopter’s external social environment (i.e. communication with people). Collectively, these theories suggest that adopters have full autonomy in making adoption decisions, with influence from the external social environment.

Workplace technologies and centralized ICT systems implemented to facilitate work in large organizations are usually choices beyond the realm of decision-making by most organizational members. However, once implemented, workplace technologies and centralized ICT systems may become a silent form of standardization. They determine how members do work. Members’ use (and non-use) of a workplace technology and centralized ICT system becomes a unique case for technology adoption research.

Faculty at a university cannot be coerced into using a certain type of ICT or a centralized ICT system in their teaching. For example, a faculty can choose to post a course syllabus on his/her own website for students (and the world) to download, or s/he can post it on the official online course management system at ABC University. Another faculty can choose to send an email to students through the online course management system, or s/he can set up a listserv to facilitate communication among class members. Each alternative choice which departs from the
centralized platform contributes to the faculty’s identity construction and the decision to use an alternative option is a form of organizational resistance.

Although Individual members do not have a choice in organizational adoption decision at the macro-organizational level, they do have a choice in their use or non-use at the micro-individual level. This makes the micro-individual use or non-use a case for investigating organizational conforming and resistance. As discussed earlier, identity is a key dimension of, and identity regulation is an important modality in, organizational resistance and conforming. By bringing the theoretical construct of technology adoption and the research framework of identity regulation on “the employee," an opportunity for research emerged in the case of Blackboard. In order to examine the potential for technical standardization and organizational resistance in the (dis)adoption of these centralized technological platforms, I turn my attention to Blackboard with two research questions:

- **RQ1:** How do faculty explain their (dis)adoption of a centralized online course management system such as Blackboard to conduct their teaching?
- **RQ2:** How do faculty explain their colleagues (dis/non)adoption of a centralized online course management system such as Blackboard to conduct their teaching?

### Method

#### Case Description

Blackboard is a particularly appropriate example of a centralized online course management system because it has a clear institutional focus, it is the biggest and most adopted system of its kind in the U. S., and it is the commercial system with the most extensive history to date. Founded in 1997 in Washington D. C. with the mission to “enable educational innovations everywhere by connecting people and technology,” Blackboard’s vision is “to improve the educational experience with Internet-enabled technology that connects students, faculty, researchers and the community in a growing network of education environments dedicated to better communication, commerce, collaboration and content” (according to Blackboard.com). Today, Blackboard’s clients come from primary and secondary schools, higher education, corporation and government markets as well as textbook publishers and student-focused merchants. In a 2004 interview, Matt Pittinsky, Blackboard’s chairman predicted, “In the next 10
years online teaching and learning will be part of the DNA of educational institutions" (Yang, 2004).

Blackboard’s expansion in the past few years have been aggressive. In 2002, Blackboard acquired a competitor, Prometheus (Carnevale, 2005, October 21). In 2003, the California State University (CSU) system, the largest university system in America, signed a contract with Blackboard to make its learning and portal system the standard platform for the 414,000-plus students and 46,000 faculty and staff in the CSU system (Largest U. S. University Systems Signs Deal, 2003). In 2004, Blackboard had over 2,000 customers in more than 50 countries (Lynn, 2004). On June 18, 2004, Blackboard (BBBB) became a publicly traded company and entered the market at $14 a share, then surged to $23.38 and finally closed the day at $20.01, greatly surpassing expectations for an education-technology stock. With 5.5 million offered shares, representing 21.5% of the company, Blackboard raked in $77 million (Lynn, 2004). In 2005, with a $178 million cash deal, Blackboard Inc. purchased WebCT Inc. and formed the largest software vendors in the American higher education industry (Roach, 2006). According to McLester, Poftak, and Smith (2006), the merger gave the two course management system providers a 75 percent market share. The combined customer base was estimated to be more than 3,700 higher education, K-12, government, corporate and for-profit academic institutions (Roach, 2006). The merger was completed in March 2006. Blackboard absorbed WebCT's 1,480 institutional customers, 274 employees, and about $26 million in cash (Borja, 2005). The combined company is now a dominant force in the higher-education market (Carnevale & Read, 2006).

The University (hereafter referred to as ABC University in the rest of the paper) involved in this study is one of the 19 campuses in the California State University System, Blackboard’s biggest client to date. ABC University is located in a metropolitan city, and it serves approximately 35,000 students. ABC University historically has a strong teaching mission, although it has recently developed a research reputation for the institution. Blackboard came to this campus in Fall 1999. There were only six faculty members in the pilot program in Fall 1999. The number increased sharply to 153 in Spring of 2000. The number of Blackboard faculty continued to increase to 232 in Fall of 2000, 513 in Fall of 2001, 864 in Fall of 2002, 1,459 in Fall of 2003, 2,618 in Fall of 2004, 3,502 in Fall of 2005, and 4,080 in Fall of 2006. Today, most faculty at ABC University use Blackboard in their teaching.
Data Collection

The interview data come from Part II of a three-part multi-method project to study the diffusion of Blackboard at ABC University. Before embarking on data collection, I received approval from the institutional review board at ABC University. Part I was an online survey to determine predictors of earlier adoption time, and Part III was a communication network analysis to identify the opinion leaders who drove Blackboard early diffusion at ABC University. On November 3, 2002, a discussion regarding recruitment was initiated with the Blackboard coordinator. After the invitation email draft had been approved by the director of Instructional Technology Services (ITS), on November 11, 2002 at 1:24 PM, the Blackboard coordinator sent out an invitation e-mail to the all the Blackboard faculty on the e-mail distribution list in Fall 2002 semester. The invitation email contained a web link to the consent form and online survey questionnaire. The consent form and questionnaire were posted under my website under ABC University server.

Interested and willing faculty participants clicked on a link on the online consent form, which took them to the survey questionnaire [Part I of the Blackboard project]. After completing the survey questionnaire, participants clicked the SUBMIT button at the end of the questionnaire, and were taken to an invitation for a face-to-face interview [Part II of the Blackboard project, which this paper is based on], which participants were able to decline or accept by clicking one of two different buttons. Those who accepted the invitation for a face-to-face interview then entered their names and contact information before clicking the second SUBMIT button. Either decision, participants who completed the online survey were taken to the “Thank You” page, which indicated the conclusion of their participation in Part I.

Interview participation was completely voluntary, and no monetary incentive was provided during the recruitment and interview process for Part II of the project. 44 faculty submitted contact information and indicated interest for an interview. However, only 35 interviews were completed in Fall of 2002. Limited time availability towards the end of the semester among the participants did not allow the completion of the remaining nine faculty interviews. Although a list of questions was prepared for the interview (see Appendix A), I employed a semi-structure style during the interviewing process. Certain participants strayed from the interview questions, but they took the interviews to interesting places where they had
other insights to share. Instead of bringing participants back to the interview questions, I simply followed their lead. All the interviews were conducted between November 14, 2002 and December 18, 2002. Interviews lasted between 35 minutes to 60 minutes per session, resulting in about 26 hours of interview recorded on audiotapes. In order to protect the identities of the participants, the names of the participants are their own self-assigned nicknames. The professional titles and the academic affiliations with different colleges remain factual.

Using the annual adoption rates obtained from the Instructional Technology Services at ABC University mentioned earlier, a diffusion “S” curve (in blue) is plotted in Figure 1 below. According to Rogers (2003), the point of inflection (in red) on a diffusion “S” curve indicates where an innovation has achieved critical mass in the diffusion process. At this point, the innovation takes off on its own, and it will be difficult to stop the diffusion of the technology in the social system. Based on Figure 1, the interviews were conducted (in green) right before Blackboard reached the point of inflection in the diffusion process at ABC University. This means the narratives in this study represent the experience of faculty before Blackboard took off and became the centralized online platform in practice for teaching at ABC University. This is an important point in the diffusion process because right before the point of inflection and critical mass, there was a wide range of faculty with varying degrees of experience with Blackboard. Faculty had the opportunity to use Blackboard (dis)adoption for identity regulation as a form of organizational resistance or conforming.

![Figure 1: The Diffusion “S” Curve of Blackboard.](image-url)
Data Analysis

I take a narrative perspective (Browning, 1992) to analyze the data. Narratives and politics are closely related (Mumby, 1993). Narratives at work and language in use reveal much about power and control (Clegg, 1993). Organizational narratives depart values and keep members in obedience (Witten, 1993). Therefore, data analysis looks specifically for power, values, resistance, and conforming. Data analysis took place throughout the data collection process. Then all 35 interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber in Spring of 2003. Then the data analysis process was interrupted as I was finishing up the quantitative analysis for my master’s thesis [Part I of the Blackboard project]. I then put the project on hold as I pursued a second master’s degree in a different discipline.

In Fall 2006 I started my doctoral studies in communication studies at a different university. In Fall 2007, I picked up the project again. During the second round of data analysis, I listened to all 35 interviews on audiotape twice while following the transcripts closely on the computer screen. I stopped and took notes along the process, looking specifically for their Blackboard (dis)adoption narratives, and how they talked about their colleagues’ decisions.

Initially, I was interested in how faculty implemented Blackboard in their teaching. Therefore, majority of my participants talked about their implementation process. Occasionally, some participants strayed from the initial focus and talked about his/ her identity and the identities of their colleagues as Blackboard (non)users. After careful listening, narratives discursively (re)construct identities emerged from 13 participants (6 males and 7 females). I then focused the analysis based on these 13 participants in order to capture the discursive process of identity regulation in their narratives.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Although it is not a perfect categorization of faculty at ABC University right before the point of inflection in Blackboard diffusion, they can be broadly defined by three dimensions: adoption status (i.e. dis-adopters, adopters, and non-adopters), satisfaction (i.e. complaining and happy), and self-perceived technology savvyness/ comfort level (i.e. high/ comfortable and low/ getting comfortable). These dimensions help describe participants in the study. This section presents an analysis of data based on how complaining (dis)adopters and satisfied adopters discursively construct and reconstruct themselves as well as each other and non-adopters. In
these (re)constructions, the self is often technologically more savvy than one (or both) of the other groups, and the decision to (dis)adopt Blackboard by the self is more efficient and more powerful than the decisions made by others. In addition, the technology chosen is often regarded as ‘cooler’ and safer, thus making the ‘self’ ‘better than the ‘others.’ The analysis begins with the first mode of identity regulation by Alvesson and Willmont (2002) by looking at how faculty discursively construct and reconstruct themselves as complaining (dis)adopters and satisfied adopters of Blackboard.

Let’s Talk About Me!

Complaining (Dis)adopters

The first group of participants are described as (dis)adopters with parentheses qualifying the prefix of ‘dis.’ These faculty are framed as (dis)adopters instead of dis-adopters because some have not officially dis-adopted Blackboard at the point of data collection. Although some have confirmed their dis-adoptions, others use Blackboard not by choice, but by various situational factors, such as department handing them a course previously built on and designed around Blackboard. Some indicate in their narratives that they would dis-adopt Blackboard if given an explicit choice. The binding characteristic of this group of faculty is their complaints about Blackboard being a clunky technology with many technical problems. This characteristic is used to separate the first group of complaining faculty from the second group of happy Blackboard adopters.

Research Question 1 asks: How do faculty explain their (dis)adoption of a centralized online course management system such as Blackboard to conduct their teaching? At the most basic level, centralized online systems help with information dissemination and communication exchanges among faculty and their students. In the case of ABC University, some faculty already have experience setting up their own websites for teaching prior to Blackboard’s introduction to campus. These faculty obviously possess the necessary skills to bring their teaching online independently. When they encounter Blackboard as a campus-wide platform and centralized system, and experimented with it, their (dis)adoption highlights an important characteristic of online course management systems. These standard platforms blur the distinction between faculty who can build their own websites for teaching and the faculty who need a point-and-click platform such as Blackboard in order to have an online component in their teaching. In the current technology adoption research, adopters are thought of as simple users of a technology.
Yet after (dis)adoption of Blackboard, faculty can maintain a parallel web presence by building their own websites.

“I am a Technology Wizard! Blackboard is Just Not Good Enough for Me!”

Many faculty who complain about Blackboard at ABC University have early experience working with computers and building websites. Due to their experience with computer and internet technologies, they generally perceive themselves as highly technologically savvy. They discursively construct themselves as technology wizards with a long history with computer and internet technologies. The first example of this group of faculty is Tex, Professor of Accounting. ABC University launches an upgraded version of Blackboard at the point of interview, and he complains about the technical problems with the new version that makes him want to disadopt Blackboard. During the interview, he emphasizes his history with technology in the following narrative:

In fact I was going back… Bob was probably the first [Blackboard] user on campus and I was probably second or third… Remember our department, for example, when I was the department head here…we had the first computer on campus, the first PC, OK? People used to take tours through our office to come look at it… We definitely had the first computer on campus, OK? And I consider myself an extreme power user…

In this narrative, Tex cites his history with computer and internet technologies in order to construct the technologically savvy self. The beginning reference to his position as the former head of his department establishes his social and political position in his department and on campus. His department’s adoption of the first computer on campus, and his experience among the first three faculty to have explored Blackboard on campus are evidence of his savvy self. Furthermore, the early adoption of computer was also recognized on campus. This is implied when he recalls people taking tours to see the first computer in his department. Towards the end, he calls himself ‘an extreme power user’ of computer technologies. Tex draws this conclusion and discursively constructs a technologically savvy self based on his long-term history with computer technology and Blackboard on campus.

Furthermore, complaining faculty use reference to early history with features found in Blackboard, such as email, as a discursive strategy to construct the technologically savvy self. By revealing an early history with individual features of Blackboard prior to its introduction to ABC University, faculty establish their technological orientation and savvyness. Although Blackboard can broadcast mass emails to students who are officially enrolled in the class, their
email addresses were not automatically programmed into Blackboard with the version at the time of interview. The version of Blackboard at the time required faculty and students to manually enter their email addresses in the beginning of each semester. Many faculty complained about the email feature on Blackboard, because many faculty and students were often unaware of this requirement until mistakes had been made. William, Professor of Information and Decision Systems, talks about what he did with email before Blackboard came along in the following excerpt:

And don’t forget I was already doing something because I used to just make a mailing list of all my students myself and put it up on my website… There’s some of us who… you know we know how to do it.

In this example, William secures attention to his history with email by pointing out and reminding me of his experience with email prior to Blackboard. In his excerpt above, William discursively constructs himself as a technologically savvy faculty with the fact that he created student email distribution lists prior to Blackboard’s introduction on campus. In other words, he constructs himself as ahead of, and better than, Blackboard and its users, because his email lists work. By going back to the way he used to compile student email distribution lists, he implies that Blackboard is not good enough for him.

Together, Tex and William discursively construct themselves as ‘technology wizards’ as they are extreme power users, they were among the first few to experiment with Blackboard, first in using new technologies, and were already doing the things Blackboard offers to do. Although not explicitly stated, the collective narratives by complaining (dis)adopters who perceive themselves as technologically savvy is, “I am a technology wizard! Blackboard is just not good enough for me!”

“I am Not a Technology Wizard, but I am Smart Enough to Write HTML!”

Not all complaining Blackboard (dis)adopters perceive themselves as highly technologically savvy. There are Blackboard (dis)adopters who perceive themselves as less savvy with technology, but they do think of themselves as technologically sophisticated enough with computers. The key reference they make to support their technological sophistication is the ability to build and maintain their own websites. When the internet hit higher education, the only way to create a web presence for faculty was to have a website. Barbara, undergraduate advisor
and a senior lecturer in the Department of Biology talks about her ability to run a website for her class:

So I’m fairly computer confident… I had somebody set that [my webpage] up and then I learned how to use … Netscape Editor and … first I was doing it in HTML and that was a pain… But I would just copy another HTML to make my page and then I got into using the editor on Netscape and that worked out great. … So I’m pretty much my own web master at this point… I’m not bad at computers… I’ve got my own syllabi on my own webpage. I recently switched over to Dreamweaver [a web design software] where I’m going to have the first class in Dreamweaver in December but I’m already using Dreamweaver. So I’m not dumb of computer stuff. It’s just that it wasn’t… You know a few things that I didn’t know how to do and I really didn’t have the time. I just didn’t. I didn’t… I’m so busy that if the technology takes up more time that’s going to save time, I don’t need it. So that’s what happened to it.

Barbara’s case shows repeated reference to construct a self that is ‘smart enough’ to run a website. She acknowledges that she receives help from setting up the webpage initially, and copying HTML codes from other existing websites to build her own. In this acknowledgement, she clarifies that she is not a technology wizard. However, she also stresses the fact that she has a website, and she is her own webmaster. She repeatedly emphasizes that she is ‘fairly computer confident,’ ‘not bad at computers,’ and ‘not dumb at computer stuff.’ She mentions her ability to use Netscape Editor (a lay web editing software) and her recent upgrade to Dreamweaver (a professional web editing software) to demonstrate her ability learn computer software. With all these references, she discursively reconstructs her identity as a faculty who is smart and capable of building and upgrading a website to run a class. Along with her disadoption of Blackboard in her teaching, she puts forth the notion that having her own website, run and maintained by herself, is better than using a centralized online course management platform such as Blackboard. Discursively, she constructs herself as ‘smart enough’ to use Dreamweaver and write HTML codes.

Barbara is not alone in using HTML codes as a discursive reference to construct an identity of being ‘smart enough.’ Kris, a lecturer in the Department of Linguistics engages in similar discourse. She is hired as a temporary lecturer to take over a course that was previously taught by a Blackboard adopter. The course was designed around Blackboard, and she was handed the course with Blackboard. She talks about not having a choice between using Blackboard and another online system:

But to me, as much as I am not afraid of technology and I’m very interested in it… actually I personally didn’t have any choice. I was asked to do it. OK? But I had no trouble. I jumped to the opportunity to do it because I loved doing that stuff. But as I said, … I would prefer to code my website myself. But that’s just me. I know that other people wouldn’t even think of it.
Although Kris is a Blackboard user, she complains about many Blackboard features during the interview, including the email problem William talks about earlier. In this excerpt, she talks about not being afraid of technology. However, her use of Blackboard is not a choice, but a part of a course that was handed to her. However, she discursively constructs herself as more technologically sophisticated with a preference to code her own website. She states that if given a choice, she would rather code her own website. This preference implies that she is ‘smart enough’ to build her own website.

Collectively, Barbara and Kris discursively construct and reconstruct themselves as ‘smart enough’ to write build and run a website. They are technologically more sophisticated than Blackboard users who simply use a point-and-click platform. Although Barbara acknowledges that she receives help with building her website, underlying their narratives is the message that, “I am not a technology wizard, but I am smart enough to write HTML!”

Happy Adopters

On the other side of the fence among faculty who have had experience with Blackboard are the adopters who are happy with using a standard platform and a centralized online course management system. Similar to the complaining (dis)adopters, they vary in self-perceived technological savvyness (i.e. high and low) and comfort level (comfortable and getting comfortable). The next theme reveals the perception of faculty who are comfortable with Blackboard system.

“I Am Comfortable with Technology, and Blackboard Makes Me Cool!”

Happy faculty who are comfortable with technology see Blackboard as a ‘cool’ technology. The perceived ‘coolness’ also comes from their comfort in using the technology. They seem to work fine with Blackboard’s technical problems, and accept that as a part of working with a new technology. However, the ‘coolness’ seems to make them happy and satisfied with Blackboard. Sebastian is a graduate teaching associate and a graduate student in the Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies. During the interview, he expresses a high level of comfort with internet technology and Blackboard, and he talks about the ‘cool’ factor:

Just that I thought it’d be cool. I was like, “Cool! Wow! And I could change the color of my website [i.e. Blackboard site]!” And I think I can either enable a certain feature, disable a certain feature and I can, you know, have a certain thing pop up when they [the students] log on… We’re not kidding anybody but the fact is that it’s cool. You know this is totally cool!
The adjective ‘cool’ is repeated multiple times in Sebastian’s narrative. He thinks the ability to change colors and control the entry page content are flexible features that make Blackboard ‘cool.’ Not only does he discursively construct the technology as ‘cool,’ by repeatedly using the word ‘cool,’ he discursively associated himself with a ‘cool’ technology, thus making himself ‘cool.’ The ‘cool’ factor appears to be an important reason for Sebastian’s adoption of, and satisfaction with, Blackboard.

Faculty who feel comfortable with Blackboard technology discursively construct technology as ‘cool.’ By discursively construct an association with the technology, faculty appear ‘cool’ in their discursive constructions and reconstructions of themselves. Thus, the underlying message is, “I think technology is cool, and Blackboard makes me cool!”

“I Am Becoming Comfortable with Technology, and Blackboard Brings Me Online!”

Not every happy Blackboard faculty is comfortable with the technology. They are happy Blackboard faculty who are still learning about Blackboard. In fact, this group of faculty do not see themselves as full-fledged Blackboard professors with high degree of comfort. They talk about their experience as making a transition from one world to another. David, Associate Professor of Philosophy, talks about his transition in a humble way:

I’m now, I’ve now entered this world that I wasn’t in before. The other thing that’s interesting … is there’s a real division on the campus between the people who use it [Blackboard] and people who don’t. I don’t see myself as a user in the sense that I’m on that side of the users. I’m kind of in the middle … Because what happens is the people who know, they take a step into another world where they know a language and all of us from the other side aren’t really quite comfortable with yet. I’m not uncomfortable… my comfort level has grown with this system but there’s a difference between my comfort level growing and being completely comfortable with it and I haven’t reached that level yet. I know a lot of people who say, “But you can speak that language!” You know, so I’m still at the level where I talk to people who know nothing about it and they see me push that button and say, “That’s what happens when you push that button.”

David’s thoughtful narrative points out an important group of Blackboard users like himself. He argues that Blackboard users are not all alike, in terms of comfort level with technology. In fact, he invokes the metaphor of two worlds: one being the world of the technologically comfortable Blackboard users, and the other being the world of the technologically uncomfortable. He sees himself as being in the middle as he explains that his comfortable has grown, but not at the level of being completely comfortable.

In his narrative, David discursively constructs himself as becoming comfortable with Blackboard, but not yet fully living in the world of the technologically savvy Blackboard users. However, he reconstructs himself with the scenario of showing a non-user how Blackboard
works by pushing a button. He explains to this non-user what happens when he pushes a button on Blackboard. In this scenario, he cites a non-user’s assumption that he speaks the language of technology as a marker of his non-membership status with the world of the non-adopters. He creates a space between the two worlds for himself, but marks himself as a Blackboard adopter nonetheless.

Faculty who are not completely comfortable with Blackboard have to make an attempt and a commitment to overcome their fear. Many of them are conscious with the decision to adopt Blackboard and they articulate a strong reason for learning the technology. Mary, Professor of Rhetoric and Writing Studies, shares her narrative:

But I am not a good computer person and that’s why Blackboard’s good in a sense that it’s transparent. And I’m more confident now... Let me say something else about that that I think is really important. This generation of kids have got to be much more technologically savvy than I know. So I have the compulsion to put them on Blackboard immediately and have them do group work and all kinds of things because if they don’t start learning this then they’re in trouble anyway, OK? So I feel that I’m making a contribution to sort of overcome my paranoia about technology. Also I have a husband who’s more afraid than I am and so I have to train him.

Similarly, Mary claims to belong to the space in between the two worlds metaphorically argued by David. She says she is ‘not a good computer person,’ and this establishes her outside of the world of the technologically savvy. On the other hand, she also talks about her husband who is more afraid of Blackboard than she is, and she has to train him. She discursively puts herself between the two worlds and explains that she has overcome her ‘paranoia about technology.’ She makes a conscious decision to overcome this paranoia because she sees using Blackboard as a contribution to her students.

In addition, faculty in this group have looked into the possibility of creating a web presence prior to Blackboard. However, it was not possible for them prior to Blackboard. In other words, they would remain in the brick and mortal classroom teaching offline the way they have also done in the past, had it not been for Blackboard. Some faculty have sought out knowledge and information about creating a web presence. Jan, a lecture in the Department of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences, talks about her reason for creating a web presence and her unsuccessful attempt to learn HTML:

I just think I recognize students are online… I’m not going to be obsolete. I needed to know the directions whether I wanted to or not. And that happened in 1999, 2000 area of time. It just something I was thinking, I’ve got to figure out this Internet technology… I had gone one time to an HTML kind of thing and I was just blown out of the water. I thought, “I cannot do this!” I remember coming away from it and telling myself, “Even if I just made up the time and I can’t do that. I’ve just got to wait until it’s easier. It
will get easier!” I said. Well then and we got involved in Blackboard and that’s when I said, “OK, I can do this.”

Jan shares a similar need to stay current with their students on internet technology. In her narrative, she discursively constructs herself as technologically not savvy by saying to herself. ‘Even if I just made up the time and I can’t do that,’ despite a conscious effort to attend a workshop on HTML. However, when Blackboard comes along, she can get online with her teaching. At this turning point, she discursively reconstructs herself as an online professor.

Common in the stories of David, Mary, and Jan is the notion that there are two worlds of faculty on campus: those who are technologically savvy and comfortable with Blackboard, and those who are afraid of Blackboard and other internet technologies. They perceive themselves as belonging to a third group that exists between the two worlds, and conscious of making a transition to become more comfortable with Blackboard. Underlying their experience is the feeling that, “I am becoming comfortable with technology, and Blackboard brings me online!”

Let’s Talk About the Others!

Thus far, in answering the first research question, the analysis has focused on Alvesson and Willmott’s (2002) first mode of identity regulation – the discursive construction of the ‘self.’ Research Questions 2 asks: How do faculty explain their colleagues (dis/non)adoption of a centralized online course management system such as Blackboard to conduct their teaching? The remaining analysis examines the second mode of identity regulation by looking at how the complaining (dis)adopters and happy adopters discursively construct each other and the non-adopters who have not considered using online technologies, such as a website or Blackboard.

Complaining (Dis)Adopters

Similar to first half of the analysis, (dis)adopters vary in technologically savvyness and comfort level. They discursively construct the other two groups of faculty by speculating about their experience with websites and internet technologies. They also make speculations about the demographic, psychographic, and disciplinary profiles of each the non-adopters of any internet technologies. The discussion begins with the complaining (dis)adopters talking about the happy adopters.
“They Didn’t Have a Website but I Did!”

As revealed earlier, faculty who are technologically savvy and more sophisticated were already online prior to Blackboard’s arrival on campus. They adopted the first computer on campus, explored Blackboard before most other faculty, compiled their own email distribution lists, and created their own websites to teach online. Since they already have a working system for teaching their classes with the internet, they do not see a need to switch over to Blackboard. In fact, they see a switch as giving up something they took the time and effort to create. Barbara explains why she thinks other faculty are getting on Blackboard:

And just for other people who probably don’t have a pre-existing base of how they did things it’s probably been easier because they weren’t giving up anything. They were starting something fresh. Whereas I have a whole system going that I have to somehow move to fit Blackboard.

In this excerpt, Barbara discursively constructs the satisfied adopters as faculty who did not have a website to begin with. Therefore, it is easier for these faculty to get started with Blackboard because there was nothing to give up. Furthermore, by explaining that these faculty did not have a web presence before Blackboard, she implies that these faculty are probably less technologically sophisticated, thus discursively reinforces the identity she constructed for herself as technologically more sophisticated. The underlying assumption in her narrative is, “They didn’t have a website but I did!”

“They Are the Incompetent Technophobes!”

Technologically savvy faculty take their argument further about the non-adopters who have not considered using Blackboard or other internet technologies. They keep the non-adopters in the world that David constructed for those who do not speak the language of technology. Terry, Associate Professor of Social Work, and the first professor who attempted to create online lectures with audio over PowerPoint slides discursively draws a line between the two worlds:

Yeah, they said I was the first one to use that feature and I’m sort of, sort of disappointed that I’m kind of couldn’t finish it … I just quit going over. I did about three lectures on it before I had a problem… [But] I mean you’ll find people in Social Work who really embrace technology. You know I’m one of them, and Dan Finnegan, Maria DeJenairo. There’s all kind of Social Work with Technology conference and all these people are doing amazing things with either Blackboard or WebCT or one of those, you know any of those programs. But there’s been also a very large group that is very anti-technology. They treat the computer like it’s a magic box of some sort and they say that it’s mysterious. But I mean I’m amazed. Simple emails with some of their students they can’t deal with. I mean how hard is it to upload a pdf file?

In this narrative, Terry discursively constructs the non-adopters as ‘anti-technology.’ They consider the computer as a mysterious ‘magic box.’ They are fearful of technology and they
cannot do simple internet related tasks such as sending emails and uploading a pdf file. By discursively constructs the non-adopters as anti-technology, incompetent, and fearful of the computer and the internet, Terry reinforces the identity she created for herself and other similar technologically savvy faculty.

Similarly, Tex, the former department head who adopted the first computer on campus, shares his speculation of the adoption and acceptance of Blackboard on campus:

I don’t know what the acceptance [of Blackboard] is across campus, OK? Maybe it’s a lot less. My guess is it’s a lot less. I think some certain colleges are less technically oriented and I think typically Arts and Letters. I can’t imagine a lot of English and History, Literature types getting into this, OK?

In this narrative, not only does he speculate a low acceptance rate of Blackboard across campus, he speculates the disciplinary representations among those non-adopters. He discursively constructs the non-adopters as faculty in the College of Arts and Letters, such as faculty in English, History, and Literature. These disciplines are traditionally argued by Snow (1989, first published in 1959) as the group of scholars often pitted against the scientists and engineers as technologically incompetent. With this wide spread assumption that literary scholars are technologically incompetent, Tex’s discursive construction of the non-adopters appears almost intuitively correct.

Terry and Tex describe the non-adopters as anti-technology, incompetent, fearful of the mysterious magic box of computer, and being the literary scholars who are not technologically savvy. Together, they discursively construct the non-adopters with the message, “They are the incompetent technophobes!”

Happy Adopters

Similar to earlier analysis, the satisfied adopters also talk about their colleagues. Here they compare their experience with faculty who dis-adopted Blackboard and faculty who did not consider using Blackboard in their teaching.

“They Are Taking a Risk With a Public Website, But My Blackboard is Secured!”

Happy Blackboard faculty who are comfortable with internet technology generally consider their adoption of Blackboard a wise decision. As discussed earlier, the discourse about this group of happy adopters by complaining disadopters is that happy Blackboard adopters did not have a website to give up, and that is why they are happy with using Blackboard. Although
this earlier argument appears to put happy adopters at a technologically less savvy position when compared to the complaining (dis)adopters, happy adopters have a counter-argument about the risk of running a public website for a class. Rocco, a graduate teaching associate in Accounting states:

   Overall I’m pretty happy with it [Blackboard]. I know some people are not happy with it and they’re kind of resistant to change like before Blackboard came along some faculty here started their own websites to manage their classes like through the school we host a site and we have a server here that we have access to so we do our own web page on our site and post grades through there and give students information through there and stuff like that. And some people still use that and don’t want to use Blackboard. Like Sharon Lightner, she doesn’t like to use Blackboard but I’m kind of converting her over to Blackboard just for the security purpose. Basically it’s the fact that we can distribute grades to people and not have to worry about any of these privacy issues…you know what I mean?

During the time when faculty were using their own websites to report grades, they often used the last four digit of students’ social security numbers as identifications for grade reports. Rocco points out the resistance among the technologically savvy faculty who did not like Blackboard. However, he discursively constructs the faculty as making a less wise decision in overlooking the security concerns. He also talks about his attempt to persuade a senior faculty to switch to Blackboard. Underlying Rocco’s narrative is the notion that, “They are taking a risk with a public website, but my Blackboard is secured.” This notion complements the earlier notion that “Blackboard is cool.” Indeed, when taking security issues into consideration, Blackboard is ‘cooler’ than posting students’ social security numbers on a public website.

“They Are The Outdated, Unwilling, and Lazy Professors!”

Beyond discursively constructing the other group of technology users on campus, faculty also talk about the non-adopters. These non-adopters are faculty who have not considered, or resistant to considering, using internet technologies in their teaching. These faculty prefer to teach the way they have always done in the past, without an online presence. The group of faculty are discursively constructed as different types of ‘technophobes’ by the two groups of technology users. Blackboard faculty who do not consider themselves as technologically savvy talk about non-adopters as out dated. Bartolo, Professor of Audiology shares:

   I don’t really feel like I’m that computer savvy for the most part. However, those that are older than I am don’t necessarily have a tendency to be computer savvy and they might be just scared and not want to deal with it. Some of the professors here still will do everything with overheads. They won’t even move to PowerPoint. So...those are the ones that I would have a tendency to say that if they’re not, if you don’t feel very computer savvy you might not even be willing to try it [Blackboard]. But, as I said, I wouldn’t necessarily classify myself as someone who is computer savvy and I tried it. It was great and there was no
problem with it… And with Mike behind me, he basically said, “I’m too old, I’m getting ready to retire. I’m not learning something new. I think you guys are doing a good job, but I’m not doing it.”

Although Bartolo does not see herself as technologically savvy, she discursively constructs the non-adopters are ‘scared and not want to deal with it,’ and ‘not even be willing to try it!’ She further constructs these faculty as ‘old’ like Mike, whose office is behind hers. By quoting Mike’s comments of her use of Blackboard as ‘doing a good job, but I’m not doing it,’ she reinforces the earlier identity that ‘Blackboard brings me online!’ thus making faculty who are online as better and doing a good job.

Furthermore, some Blackboard faculty further discursively constructs the personality trait of non-adopters. Ken, Associate Professor of Public Health explains his opinion:

I actually hate to talk about my colleagues. Sometimes I think it’s laziness. It got them to, it’s in a form that they like and you don’t want to recreate it in a different format. I could guess. But there’s no reason they can’t learn it. Some of them are smarter than I am. I don’t know why they can’t.

Ken prefaces his opinion with his reluctance to talk about his colleagues. This opening signals that he is going to state a negative opinion. In this excerpt, Ken discursively constructs the non-adopters as ‘lazy.’ He argues that some of these colleagues are smarter than he is and are capable of learning to use Blackboard. However, their non-adoptions is not a matter of ability, but the negative traits of ‘unwillingness’ and ‘laziness’ to learn.

Whether non-adopters are scared, unwilling, or lazy, Bartolo and Ken discursive imply that non-adopters are not good (enough) professors. They discursively construct the notion that, “They are the outdated, unwilling, and lazy professors!” This notion reinforces the earlier discourse that Blackboard gets technologically non-savvy faculty online, and being online is a good thing. Therefore, Blackboard faculty are better than non-adopters.

The themes and discursive (re)constructions of the ‘self’ and the ‘others’ are summarized in Table 1 below. Together, these themes describe ‘the employee,’ using Alvesson and Willmott’s (2002) first two modes of identity regulation to examine faculty’s explanation of Blackboard (dis/non)adoptions at ABC University. The discursive (re)constructions also illustrate Blackboard (dis)adoptions as a form of resistance/ conforming to a silent form of technical control through a centralized ICT system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Self</th>
<th>Complaining (Dis)adopters</th>
<th>Satisfied Adopters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High in Tech Savvy/</td>
<td>“I am a technology wizard! Blackboard is just not good”</td>
<td>“I am comfortable with technology, and Blackboard”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Others</td>
<td>Comfort Level</td>
<td>Low in Tech Savvy/Comfort Level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology Users</td>
<td>“They didn’t have a website but I did!”</td>
<td>“They are taking a risk with a public website, but my Blackboard is secured”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Technology Users</td>
<td>“They are the incompetent technophobes!”</td>
<td>“They are the outdated, unwilling, and lazy professors!”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Discursive (re)constructions of the self and others by technology (dis)adopters.
Discussion

Blackboard (dis)adoption shows some of the way faculty perform organizational resistance of/ conforming to a silent form of standardization through implementing a centralized online course management system. My analysis of Blackboard (dis)adoption reveals that faculty use discursive (re)constructions of the ‘self’ as ‘good’ and ‘better’ professors (e.g. savvy, smart enough, cool, and are online) in explaining their Blackboard (dis)adoption (Research Question 1). As long as they are ‘good’ and ‘better’ professors, they justify for their Blackboard rejection/ acceptance, thus conforming to/ resisting of the centralized system of technical control. Faculty also use discursive constructions of the ‘others’ (another group of technology users and non-users) as less capable (e.g. the have-not’s, out-dated), less intelligent (e.g. incompetent, and risking), and unmotivated (e.g. unwilling, and lazy) in explaining their colleagues’ (dis/non)adoption of a technology (Research Question 2). This discursive constructions of the ‘others’ reinforces the ‘self’ as good, or even ‘better’ (Research Question 1). In this way, Blackboard became a site of organizational resistance of/ conforming to standardization through faculty’s identity regulation.

Following Gossett and Kilker’s (2006) attempt to maintain a rigorous standard in conducting qualitative research, a negative case analysis was conducted to determine if contradictory interpretations might also be supported by the data set. Even though most of the interviews are about how faculty use Blackboard in their teaching, and not all interviews speak directly to the issues of the discursion (re)constructions of the ‘self’ and the ‘others,’ there were no narratives that directly oppose the analysis. No faculty suggested that their (dis)adoption of Blackboard was a less intelligent decision than their colleagues’ decisions for a different technology or no technology. There was not a differing opinion that the non-adopters were either unmotivated, less intelligent, or less capable than the technology users. No faculty disagreed with the perception that technology adoption makes faculty better at their teaching. There were obvious disagreements on the choice of technologies and platforms, but no one argued against the needs and benefits of having an online component in their teaching. Therefore, I feel confident that the analysis presented in this paper is an acceptable and reflective interpretation of the narratives shared by faculty in the study.

There are some limitations in this study. The fact that the interview recruitment was filtered twice, first by an email from the Blackboard coordinator and second by making
participants complete an online survey, delayed the enthusiasm and likelihood for interview participation. These two layers might have significantly reduced the number of potential interview participants. Furthermore, the email invitation was initiated by the Blackboard coordinator at ABC University, so it excluded non-adopters from the study. Non-adopters and soon to be adopters were not on the Blackboard coordinator’s email list at time of the study. In addition, since the recruitment email came from the Blackboard coordinator, dis-adopters might have assumed a pro-Blackboard bias in this study, thus tended not to participate. Participants in this study probably are also pro-Blackboard, or at least pro-technology, as demonstrated in the data analysis and interpretation. Finally, using email as means for recruitment also excluded non-email users. Future research projects might recruit widely, through a campus-wide email for recruitment, and with non-technology strategy for recruitment, such as flyers and departmental meeting visitations. These non-technology based recruitment strategies may be more time-consuming and costly. However, they will provide a broader range of voices in understanding technologies (dis/non)adoption at a university campus.

Theoretical Implications

Several theoretical and practical implications can be drawn from the results in this study. At the theoretical level, this study contributes to the technology adoption literatures. Instead of studying technology adoption as explainable mostly by a technology’s characteristics, a potential adopter’s exposure to it, and his/her external communication with people about the technology, researchers may benefit from looking at technology adoption (and dis-adoption) as identity regulation. The study illustrates that identity regulation tend to demonstrate a better sense of the ‘self,’ often against the perceived ‘others.’ This performance of identity may either resist or conform to an organization’s centralized system or a society’s dominant trend. This perspective suggests that technology adoption is also influenced by internal discourse about the ‘self’ and the ‘others.’

Second, this study reveals that technologies usually exist in an ecology, rather than in isolation. When investigating technology adoption and implementation in an organization, it is more realistic to study a technology in relationship to other similar or complementary technologies. The limitation of focusing on only one technology for the sake of ease and simplicity for research is the expense of getting a less accurate picture of reality. This argument
challenges researchers to develop and employ more sophisticated theories and methods to capture this reality of an ecology of technologies, as the diversity of technologies will only increase in the future.

Third, this study challenges researchers in technology adoption and organizational communication to consider the tension between the hope of technology adoption to improve quality and efficiency of work on one hand, and the fear of technology adoption to impose standardization on the other. This tension reflects the meta philosophical tension between democracy and technocracy in a technologically advancing society. As technological advances continue to impact the workplace and our society, this tension represents a rich area for research.

**Practical Implications**

At the practical level, university administration may need to consider wider faculty’s input in choosing a centralized ICT system for the university. Instead of making a top-down decision in implementing a standard platform, administration can benefit from gathering examples of existing practices among faculty in considering a central solution for all. In that case, a solution comes from within the local context. This will reduce the likelihood for struggle among faculty who need to give up an existing practice in order to participate in a centralized solution, thus threatening their identities at work. Resistance is likely to occur when faculty’s self-identities are challenged. Successful implementation attends to faculty’s self-identities.

Instead of pushing the diffusion and adoption of a centralized system to faculty and treat resistance as non-cooperation, administration should consider resistance an opportunity for feedback to improve the centralize system in order to facilitate faculty’s teaching. Faculty engaged in daily teaching in the classroom possess ‘shopfloor’ knowledge and experience that should be valued. Meaningful education takes place where they teach, and they know what technologies are best suited to teach their disciplines and subject matter. By engaging resistance as opportunity to improve a centralized system for all, administration can create more effective solutions at ABC University. It may be in the administration’s best interest to work with, rather than against, dis/non-adopters of a centralized system.
Conclusion

Technology (dis)adoption is a constant process in our society and today’s workplace. By the time you read this paper, some complaining (dis)adopters may have become muted adopters of Blackboard adopters, and some of the happy adopters may have left Blackboard in pursuit of other technologies, such as Web 2.0 technologies of Facebook and Youtube, 3-D virtual world of Second Life, the podcasting technology of iTunes University, or simply an open source platform such as Moodle. Whatever the present state of adoption and implementation of Blackboard at ABC University, it is clear that the internet is increasingly becoming a place for faculty to expand their teaching. In a time when our college campuses are increasingly wired and technologically saturated, ICTs and centralized online course management systems afford faculty the opportunity to connect with students and extend education beyond the brick and mortar classrooms. These systems are one site where individual desire for identity construction meets the organizational interest in centralization and standardization. Researchers and practitioners in communication technology and organizational studies should learn how these technological systems function to meet the communication challenged in contemporary workplace and the increasingly wired organizations.
References


Largest U. S. University system signs deal with Blackboard. (2003, October 15). *Distance Education Report, 7* (20), 8.


Appendix A

Interview Guide
1. What classes and class levels do you teach?
2. Which class do you teach with Blackboard? How would you characterize the nature of your Blackboard classes in general, or specific?
3. Which Blackboard features did you think you were going to use before your implementation?
4. Which Blackboard features did you end up using?
5. How did you incorporate them into your existing teaching practices?
6. Which class do you not teach with Blackboard? How would you characterize the nature of your non-Blackboard classes in general, or specific?
7. Are you going to continue using Blackboard in your teaching? Why/why not?
8. Now, pretend I am a faculty in your department who has never heard of Blackboard, how would you describe Blackboard to somebody like me? Tell me more…
9. To conclude the interview, I would like to ask you to reflect upon your experience teaching with Blackboard for a few seconds. What metaphor, analogy, imagery, or description comes to your mind?