"No need is more fundamentally human than our need to understand the meaning of our experience. Free, full participation in critical and reflective discourse *may be interpreted as a basic human right."*

– *Jack Mezirow (1923–2014)*
"How Critical Reflection Triggers
Transformative Learning"
In Jack Mezirow and Associates,
Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood:
A Guide to Transformative and
Emancipatory Learning
San Francisco: Jossey–Bass, 1990, p. 11

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Let a Thousand Honors Programs Bloom *or* A Boyer College for All

"'Much as we've done this, you'd think it might get a tad bit easier,' Darnell said, 'but that's not the way of it.'"

– Ron Rash
"Three A.M. and the Stars Were Out"
in Something Rich and Strange *(2014)*

To say the least, this is a tough but really important time at SUNY Empire State College. I think it's tough because we have been pushed to ask ourselves what we most believe in, what we stand for, what's worth keeping. I think it's important for exactly the same reasons. If we are going to remain viable (we cannot be naïve about this); if we are to going to keep experimenting (yes, for sure, this is a place of change for ourselves and for our students); and if we are going to provide students with opportunities to learn and to earn the degrees they want and they deserve (surely, right at our core) – if we are going to make it as Empire State College, we have our work cut out for us. It don't come easy.

There are many entry points to the debates that are raging right now. I want to zoom in on one because, for me, it's crucial to so much about our future. (Sorry if you've heard this before.)

The notion of a "Boyer College" is often floated around. (As you'll see in Ed Warzala's fascinating discussion with Jim Hall in this issue, for the moment, we're skirting around what Boyer may have actually envisioned.) For some, the phrase has been the touch point for a critique of ESC. "Come on," these colleagues have argued, "just create a 'Boyer College' for those special students, those extraordinary ones, who want it and are capable of doing something different. Don't assume that every student craves it; don't assume that every student can pull it off."

For others, a "Boyer College-for-all" has been at the heart of ESC since its opening. "Let everyone participate in the creation of his or her own education," these colleagues insist. "To greater or lesser extents, we know they can do it."

Not surprisingly, I'm in the second camp.

A great deal is at stake here, but here is one thing that stands out for me.

There are literally thousands of honors colleges and honors programs in universities across the country; and, based on the little research I have done, the numbers continue to grow. Why do they exist? What do they offer? I'd guess they exist and continue to grow in order to attract high flying 18-year-olds to institutions for which they might otherwise not apply. It's all about marketing to the very few. Such programs present themselves as offering alternatives to the current higher education trifecta: big lectures, student anonymity and fixed curricula. One such program promotes its "specialized advising." Another mentions "challenging students to think outside the box." Others offer "interdisciplinary seminars." And still another university proudly announces: "We encourage our students to create their own ideal education."

How familiar all of this is!

ESC is making a number of radical claims: We are a public college that serves learners who deserve a higher education that is responsive to their professional, academic and personal needs. And that's what we offer them. No two ways about it: We're a living contradiction. We're an open learning-honors college for all that seeks to provide thick advising/mentoring, a model of learning contracts that can break the hold of the disciplines, and the amazing opportunity for students to be encouraged to talk about and have someone take seriously their vision (whatever form it takes, however rambunctious or conventional it might be) of "their own ideal education." We, as mentors, surely don't know all the answers (our expertise might be better understood as being more humble questioners and careful listeners whose knowing gets disrupted all the time) and, wow, for myriad reasons (of money, time, priorities, fears of academic chaos and our current dug-in institutional ways), we're often disappointed by the gap between this big ideal and the day-to-day realities of our work-lives and of our students' learning. But there's a deep democratic ideal animating all of what we are trying to do that we shouldn't toss away so quickly.

Why only honor the few?

A final thought: Our personal and institutional championing of the blooming of a thousand (and counting) honors programs resonates well beyond our not-so-small college. This is part of the beauty and the difficulty of the challenge we face, and another one of those radical claims: Flickers of a student's active participation in his or her learning (and think of the many, many ways this

can manifest itself!) means that yet another person is gaining valuable practice having a voice, contributing to important decisions and learning that being part of an institution (whatever that institution is, whether family, job, community or religious group) is not about bystanding, nor about becoming more adept at dodging the moves of others, but about being recognized as an authority, with all the limitations that any claims to authority always imply.

"Fostering discourse, with a determined effort to free participation from distortions by power and influence, is a long-established priority of adult educators. The generally accepted model of adult education involves a transfer of authority from the educator to the learners; the successful educator works herself out of her job as educator and becomes a collaborative learner."

– Jack Mezirow (1923-2014)
In Edward W. Taylor, Patricia Cranton and Associates
The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012, p. 81

Mentoring and the Identity Development of Adult Learners

Julia Penn Shaw, Center for Distance Learning; Margaret Clark-Plaskie, Genesee Valley Center

A Shared Perspective on Identity Development Through Mentoring

Our mentoring at SUNY Empire State College binds our college community together and also distinguishes us from other academic institutions within SUNY and beyond. This work is far more than "branding," although it certainly contributes to our shared identity within Empire State College. Throughout all regions of New York state and across the United States, and even internationally, and spanning all levels of responsibilities, is our ever-present desire to meet the mentoring needs of our adult learners.

From a developmental perspective, mentoring is meaningful both theoretically and experientially. Do theories such as Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial identity development help mentors engage students in reaching their academic, personal and professional goals? When theories of adult development are part of adult learners' studies, do they contribute to learners' insights into their own educational, professional and personal journeys?

The attraction to consider the interplay between theory and practice in adult development, particularly adult identity development, became the basis of our scholarly exploration of mentoring and the identity development of adult learners at SUNY Empire State College. This topic was broad enough to include most paths of interest to us, but narrow enough to keep us connected to a central theme. It provided bounds for our population (within the college), the focus (impact of mentoring) and a theoretical basis (identity development). Since one of us works fully online with students through the Center for Distance Learning (CDL), and the other works primarily with individual students face-to-face at the Corning/Elmira Unit, our exploration provided an opportunity to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the

Julia Penn Shaw

PHOTO CREDIT: JIM GUPTA-CARLSON

impact of mentoring relationships across different settings and modes of working at the college.

Qualitative research methods suited our project. In a sense, we interviewed ourselves and each other about mentoring, based on our cumulative 27 years as mentor faculty at SUNY Empire State College. Stories about student experiences grounded our investigation. Sometimes examples helped us explore ideas about how mentoring worked well, and sometimes examples helped us to pose critical unanswered questions about the challenges of some students that concerned or even baffled us.

This led to the development of our February 2014 publication in the open access online international journal, *Educational Research,* titled "Beyond Stages: Mentoring as Transitional Identity Space for Adult Learners" (Clark-Plaskie & Shaw, 2014). We provided our observations and mentoring experiences with five students who illustrated learner-mentor relationships and experiences from different vantage points (though some details were modified to maintain anonymity). Each

Margaret Clark-Plaskie

one demonstrated different learner approaches to the learner-mentor relationship and to engagement in the learning process. Given the interdependent nature of mentoring, each learner-mentor relationship also uniquely engaged us as mentors in our efforts to guide each learner to reach his or her goals. Focusing on stories about students enabled us to bridge our different physical settings and methods of interacting with students, discussing both effective and perplexing mentoring experiences from different vantage points. In some ways, the process of sharing these student stories helped us to elucidate how the mentoring experience can influence adult identity, and also to visualize and articulate what we mean by the "impact of mentoring on identity development of adult learners." The process of education changes lives, and life-changing experiences change identities.

The theoretical foundations of identity development provided a starting point for understanding the impact of mentoring on identity development of adult learners. Erikson's psychosocial theory of development describes continued growth across the lifespan,

with identity development proposed as the hallmark of the adolescent stage. As adults and mentors of adults, we know that identities can definitely develop and change throughout our lives. In fact, we recognized that many of our students, even while leading full and effective adult lives, were in the midst of identity work that others had completed (or, according to Erikson's theory, were proposed to have completed) in adolescence. They may or may not have been consciously aware of their identity struggles; they may or may not have been seeking "growth" in this personal life domain. Some of our adult learners have, nonetheless, experienced changes in their "sense of self" within the mentoring context.

According to Erikson, identity development is framed around an abstract "sense of self" (Erikson, 1959). This is characterized by fidelity to one or more commitments to that self, such as a commitment to an ethic, a professional path, a gender status, a religious affiliation or a set of relationships (a family). This commitment, or these commitments, are built upon childhood experiences, but are likely to first be made as conscious decisions during adolescence. They become more complex in adulthood, as they are reinforced by adult choices and challenged by expanding responsibilities, opportunities and cognitive processes.

As mentoring shows us, many students who take on the challenges of formal adult learning do so to complete a commitment to the self that could not be completed at an earlier time; to respond to external pressure; to explore further options for their lives; and/or to gain fidelity to a new "sense of self." Sometimes they can articulate these goals clearly when they become students, but frequently they cannot – perhaps because there are many aspects intertwined into the one goal of "getting the degree"; perhaps because the goals are only loosely articulated; and perhaps because the goal is to explore the bounds of a new "sense of self."

Our Paradigm Shift

Erikson's foundational work served as an overview tool for evaluating lifelong psychosocial development of identity. The traditional linear models, particularly of Erikson (1959), but also of Marcia (1966, 1987), Kroger (2000, 2003, 2007, 2010) and

others were hierarchical, based on distinct stages and measurable changes. That is, from these perspectives, developmental changes were seen to happen in a sequence, and each new stage was viewed as progress from the earlier stage.

A small but significant paradigm shift emerged in our descriptions of mentoring, moving us beyond this traditional identity framework. Our shift was from using the psychosocial linear model to using a process-oriented spatial one. This emerging framework, which we identified as a "transitional identity space," better captured adult learners' identity development within the educational mentoring context and seemed to bring identity theory into the 21st century. This updated model still had traditional adult identity development as

As mentoring shows us, many students who take on the challenges of formal adult learning do so to complete a commitment to the self that could not be completed at an earlier time; to respond to external pressure; to explore further options for their lives; and/or to gain fidelity to a new "sense of self." Sometimes they can articulate these goals clearly when they become students, but frequently they cannot – perhaps because there are many aspects intertwined into the one goal of "getting the degree"; perhaps because the goals are only loosely articulated; and perhaps because the goal is to explore the bounds of a new "sense of self."

a foundation, but also incorporated elements from Donald Winnicott's (1953) holding environment, Martin Buber's (1958) concept of the "I-Thou" relationship, and dynamic systems theory (Fischer, 1980; Fischer & Bidell, 2006).

Describing the adult mentoring process, as we experienced it, required this more versatile and granular model. How could we describe our students who had fidelity to their commitments as parents or as professionals, but had not completed their academic goals, or the complex shifts in their paths interlocking their personal, academic and professional goals?

The work of Erikson and other developmentalists was useful, but too limited for our mentoring experiences with adult learners. Traditional identity theory provides milestones for changes with child, adolescent and adult populations over longer periods of time, and its sustained application in both therapeutic and educational settings is a sign of its continued usefulness in those settings (Kroger, 2000; Cramer, 2004). Erikson's traditional psychosocial theory also has been found to be useful when singling out specific aspects of identity within a whole person. The mentoring experience, however, was too complex to be captured in a hierarchical model, and although linear models were helpful in a number of ways, they did not describe our experiences sufficiently.

We confirmed that identity theory needed to be updated, and our experiences with mentoring were a logical path in doing so. A *view upon* students was not effective in describing our *experience with* them – or their experiences with us. We wanted to convey identity development as a process – a dynamic process within a complex system of interactions. We needed a framework with more flexibility for capturing nuanced and subtle hours of interactions with adult learners across a number of years.

The direction that evolved was a logical one – from linear to spatial, and from stage-developmental assessment to dialogic planning. Both the student and the mentor engage in a discussion of small increments to secure "next steps," whether determining a degree program, responding to questions from an assessment committee or planning and completing a term of study. Stages are too large and too linear to capture that experience. With finer

granularity comes the appreciation of process and the flows of multiple progressions and sometimes regressions. Not only is there room to *notice when* small shifts are made, but also perhaps more importantly *how* those shifts are accomplished. Which successful actions by the learner or mentor – or both – within the interaction made a positive difference and why? The process perspective is based on realities enacted in real time, not abstractions so encompassing that they engulf – and sometimes even obscure – smaller but immensely meaningful exchanges and personal changes. A process orientation leads to a celebration of micro-achievements, both those along the path toward definable larger goals and those that suggest potentially deep changes within the "self."

Transitional Identity Space

Labels for new concepts are helpful, and we found two labels that seemed appropriate for our work: "Transitional Identity Space" (TIS) and "The Seeking Self." The first concept for the spatial view of mentoring, the TIS, immediately shifted thinking from a line or ladder to an open and at least three-dimensional space, incorporating many aspects of the learner, not just their academic roles. When we focused on the transitional learning space of the learner, we relied less on a definition of effective mentoring and more on the process of mentoring.

The TIS differs from stages in many ways:

- It is from the perspective of the learner: Each space is somewhat unique.

- It is process-oriented, not definition-oriented.

- It more readily incorporates "relationships" as both learner and mentor traverse the learning space.

- The path/paths within a TIS are visible parts of a learner's resiliency, flexibility and learning – even if these qualities are not visible parts of movement across stages.

- *How* a learner learns becomes the focus – much more important for developing habits of lifelong learning – rather than just *what* a learner learns.

- It incorporates measurements about qualities, such as improved focus; critical thinking; connected and meaningful learning; humor and patience, as well as measurements about whether the end goal of the degree is met.

The Seeking Self

We found that it also was helpful to have a process-oriented frame for our students as seeking selves who create and then traverse paths in their own "transitional identity space" with their mentor and other helpful guides. Learners who are "seeking selves" have some of the following qualities that support their academic success:

- The student has prior success in meeting a commitment, frequently to a relationship, such as that with her or his children, or a profession. The student has already shown the capacity to sustain fidelity to a commitment.

- The student has the ability to trust in the relationship with their mentor, based on prior success with at least one trusting relationship: The student has the potential to engage with the mentor in an "I-Thou" relationship.

- The student describes at least one success in overcoming obstacles through personal resiliency or perseverance.

Offering a "transitional identity space" to a "seeking self" seems to describe some of the potential in the mentoring experience.

Why the Paradigm Shift?

Freire (1970) asked us to "walk the path with the learner." In so doing, many of our mentoring experiences become "I-Thou" relationships (Buber, 1958), well beyond the "I-It" relationships that can be associated with "taking courses." An I-Thou experience is one that engages two unique individuals in a mutual exchange – a dialogic exchange and a dialectical experience. We *work with* our mentees. They may expect us to be experts in the college, in mentoring and frequently in a subject area, but we know that they are experts in what gives them meaning, in what feels compelling to learn about, and in what goals they want to pursue. The learner-mentor relationship develops from these two complementary sources of energy.

Although stages are useful for assessment over time, they cannot capture micro-changes, which result not only in learning but also in confidence, in commitment to new goals and in fidelity to a stronger identity. Both stage and spatial metaphors capture movements toward goals, but the spatial metaphor opens up more pathways for movement, allowing for more variations and smaller increments of change. Movement within a learning space may lead to more than one stage-developmental type of change. A path may take unexpected turns or incorporate new aspects of the self, which are important to note, but which do not directly lead to the "next stage." Stage development may measure the points where the transitions in status are most evident, but these may not always be the points most meaningful for students.

Stages do not capture the progressive integration of dissonant aspects of the self. Learners may recognize first that they can be both parent and student (and be a role model for their children), but only later gain confidence that they are prepared for that promotion they seek. These are different points of meaningful integration. The relationships are unique for each learner-mentor pair –and the terrain may be different for different academic subjects.

Our Next Steps

When we talk about adult transformation (in adult education theories or in our own college mission statement), is it not *adult identity* transformation that is being addressed? It seems in many ways as if identity transformation is at the root of our college values, and in part, the desired result of the particular roles of educational planning and primary mentoring. These college commitments to our students foster the learner-mentor relationship and the identity development that may ensue.

Having thoughtfully started to travel a path to learn more about identity development in our adult learners, we want to continue in this direction. Knowledge about the impact of mentoring on the whole lives of our students is particularly important now as the direction of the college with respect to mentoring is being evaluated. Next steps necessarily involve learning from our alumni whether their experiences with mentoring (as varied as they

may be) were significantly valuable to them, and if so, in what specific ways. We want to survey cohorts of alumni on their views of the values of mentoring. We will be focusing particularly on their perception of the impact of mentoring on their educational experiences, on the achievement of their expressed goals, on tools to enhance lifelong learning, and on a concomitant confidence and on integration in their sense of self.

We are looking forward to refining the idea of a spatial, process-oriented framework for mentoring, which we believe allows for an organic view of adult learner experiences. Action research on the learner, the learning process, and the relationship between the learner and the mentor is key to our work at the college, and allows us an opportunity to reflect about, and with, our students in a deeper way.

Our progress over the last year, including our *Educational Research* article (Clark-Plaskie & Shaw, 2014), was in large part due to the focus and professional time provided by the Institute on Mentoring, Teaching and Learning (IMTL) for 2013-2014 offered by the Center for Mentoring and Learning. Without the support and the deadlines for closure, we would not have reached this milestone. Fortunately, we are working within the support of the IMTL again in the 2014-2015 year, moving forward with qualitative and quantitative research with our graduates.

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A Business Model for the 21st Century?

Tanweer Ali, Center for International Programs

Vojtěch Sedláček is not a typical businessman. For a start, he shows not the slightest interest in making money – but we will come to that in a while. He has had a wide and varied career, a career that appears to be in full swing; at 67, he does not strike one as a man on the verge of retirement. After completing his military service in 1969, he started working as a computer programmer. His career in the IT sector was set back in the 1970s as he came to the attention of the communist-era Czechoslovak secret police. In 1977, he became one of the first wave of signatories of Charter 77,[1] along with the late Czech President Václav Havel and 240 other people. Performing a number of different odd jobs in the years that followed, Sedláček first started volutering as a teacher for disabled children in 1981, an activity that he kept up for several years. After the fall of the communist regime in November 1989, the former political dissident played an active role in the newly formed Civic Forum, becoming mayor of his hometown, Roztoky, just outside Prague, and working for the Czechoslovak federal government. But Sedláček's political career was short-lived and he soon began life as an entrepreneur.

Sedláček now runs a family of around a dozen small businesses, which were all founded with the specific purpose of employing people with disabilities. These businesses are all social enterprises – run for a social goal, not for maximizing the wealth of their owners. Sedláček only looks for one quality in potential employees: the willingness to communicate. All profits go toward furthering the social goal of providing a livelihood for disabled people. Sedláček's businesses are all successful, and he is passionate about all of them. This June, I took a group of my Prague Program[2] students in my summer course, Creating a Social Business, to visit a selection of his businesses in Prague. We started at the Kepler Museum, the smallest of his firms (and the smallest museum in Prague), with one employee. The visit began with an open air impromtu lecture in the

courtyard on Johannes Kepler's achievements as an astronomer, with students serving as live props, one representing the sun, another the earth and a third the moon. We also saw a poster production firm that Sedláček runs, which he founded just after the flood of 2002 devastated large parts of Prague.

The social enterprise course was designed to blend theory with practice. We combined lectures and readings with field trips, guest speakers and case studies. Students were required to analyze what they saw in the context of theoretical principles in written assignments, a team presentation and a final examination. While students visited real social businesses in Prague, the case studies were global in reach, and examined a range of issues such as microcredit (making small loans available to the poor), job creation, social inclusion and urban planning.

One of the aims of the course was to present business education in a new light (the majority of students in the class were concentrating in business, with a minority from our international relations and communication concentrations). The dominant ideology in business education revolves around the supremacy of market forces and self-interest. The world that is presented is generally one of profit maximizing firms and individuals contributing to the greater good by competing in a free market. While in recent years, greater emphasis has been placed on business ethics and corporate social responsibility, shareholder value – the notion that the financial interests of equity owners should be the paramount goal of managers – remains the dominant ideological precept.

Business and the broader social good are most often viewed as belonging to separate world views, often barely compatible. So the idea of a commerical enterprise, financially sustainable and competitive, managed for the purpose of furthering a social goal is something of a departure from this traditional view of

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business. Indeed, advocates of social enterprise see business as an integral part of the solution to social and environmental problems.

Another key goal of the course was to generate awareness of potential career opportunities. Social enterprise offers business graduates a chance to apply their skills and energy to achieve a number of goals at the same time. To gain a deeper personal exposure to the sector, students, working in pairs, were required to locate and interview someone working in a social enterprise. And there was a team assignment: preparing a business plan outline for a new social enterprise. Teams had to identify a specific social or environmental problem and develop an entrepreneurial solution. Each team presented its idea at the end of the term. Ideally, one day we will be able to develop a course, perhaps at the graduate level, which allows students to dedicate time and resources to prepare fully viable business plans. A funding partner might be able to help some of these ideas turn into real-life enterprises. Harvard and Stanford have developed social innovation labs that have enabled numerous student-led initiatives to

come to fruition, and hopefully this concept will spread around the world. On a more immediate level, I very much hope that some of the students who took this course will take part in the social enterprise competitions for young people that already exist and that provide coaching and resources to new start-ups.

While Vojtěch Sedláček is undoubtedly an inspiring figure, the formative political experience of his life makes him an implausible role model for the current 20-something generation; that is, for our International Program students in Prague. In addition, business academics have not been able to identify any specific personality traits common to social entrepreneurs, or for that matter, to any type of entrepreneur. It appears that any type of person, with any type of background can become a social entrepreneur. So we visited a number of social enterprises.

Petr Vítek is in his early 30s, speaks near perfect English, worked until recently in the Prague office of a "Big Four" audit firm and counts a number of our recent alumni among his personal friends. Vítek is a co-founder of the Hub, a co-working space and resource center for entrepreneurs of all kinds. Self-employed professionals and small firms may use the office space in return for a small membership fee. Moreover, the Hub offers regular training courses, seminars, conferences and networking events. Though the Hub serves all types of businesses, social enterprise is clearly Vítek's passion, and during our visit to the Hub's expansive and light-filled space in a former printing press, Vítek explained his vision of a future world, saying that in 20 years' time, the majority of start-up firms will be social enterprises. Needless to say, the Hub itself, a franchise born in London, is a social enterprise.

Markéta Borecká spends most of her working day in the Hub. She currently divides her time between a regular job with a small human resources consultancy and a social enterprise that she runs with one assistant: both entities are based in the Hub. Borecká organizes collections of old clothes, some of which are distributed to local charities. The remainder, which are not in sufficiently good condition to be worn, are recycled into covers for diaries and mobile phones and into small bags. The resulting products are beautiful and

make perfect gifts. In addition to individual customers, Borecká has two large corporate clients. Her guest lecture to the class was followed by a lively question and answer session, and at the end of the study, a number of students told me that hers was the most interesting story. Perhaps this was because Borecká, a recent Ph.D. graduate, is closest to our students in age and experience.

Besides Sedláček, Vítek and Borecká, we met two other social entrepreneurs. Filip Kavka Smiggels is a Dutchman who has lived in Prague for just over 10 years and considers the city his true home. In 2010, he opened his vegetarian restaurant, "Mlsna Kavka" (or "picky jackdaw") a joint venture between him and Green Doors, a local nonprofit that works with people suffering from mental illness. The goal is to provide employment opportunities to the clients of Green Doors, opportunities that would not normally be open to them in the regular labor market. The result is a success: The staff at the restaurant have strong support and are efficient, polite and friendly. The food, as the students who stayed beyond the visit for lunch would testify, also is excellent. When I first arrived in Prague in the early 1990s, the city contained just one salad bar; now Kavka's restaurant is part of a thriving vegetarian scene, a sign of how much has changed in the past two decades.

Our last visit was to Bajkazyl (or "bike asylum"), a cafe that doubles up as a bicycle repair workshop. The concept was the brainchild of Martin Kontra, a passionate cyclist, who has struggled to make Prague a more bike-friendly place for much of his adult life. Kontra has kept up his day job as a journalist throughout the life of Bajkazyl and also was supported for three years by the US-based Ashoka Foundation. The visit so enthused one student that he bought a second-hand bike on the spot: the photo appeared on Facebook minutes after the class!

For all the difference that social enterprise has made in the world, it is important to see its limitations as a vehicle for social change. A particularly relevant case in point is microcredit, once seen by many as a silver bullet in poverty reduction, but now the subject of fierce controversy. Of particular significance is the role of government as a change-maker. Many social entrepreneurs are instinctively dismissive of government and suspicious of

the political process. Yet, government plays a key role, not only in social policymaking but also in creating a receptive environment for social entreprise. In the United Kingdom, seen as a leader in the field, legislation has been developed to make it relatively easy to start and run a social enterprise. The public procurement process also favors firms that have a demonstrable social purpose. Social enterprises, which often have a better ground-level understanding of social problems than central government agencies, are encouraged to function as partners to the public sector. This model of partnership surely has considerable potential in a world where there is little faith in state socialism, and yet where the market fundamentalism of neoliberal ideology also has come to the seen as a failure. Hazel Blears, a member of the British parliament's committee on social enterprise and a former cabinet minister in the administrations of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, told a recent social enterprise conference in the Czech Republic: "In politics you can have a good idea but if the time is wrong, then you will fail. If the time is right but if you don't have any ideas, then you will also fail; you succeed with the right idea, at the right time." Perhaps social enterprise is an idea whose time has come. If so, I hope some of our students will play an active role in developing this sector.

Notes

[1] Charter 77 was a document calling for the government to respect human rights and was composed in 1977. Further signatories added their names in later years, a courageous and often dangerous move under communist rule.

[2] For more information about the Prague, Czech Republic Program, please visit http://www.esc.edu/international-programs/prague-czech-republic/.

Essays Before a Syrtos,[1] Part II

Eric L. Ball, Center for Distance Learning

In what follows here, I continue my writing that began in the last issue, dealing with my ongoing learning objective. In Part I, I described this objective as follows: to become a competent musical artist engaged primarily with Cretan tradition, maybe even a competent artist of the Cretan *lyra. I tried to begin unpacking my use of the word* competent *in this description. Now, in Part II, I will turn my attention to two of its other key terms:* tradition *and* artist.

Tradition

"Everyone should have the opportunity of not being over-influenced."

  – Charles Ives, Essays Before a Sonata *(1920)*

Tradition, in many modern nation-states, including Greece, is a concept that has been deeply influenced by modern romantic nationalist discourse and its descendants – including the discourse of folklore and the academic field of folklore studies, or, as it is known in Greece, of *laografia* (literally: writing the people). At least since the 1980s, critical interrogation into the relationship of folkloric work and romantic nationalism, and into associated ideas of "authenticity," has been an important topic in academic folklore studies as well as cultural anthropology. Michael Herzfeld did seminal work in the 1980s on the emergence of *laografia* in Greece,[2] and many others have continued with this line of work, myself included.[3]

Lay concepts of tradition, in many cases adopted or adapted from earlier professional and academic ways of conceptualizing tradition, tend to take tradition as an objective given – as those things and practices that a group of people hand down, pass on, continue and develop over time. Questions and arguments abound regarding what is and what isn't traditional, who is and who isn't an authentic tradition-bearer. So-called "folk tradition" is frequently taken to designate, however simplistically, something pre-modern or close to it. Or, in modern Greece, it can be

taken to designate something diachronically Greek – at once pre-modern (usually implying deep, direct connections to ancient Greek or Minoan civilizations), but also continuing to evolve in the present with a modern twist, provided that the diachronic Greek (or Cretan) essence of the tradition remains intact.

One reason for continuing attention to folk tradition in a nation-state like Greece, both in the academy and among the public at large, is an ongoing sense of many people that even if capitalist modernity rescues humanity from certain injustices that had been pervasive under traditional historical arrangements, capitalist modernity also alienates and takes away from humanity much of what was good about pre-modern, pre-capitalist social formations and civilizations. Another reason for ongoing attention is that during the historical process of nation-building, intellectuals often insisted that the essence of the nation can be found in its purest form within folk traditions. (This was certainly the case during the formation and consolidation of the modern Greek state, as Herzfeld, mentioned earlier, has demonstrated.) Yet another reason is to provide an institutional and discursive mechanism for resisting the inroads of more powerful nation-states at the expense of the indigenous. (This is true in contemporary Greece, where, for example, state funding for the study and dissemination of Greek folk musical traditions can serve as an important strategy for defending a plethora of Greek musical practices against the massive influence of the American and Western European popular music industries that have so much private capital behind them.)

When academics dealing with folk tradition scrutinized their own projects and various other public folklore projects further, they noticed just how political and sometimes unclear and contradictory some of their fundamental assumptions about tradition seemed to be. Handler and Linnekin[4] demonstrated succinctly the shift that occurred with this recognition when they

Eric Ball collaborating on a song with his niece.

wrote: "Instead, we [folklorists] must understand tradition as a symbolic process that both presupposes past symbolisms and creatively reinterprets them. In other words, tradition is not a bounded entity made up of bounded constituent parts, but a process of interpretation, attributing meaning in the present though making reference to the past" (p. 287). Once scholars realized that, "[t]he varying definitions of authenticity that have resulted from this pursuit reveal that 'traditional' is not an objective attribute of cultural practices, but a designation that is always assigned in the present," they found it sensible to shift their focus away from participation in debates about what is authentically traditional and instead focus on articulating the *criteria* (and the implications of such criteria) that get invoked in discussions and debates about authenticity (p. 282).

This was an important move, and it has made academic considerations of tradition much more slippery and nuanced than they used to be, but it strikes me as nevertheless lacking in at least one important respect: Sure, something's value as traditional does not

necessarily depend on an objective relation to the past. And, yes, we can ask who values something *as* tradition, and inquire as to what end and with what consequences they value it, and how they define authenticity. But we can still nonetheless *also* examine if and how that value *does* depend – for those who value it – on empirically supportable relations to the past. And, we can further ask what the purposes and consequences of the extent of *that* dependence (or lack thereof) are. Not because we take it for granted – as did some of our academic predecessors – that there is, or should be, a correlation between the existence of such objective relations and the value ascribed to the tradition in question (e.g., as the survival of the essential spirit of a people in spite of foreign influence or domination), but because the tradition might remain important to us. So, to the extent that "tradition" can do potentially useful work (e.g., in defending against whatever is egregious about capitalist modernity, such as when victimized groups use nationalism to protect themselves from further harm or to establish for themselves a better footing vis-à-vis various imperialisms and colonizers), it makes sense for some academics who study the past to participate in figuring out how the past is, or might be, drawn on as a resource in the present (in the context of talking about tradition) without resorting to the invocation of false historical facts or to ideological assumptions that can be persuasively argued to be unfounded and or at least as unjust as what they purport to be defending themselves against. And, of course, without resorting to old notions that tradition is the handing down of various essences independent of any interpretation of them as such.

Doing so, however, requires a positive way of conceptualizing tradition that improves on the essentializing, organic metaphor that has been so frequently critiqued, and it requires more than the weak, albeit important, claim that it is interpretation of the past in the present. I don't think that I've encountered such a positive concept of tradition, one that does not come into direct conflict with the many critiques of tradition as a social construct. (I *have* seen some academics experimenting with scholarly genres in ways that, in my reading, indicate gestures in such a direction.[5]) Nor have I myself come up with such a positive concept of tradition. But, even in the absence

of such a positive concept – armed only with the "outdated" organic definition of tradition and the critiques that have subsequently complicated it – I remain convinced that *tradition* remains, for now anyway, a useful way to interpret certain cultural practices, and that it is still worthwhile for academics to debate and negotiate the provisional delineation of boundaries of particular traditions, including when it comes to music, and to Cretan music in particular.

For instance, because of my own concerns regarding both the successes and drawbacks of capitalist modernity, I would not advocate the conceptualizing of Cretan music as merely another *genre* or *category* of the world's music to choose from as a performer or as a consumer. I do believe there is value in viewing it *as* a tradition, and that there is value in the fact that most people who deal with Cretan music do view it and talk about it *as* a tradition. I continue to believe this, in spite of my simultaneous worries that in the Greek context, *tradition* often connotes something more along the lines of *folk music,* even though Cretan music is extensively developed in many of the most modern of ways one can imagine, from being taught in music schools to being produced by numerous record companies and having its own star system. Indeed, in some respects, Cretan music is only about as *folk-*traditional as is alternative rock, post-bop jazz or the music of Mikis Theodorakis. I continue to believe there is value in viewing Cretan music as a tradition in spite of the ways that some extremist populists and all-out fascists co-opt ideas about national or regional traditions to justify their most pernicious activities. Yes, even with these and other caveats, I still believe there is provisional value in viewing Cretan music as a tradition and as *paradosiaki mousiki (folk-traditional music).* And this is why, in articulating my own learning objectives, I am referring to Cretan music tradition using these words. (I could have chosen to write, simply, "Cretan music," which you can find on display at a Greek record store near you, filed between *nisiotika* [Greek island music] and *dimotika* [Greek folk music].)

One of the many interesting issues involved in thinking about what this tradition "is" involves matters of recording technology. There is a kind of schizophrenia about the way recording technologies come into (or do not come into) discussions of Cretan music. There is a long

and extensive history of commercial recording of Cretan music dating back at least to the 78 rpm recordings of 1917 (at last made publicly accessible on YouTube, but nowhere else that I am aware of). So, on the one hand, there is endless talk and writing about professional musicians and professional recordings that is reminiscent of what gets said in the context of many other musical genres in modern recording history, including artists themselves talking about specific records that influenced their own development. On the other hand, especially when the music is being invoked as folk-traditional, recording technologies receive little mention; and even in instances when "field" recording is occurring – at a wedding banquet, say, or during a gathering of family and friends at someone's house – it tends to be treated as a matter of passively recording what is happening.

Upon closer inspection, however, one sees a lot more going on. For example, even in "the field" where one encounters the music in its "most traditional" forms, tightly interwoven with the mix of scripted and improvisatory social rituals and interaction, one can observe instances where certain aspects of collective improvisation have been influenced by professional recording. For instance, since the lyrics of most Cretan music are comprised of rhyming couplets *(mantinades),* the choice of

> *I continue to believe there is value in viewing Cretan music as a tradition in spite of the ways that some extremist populists and all-out fascists co-opt ideas about national or regional traditions to justify their most pernicious activities.*

lyrics to go with a particular melody being played is largely open to a performer's choice. At one extreme – which I know from my own experience playing the mandolin in the 1990s – playing the same tune at one gathering after another might find the same

person improvising a different set of lyrics over that same melody each and every night, lyrics that "match" whatever the concerns of the moment happen to be. This "matching" has long been the hallmark of defining competence in *mantinada* improvisation in Crete. Yet, as certain melodies get associated with certain lyrics on professional recordings, one notices that in many gatherings – perhaps increasingly many – there is a tendency for many people to hear a melody, recognize it from a well-known recording, and to sing the lyrics from that particular recording. Do they "match" the context of performance? Maybe. Maybe not. Or perhaps the "match" is occurring in a new manner, as a way to emphasize through shared recognition (of "the song," which is to say: of a now fixed pairing of particular dance melodies with particular *mantinada* texts) the importance of a *shared* sentiment (as opposed to someone "asserting," possibly agonistically, an individual sentiment by improvising something), or of sharing nostalgia for a particular notion of Cretan identity, thereby "matching" the spirit of or justification for an everyday traditional-style gathering in a modern context.

In the opposite direction, after decades of the recording industry (in Germany, in New York, in Athens and in Crete) cutting Cretan records with clean tracks and modern production techniques, the invention of YouTube and miniature, portable digital recording technologies (cameras, phones) has meant that legions of Cretans are out recording Cretan music "in the field" every day, *and* (unlike when this was happening with cassettes pre-YouTube) they are putting them up for aficionados to watch, listen to and comment on. For an island of less than a million people, the sheer numbers of new videos (old and new) of Cretan music that are uploaded every day is astounding. This development is at the very least in tension with the almost century-long significance and influence of professional studio recording. (This argument also can be extended to the several regularly-aired television shows of Cretan music performances that have been prominent in recent decades.)

Internet recording technologies may have potential bearing on what the Cretan music tradition "is," especially for me, given that I'm located an ocean away, and that I'm not (or I'm no longer) Cretan in any usual sense of the word. After all, we are talking about

a musical tradition that is conceptualized in terms of a specific geographical location – for all intents and purposes it exists and happens only *there,* except when and where someone originally *from* there, or *descended* from there, brings it somewhere else – be it Athens, Greece or Astoria, New York. I would argue that the two limit cases of this conception that have wide currency today are as follows: First, the early 78s of Harilaos Piperakis, a Cretan who emigrated to the U.S., and who made a significant number of important early recordings of Cretan (and other Greek) music in the U.S. Second, Ross Daly, a musician of Irish descent who grew up in England, the U.S. and elsewhere, but then moved to Crete as a young adult in the 1970s (he's still there today) to learn to play the Cretan *lyra.* Although he, himself, claims that he was never interested in becoming an artist of Cretan music, but in becoming a *lyra* player. Using the Cretan *lyra* and Cretan music as his base, I think it is fair to say that at least the part of his work that is most directly influenced by Cretan music (e.g., his studio recordings of various Cretan tunes) is considered by many Cretan musicians and aficionados as "within" and part of Cretan music tradition, and not merely as imitation. Daly is seen as an artist who has been making his own important contributions to the continuation and developments of this tradition. (Hnaraki's book is evidence of this, as are several Greek public television documentaries over the last 10 years.[6]) So we have two very important figures, one of whom did not live in Crete but who did come from there, and another who wasn't local or even Greek for that matter, but who became "local."

It remains to be seen if or how technologies facilitate any further negotiation – for better or worse – of the extent and ways in which Cretan music is tied to geography. And, of course, all of this has relevance to my own purposes, because as a non-Cretan who is neither from nor living in Crete now, it isn't immediately evident how anything I play or do in the near future could ever remotely be considered a part of Cretan music tradition. On the other hand, is it possible that someday I could play something on YouTube that somehow exudes something so "Cretan" that Cretan music aficionados, even the ones who don't already know me, accept it as such? Or must I resign myself to the occasional instances of being there, as when, three years

ago, I played Cretan mandolin at the family gathering of a friend while visiting his paternal village? (Then again, does my predilection for performing Cretan music in small everyday life gatherings overflowing with collective improvisation mean that, in the end, I would regret it if the former were to happen?)

Artist

"Everybody should be able to make some music. Why, it's life!"

– *Maude, in the film,* Harold and Maude *(1971)*

Much as there has been extensive academic interrogation of the construction and invention of particular (folk and non-folk) traditions, and of tradition as an abstract concept, so has there been a great deal of good work done interrogating the modern invention of the very categories of art and literature.[7] This is interesting to me not only on its own terms, but also because the invention process often involves distinguishing art from folk art (and craft), and literature from folk literature (and folk expression and oral literature). (Such distinctions did not exist, for example, in the ancient Greek concept of *techne.*) The very invention of the *artist* in modernity usually involves a contrast with the very traditions with which something like Cretan music is closely associated. And it goes to show, yet again, just how complex these matters get once we start interrogating them: On the one hand, Cretan music is considered traditional and is closely associated with folk music, which is art's "other," but on the other hand, successful, innovative, professional Cretan music musicians are, like other musical artists, called *kallitechnes.*

What does it mean to be an artist in the context of Cretan music today? Well, between my ongoing discussions with professional artists of Cretan music and my lurking or participation in various online Greek forums and YouTube, I'm convinced that insider views on the matter more or less run the gamut of the philosophy of art/music. One encounters explanations that focus on personal emotional expression, to those that emphasize reflecting the time in which the artist lives – everything from an emphasis on innovation to mastery of a canon, from the importance of challenging an audience to the conservative expression of an autonomous aesthetic (like Cretanness) …

even versions of a universal "harmony of the spheres." (I don't think I've yet encountered any strictly formalist views, however, say, in the spirit of an Eduard Hanslick.[8]) And although I cannot dismiss entirely any of these views, the fact that I have encountered persuasive academic critiques of all such ways of defining artistry once and for all, I also have my reservations about them.

Besides, as someone who believes that the distinction between art and craft, between *artist* and artisan has been overstated – sometimes to good effect, sometimes marginalizing those who ought not to be – I actually have no real preference for the word *artist* (or *kallitechnis*) over *artisan.* I would be just as glad to be an artisan as an artist, except I can't help but worry over the implications that somehow this would be taken by others as an indication that the Cretan music tradition is musically *lesser,* and hence populated by artisans instead of *real* artists.

In other ways, I actually *prefer* the term artisan to artist, for much of the Cretan music tradition remains thoroughly interwoven with other non-musical rituals of everyday life. The number of videos on YouTube showing contemporary Cretan music musicians sitting at the dinner table playing so others can sing along or improvise lyrics, or get up and dance around the room, is remarkable. And even when Cretan music is performed on a stage, it still tends to happen more frequently at weddings and baptisms and other village celebrations than at formal concerts or Cretan music nightclubs.

In fact, as with *tradition,* what I yearn for is a positive way of conceptualizing *artist* or *artisan* that could somehow get beyond old meanings and connotations (bogged down by dichotomous, marginalizing assumptions) and at the same time say something in particular about artistry that enables meaningful discussions of quality and competence that are not plagued by the ideological alienations of so many modern discourses on quality in music, be they highbrow or capitalist-commercial. Thankfully, I have encountered concepts and expressions of ideas that strike me as potentially close to what I'm looking for in this regard.

In an academic context, and in English, the closest thing to such a concept that I have encountered is Richard Sennett's book *The*

Craftsman.[9] He defined craftsmanship as "the desire to do a job well for its own sake" (p. 9), but I don't take this definition, per se, as the positive concept I'm after, but rather as a first approximation of a more complex concept that is pointed to by his entire inquiry. An additional important aspect of Sennett's inquiry involves critiquing the alienating ways that "the work of the mind" and "the work of the hand" can get separated. Also, near the end of the book – and suggesting to me that the concept he is getting at is ultimately more just than articulations of artistry that have held sway in much modern aesthetic discourse, lay and academic – he also expands to say the following: "Three basic abilities are the foundation of craftsmanship. These are the ability to localize, to question, and to open up. The first involves making a matter concrete, the second reflecting on its qualities, the third expanding its sense" (p. 277). (I've also found it helpful that some of his examples in this book come from the world of music, and that in one of his other books, *Respect,* he incorporated into his analysis reflections on his own experiences with the world of Western classical music as a cellist.[10]) I continue thinking through Sennett's inquiry into craftsmanship and quality, and I do so in dialogue with students, who read this book in my Introduction to Ethics course and connect it to their own experiences, goals and interests, which are usually not music- or arts-related.

In a lay context, and in Greek, the closest thing to such a concept that I have encountered is that of *meraklis,* one of many everyday Greek words (a loanword from Turkish) that is difficult to translate into English with just a word. Interestingly, in a recent Cretan music CD, the large booklet accompanying the CD includes an English translation of all the original materials (various essays, song lyrics, credits). Knowing that *meraklis* does not readily translate into English with a single word, the translators include a footnote explaining it as follows:

> Meraklis is a man passionate about something he does and who always aims for perfection in, for example, playing music, cooking, work, partying or making handicraft. Meraki is this particular kind of passion.[11]

Of all the definitions of *meraklis* that I have seen, this one strikes me as the closest to my experiential understanding of it, having lived in Crete and being in frequent contact with Cretans and Cretan culture ever since. One thing in particular that I find noteworthy here is the emphasis on passion, as opposed to Sennett's mere desire. Also, although I am woefully ignorant of classics, I am aware (at only the most rudimentary level) that the ancient Greeks had one or more concepts of *arete,* which, although frequently translated as *virtue,* also has connotations of aiming for or achieving excellence or one's full potential. Although the word *arete* persists in modern Greek, I haven't heard it used in everyday life very often, as I have *meraklis,* so I wonder if there is a sense that *meraklis* is a retooling of what it means to be a person of *arete* – although, as the quote indicates, perhaps more in the context of certain everyday life activities than in the broader sense that it apparently came to suggest to the ancients.

Then again, who knows? If some of the ancient Greeks believed that training in music was important for the cultivation of virtue, some contemporary Greeks seem to view musical artistry as inseparable from virtue in a broader sense. In reading ethnographic interviews with Cretan musicians,[12] I was struck by a pattern, indicated in the following excerpts from three different interviews with musicians from the east end of the island:

Example 1

Q: What are the characteristics of a good musical artist? What should an artist have in order for you to say that he's a good *lyra* player?

A: I think … Should I say the main thing? That he's an *anthropos* [literally "human," but when used like this in Greece meaning something like, "a real human being with faults but on the whole a decent person"]. If he's *an anthropos,* he's also a good artist and whatever. He'll reach high without even knowing it.

Example 2

Q: Who do you think is a "good" musician? What are the characteristics of a good musician in your view? What must he offer, technique, sensitivity in playing? Or repertory?

A: In my view, for you to be a good musician, you must play. Since you play violin, you must be a good person, to have good instincts, and have good character. That is, to not offend the other, to have the other feel like you're his person. That's when you have success. Because no matter how well you play, how advanced you are, even if you are at the peak …

Q: No matter how many tunes you know?

A: Yes, whatever you might know, as many tunes and as well as you play them, when you're not a right person in society, you lose everything. You lose it all.

Example 3

Q: Who did people think was a good violinist, musical artist, what are the characteristics of a good musical artist?

A: Well there's something else. There are many big musical artists on many instruments, but above all what wins out is the word *"anthropos"* ["a real human being with faults but on the whole a decent person"]. And *then* musical artist. You're an *anthropos,* you're a musical artist, and you have all those things.

For now, my starting point for thinking about what it means to be an artist (or artisan), in any undertaking, is the idea of *passionate devotion to doing a good job for its own sake.* Of course, the phrase *for its own sake* is where it gets really interesting. For, given the mediatedness of all knowing and the interconnectedness, as well as internal contradictions of contexts, and just about everything else that an American neo-pragmatist or a French poststructuralist would be quick point out, any idea of *for its own sake* is problematic to say the least. And yet, given the repression-oppression of modernity and the various alienations of advancing capitalism, there is still something incredibly valuable, I think, in this idea – provided we handle it with care, remaining mindful of its problematic

aspects, and cognizant that perhaps it is little more than a convenient way to say, and to think, something more complex.

I don't expect to answer the question of what it means to be an artist, but only to continue to address it. For now, as a part of this process, I have become interested in certain aspects of both Sennett's inquiry into craftsmanship and the Cretan take on *meraklis.* And, I continue to believe that the process of trying to become a competent artist engaged in the tradition of Cretan music entails ongoing inquiry into what the very concept of *artist* might usefully come to mean.

Encore (I'm worried *now* …)

I would like to point out something about all these concepts (competence, tradition, artist): It could be that really good, easy-to-handle positive concepts will not emerge, or at least not make sense or stick, unless or until there have been certain fundamental positive changes to the socioeconomic infrastructure in which we live. After all, while ideas can and do make a difference, this does not mean that every possible good idea can be conceived of, or made sense of, from within any socio-historical context.

Or, it might be that such concepts become superfluous or irrelevant after such a positive change.

I also would like to mention the work of Jacques Attali.[13] Attali's work argues the provocative thesis that developments in musical forms and practices tend to herald – to prophesize – broader changes in the socioeconomic structure in ways that other areas of culture and analysis do not. "Mozart and Bach reflect the bourgeoisie's dream of harmony better than and prior to the whole of nineteenth-century political theory. There is in the operas of Cherubini a revolutionary zeal rarely attained in political debate. Janis Joplin, Bob Dylan, and Jimi Hendrix say more about the liberatory dream of the 1960s than any theory of crisis" (pp. 5-6). This happens, he explained, because "change is inscribed in noise faster than it transforms society" (p. 4):

> Music is prophecy. Its styles and economic organization are ahead of the rest of society because it explores, much faster than material reality can, the entire range of possibilities in a given code. It makes

audible the new world that will gradually become visible, that will impose itself and regulate the order of things. […] For this reason musicians, even when officially recognized, are dangerous, disturbing, and subversive; for this reason it is impossible to separate their history from that of repression and surveillance. (p. 11)

In addition:

> Music makes mutations audible. It obliges us to invent categories and new dynamics to regenerate social theory, which today has become crystallized, entrapped, moribund.
>
> […]
>
> Music is more than an object of study: it is a way of perceiving the world. A tool of understanding. Today, no theorizing accomplished through language or mathematics can suffice any longer; it is incapable of accounting for what is essential in time – the qualitative and the fluid, threats and violence. In the face of the growing ambiguity of the signs being used and exchanged, the most well-established concepts are crumbling and every theory is wavering. The available representations of the economy, trapped within frameworks erected in the seventeenth century or, at latest, toward 1850, can neither predict, describe, nor even express what awaits us.
>
> […]
>
> Today, music heralds – regardless of what the property mode of capital will be – the establishment of a society of repetition in which nothing will happen anymore. But at the same time, it heralds the emergence of a formidable subversion, one leading to a radically new organization never yet theorized, of which self-management is but a distant echo. (pp. 4-5)

Eugene Holland has drawn on Attali and noted how, for example, something like free jazz was a development in jazz – form and process – rooted in musical collective improvisation that might have heralded a post-capitalist free market society characterized by socioeconomic collective improvisation (something that so far has not come to pass), but that historical free jazz didn't stick (as a musical practice), and probably *couldn't*

stick, because a corresponding change to the socioeconomic infrastructure remained largely elusive.[14]

So, perhaps one of the fringe benefits of *doing* Cretan music instead of merely or primarily continuing to analyze it in terms of contemporary "scientific" discussions in the humanities and social sciences, is the possibility, however remote, of becoming privy to certain about-to-emerge experiences, ideas, structures of feeling, practices or ways humans can organize ourselves and our activities. The fact that Cretan music tradition, and Cretan culture in general, has frequently emphasized the importance of collective improvisation – not to mention insurrection against the imposition of unjust shackles, and the social activity of critical reflection about quality – makes me think that it's one potentially good place to hang out.

> […] This song is a whole human race. *I crossed that river, I fell fast to sleep, I woke up with shackles on my feet.* That's *everybody's* history. Across the ocean we thought we solved all of our problems. You have that revolution. You get that home. You get that job. You think you solved all your problems. You crossed that river and found you got shackles on your feet. And who's the judge? Is it some old guy, 74 years old, with black robes? It might be the young judging the old or the poor judging the rich. But no matter what mistakes we ever made … still got a last verse that holds out some hope. […]
>
> … *I'm worried **now** … but I won't be worried **long!**[15]*

Acknowledgements

Notes

1. (Cretan) *syrtos:* a dance and the associated musical form.

2. See Herzfeld, Michael. (1986). *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece.* New York: Pella.

3. Especially when it comes to Cretan rhyming lyrics: Ball, Eric L. (2002). *"Where* are the Folk? The Cretan Mantinada as Placed Literature." *Journal of Folklore Research, 39*(2-3): 147-172. Ball, Eric L. (2006). "Guarding the Wild: Place, Tradition, Literature, and the Environment in the Work of a Cretan Folk Poet." *Journal of American Folklore, 119*(473): 275-300. Also regarding so-called *ethnographic* novels and short stories *(ithografia)* by Cretan authors: Ball, Eric L. 2005. "Toward a Greek Ecocriticism: Place Awareness and Cultural Identity in Pandelis Prevelakis's *Oi dhromoi tis dhimiourghias." Journal of Modern Greek Studies,* 23: 1-37. And in terms of food: Ball, Eric L. (2003). "Greek Food After *Mousaka:* Cookbooks, 'Local' Culture, and the Cretan Diet." *Journal of Modern Greek Studies,* 21: 1-36.

4. See Handler, Richard and Jocelyn Linnekin. (1984). "Tradition, Genuine or Spurious." *Journal of American Folklore, 93*(385): 273-290.

5. One example of this might be my colleague Maria Hnaraki's book (2007), *Cretan Music: Unraveling Ariadne's Thread.* Athens: Kerkyra Publications.

6. For an opposing view, *perhaps* starting to see a decline, see the examples of Cretan receptions of Ross Daly's music in Dawe, Kevin. (1999). "Minotaurs or Musonauts? 'World Music' and Cretan Music." *Popular Music, 18*(2): 209-225.

7. For example, see: Jusdanis, Gregory. (1991). *Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Lambropoulos, Vassilis. (1988). *Literature as National Institution: The Politics of Modern Greek Criticism.* Princeton: Princeton University Press. Shiner, Larry. (2001). *The Invention of Art: A Cultural History.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

8. See Hanslick, Eduard. (1986 [1854]). *On the Musically Beautiful: A Contribution Towards the Revision of the Aesthetics of Music.* New York: Hackett.

9. See Sennett, Richard. (2008). *The Craftsman.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

10. See Sennett, Richard. (2003). *Respect in a World of Inequality.* New York: Norton.

11. Λαϊνάκης, Στέλιος & Χαρά. (2012). *Ταμπαχανιώτικα: Αστικά τραγούδια της δυτικής Κρήτης.* Greece: Rotunda Music. On p. 87 of the CD booklet.

12. The raw transcribed interviews are available through a large online archive, *Musical Routes,* from the Institute for Mediterranean Studies: http://digitalcrete. ims.forth.gr/MusicalRoutes/.

13. The book is Attali, Jacques. (1985 [1977]). *Noise: The Political Economy of Music.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

14. See Holland, Eugene. (2008). "Jazz Improvisation: Music of the People-to-Come" in Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (Eds.), *Deleuze, Guattari and the Production of the New.* London: Contiuum.

15. This is Pete Seeger on ABC television with Johnny Cash in 1970, which I viewed on YouTube January 1, 2014. (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHbTWJ9tjnw). For a slightly different wording, see Rosenthal, Bob & Sam Rosenthal (Eds.). (2012). *Pete Seeger In His Own Words.* Boulder: Paradigm. p. 245.

Historical Lessons: From Smallpox to Ebola

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Government notification. Isolation. Quarantine. Travel bans. Strict medical protocols. All of these approaches are being currently used or proposed to stop the current spread of Ebola in the United States and around the world. Designed to prevent the spread of contagious disease, all of these restrictions have proven ineffective in the face of a virulent, epidemic outbreak, as is evidenced by the worsening situation in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, and the cases that have appeared here at home. As an academic who has studied and published on the devastating effects of smallpox epidemics in colonial America, the current Ebola crisis has led me to reflect on the similarities inherent in the attempts to prevent the spread of these deadly contagions. I am astounded by the similarities between the generally ineffective methods used to try to control its spread during the 17th century and our modern attempts to contain the current outbreak of Ebola. I wonder if the controversial method ultimately used to control smallpox – inoculation – might be a tool to combat this new epidemic until vaccinations under development are ready for public use.

In describing the 18th century American colonies, medical historian James G. Mumford (1903) noted, "at the beginning of that era, of all the foes our ancestors faced, – hardship, famine, pestilence, Indian and foreign wars, – the most dreaded was smallpox" (p. 42). Diarists such as Samuel Sewall reflected the terror the disease inspired in their writings, as well as the futility of attempting to control its spread. Smallpox was easily identified in the 18th century by the distinctive characteristics of its symptoms. These included headache, chills, backache, high fever, vomiting and anxiety, followed by a rash on the face, chest, arms, back and legs and sores in the mouth, throat and nasal passages, and finally, the surface of the skin. Smallpox victims often developed a telltale pungent, sweetish odor as a result of the cracking and running of the sores, and victims suffered in agony as the disease progressed. If the patient survived, unsightly, permanent scarring became evident in many cases. While the symptoms of Ebola do not match the distinct and grotesque nature of smallpox, its 70 percent mortality rate is higher, and the impact on the body certainly as horrific. Smallpox was communicated between individuals, but, unlike Ebola, also could be contracted from inanimate objects used by those suffering from the illness. Clothing and bedding used by smallpox victims could shed deadly, virus-bearing particles and spread the infection for days or even weeks. Still, the similarities between the outbreak of smallpox and the current Ebola crisis are striking.

In America, the appearance of smallpox within a community engendered great fear, comparable to the concern over Ebola present today. To prevent its ravages, 17th and 18th century colonists tried every means available to forestall outbreaks of this contagious and deadly disease. Prior to the introduction of preventive inoculation and the development of the safer procedure of vaccination in 1798, long-standing colonial policies of government enforced notification, quarantine and isolation managed, with some success, to control its spread; still, smallpox continued to strike fear in the hearts of colonists not immune to the disease.

Strict laws and attempts to control smallpox notwithstanding, Boston suffered a severe epidemic in 1721, when New England minister Cotton Mather reported " … the Small Pox broke in upon the City of Boston, where it very much appeared with the Terrors of Death to the Inhabitants" (as cited in Warner & Tighe, 2001, p. 31). This epidemic affected nearly 6,000 residents of a population of 10,500. Nearly one in seven died of smallpox. The danger of smallpox and the terror it inspired resulted in widespread flight from outbreak areas as only avoiding contact with contaminated places and people afflicted with the disease could prevent infection.[1]

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Inoculation, which provided protection against smallpox by introducing a mild case that resulted in subsequent lifelong immunity, was not used frequently in most colonies until after the Revolution; however its effectiveness at containing epidemics has been clearly proven. By "the introduction of an antigenic substance or vaccine into the body to produce immunity to a specific disease" (Dictionary.com, n.d.), this historical method for the prevention of smallpox did induce immunity and successfully protected against infection. While a frightening and risky prospect, use of inoculation was the only effective way to prevent the spread of a deadly, fearsome malady.

In around 1720, reputable physicians in England had become acquainted with inoculation, first introduced in America by Dr. Zabdiel Boylston and Mather during the 1721 Boston epidemic. Mather became aware of the benefits of inoculation when he read a medical paper published in the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* in 1714. The paper substantiated the claims of Mather's slave, Onesimus, who had described

undergoing this preventive procedure while in Africa. Inoculation was a widely practiced folk custom in China, India, Africa, Asiatic countries and the Middle East beginning in the first century. Anecdotal evidence indicated that the practice had long been used in Africa when epidemics threatened, and inoculation virtually eliminated fatalities from the disease and conferred lifelong immunity.

While certainly not a panacea, the procedure, while a successful preventive measure, was counterintuitive; convincing colonists to induce illness to prevent illness proved difficult. Although its use entailed risks, inoculation provided benefits to individuals and communities, including a significantly lower fatality rate. Medical knowledge and experience of the time asserted that inoculated smallpox was "… much more mild and favourable, and far less mortal, than the natural sort" (Nettleton, 1722, p. 209). These statistics eventually helped convince a skeptical populace of the value of inoculation, yet the decision to infect oneself with a potentially fatal, often disfiguring and highly contagious disease was not made lightly.

As we face increased fear and the threat of a significant expansion of the problem in Africa, perhaps medical professionals may want to consider extraordinary means to combat an extraordinary public health crisis, in the same way American colonists confronted and lessened the epidemic spread of smallpox. As historian George Santayana wrote in 1905: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (p. 284).

Note

[1] For a comprehensive discussion of the 1721 Boston epidemic and ensuing controversy over inoculation, see A. B. Tourtellot's, *Benjamin Franklin: The Shaping of Genius: The Boston Years* (1977).

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Professional Development Update: The Genesee Valley Center Festival of Ideas

Lynne Wiley, Genesee Valley Center

The Genesee Valley Center's "Festival of Ideas" event originated in June 2000 as an activity of the GVC Professional Development Committee, whose members then included, among others, GVC's former dean, Bob Milton; Wayne Willis, retiring in the fall of 2014 after 37 years with the college; and Mary Klinger, current faculty chair. Conceived as an opportunity to encourage "intellectual and professional growth among faculty in all fields of study and share and celebrate some of the results with one another and with our students" (according to a draft memo from the committee), the festival has evolved into an annual tradition that affords all members of the GVC community an opportunity to make presentations about scholarly, teaching, personal or professional interests in an event that takes place over one to two days each summer.

Not having viewed the historical record until recently, I was struck by the extent to which the committee's goals in 2000 accorded with the desire expressed in recent years to continue to find ways to reinvigorate and re-energize the intellectual foundations of our community – a desire fulfilled not only by continuing the festival, but by setting aside time during regular meetings of the center for short discussions on intellectual topics of general interest, holding regular academic retreats, and encouraging faculty and staff to undertake stimulating and creative approaches to studies and the delivery of services to students.

As the 2000 Professional Development Committee draft also noted, "we all know [that] our work with students and our college service activities have a powerful tendency to use up almost all (it sometimes seems like *more* than all) of our time and energy. We hope that the festival can act as a small counterforce that causes us to give public recognition to the importance of our wider professional development, that enables us to better know each other's ideas and interests, and that allows our students to see us in a somewhat different light than they do on an everyday

basis." Although we've not been able to involve students in the festival to the extent we would like, it has proven to be a source of intellectual renewal, engaging conversation, charming insight into colleagues, introductions to a wide range of topics, and a good deal of humor and good will.

Members of the GVC community submit ideas for presentations to a coordinating committee that reviews the proposals and determines how much time to allocate for the festival. Reflecting the multiplicity of members' interests, topics have ranged from Scholars Across the College presentations and related teaching and scholarly work, to cooking demonstrations, descriptions of diving expeditions and travelogues.

The June 2014 festival was an especially rich experience. GVC was fortunate to have two Scholars Across the College from our center this year, a faculty member returning from a reassignment, a retiring faculty member, and other faculty and staff members who offered fascinating perspectives on their areas of interest.

The festival began with a presentation by mentor Gayle Stever on the "Basics of Social Media: Using Facebook and Twitter." Gayle studies fan groups and is a leading proponent of the idea that the attraction of fans to celebrities is not abnormal, as has previously been suggested, but a form of "parasocial" attachment that has its origins in basic attachment theory. Gayle uses social media to gather data for her research, and her presentation focused on the techniques one employs to successfully navigate Twitter and Facebook.

Longtime arts mentor Marc Cirigliano then discussed "Will the Real Madame Récamier Please Stand Up?" Based on a collegewide art history study group that he has offered for the past several terms, Marc invited the audience to engage in an analysis of two versions of a portrait of Madame Récamier, a French society leader of the early 19th century. The

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presentation focused on whether the lens of historical knowledge alters the manner in which viewers experience a painting and, if so, how.

Following lunch, Susan Hollis offered her Scholars Across the College presentation, "The Journey Continues: The Origins and Early Roles of Five Ancient Egyptian Goddesses." Susan's continuing interest in the history of ancient Egypt and the goddesses Neith, Hathor, Nut, Isis and Nephthys informed her discussion of the manner in which the goddesses developed and the roles they played in the early history of Egypt (late predynastic through the end of the Old Kingdom [circa 2150 BCE]).

The festival continued with a discussion by mentor Lue Turner about the results of a recent reassignment she received to study the distinctive way in which a group of Iowa women responded to a major flood. "Stitching Through Disaster: Quiltmakers' Perspectives" described, through moving personal accounts, the manner in which the quilts produced by members of a local quilting guild became a

form of healing not only for families affected by the flood, but for the quilt makers themselves.

I then discussed "History, Literature, Landscape, and Imagination: Travels on Route 20," a personal, interdisciplinary reflection about the way in which history comes alive when traveling the Great Western Turnpike. Drawing from works of literature, historical records, family genealogy and personal experience, I described the Revolutionary

War heroes, frontiersmen, pioneers, Indian tribes, Civil War generals, abolitionists and fictional characters who populate that real and imaginary landscape.

The 2014 festival concluded with a memoir by mentor Wayne Willis titled "A Swimmer in the Ocean of Learning." Wayne offered an intimate glimpse into the early days of the college, including the steps that led him to become a member of the Empire State College faculty, his interpretation of and appreciation

for the college's distinctive mission, his experience of being involved in a career in which he was continually learning and his conviction that mentoring is a deeply student-centered enterprise.

One final thought: The Festival of Ideas was originally intended as an activity to which faculty, staff and guests from around the college would be invited – so, come join us during the last week of June 2015! Contact me at Lynne.Wiley@esc.edu for more information.

> *"We learn in order to add to, extend, or change the structure of our expectations, that is, our meaning perspectives and schemes; learning to change these structures of meaning is fundamentally transformative."*
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> *– Jack Mezirow (1923-2014)*
> Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning
> *San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991, p. 62*

Family Chorus

Robert Congemi, Northeast Center

Earlier today, I had occasion to walk to the Rockefeller Plaza, choosing this year to take some part in the July 4th Independence Day activities and fireworks, and when I did so, I luckily chanced upon a ceremony at one end of the Plaza where dozens of people were being sworn in as United States citizens. I needed all my sophistication not to be quite emotional as men and women from places like Nigeria, Indonesia, Ukraine, Tobago and the Balkans made their way to a podium to a white-haired judge, whose own mother had come from Belfast 80 years ago, and received their official notice of American citizenship. And seeing this, especially when a lady from Albania received her notice, made me think of my own grandmother from Poland and write the little story that follows. Thus, once again, I seek to ransack my past, to find those nearly-lost moments and muse upon them until – great surprise and delight – they blossom with all the meaning inherent in them or I, rather sadly, imbue them with meaning.

Among the memories of my grandmother that often come to mind are those that involve what I call our "family chorus." I must tell you that the years that gave birth and fruition to the family chorus were those of World War II. Sadly, this was a very hard time for my family. Poor then, the family's years of grandchildren becoming doctors and entrepreneurs and academics were still in the future. One of my grandfathers was a carpenter when he could find work, while the other was an odd job man who scarcely ever found work. One of my grandmothers had a dozen children and lived in a Brooklyn tenement; the other grandmother worked as a domestic, and she is the person that this memory is principally about. Before they were drafted, her young sons were clerks and errand boys. Her daughter was a secretary.

With the war, Uncle Aldo and Uncle Dariusz were sent to the South Pacific, and my Uncle Frankie to Europe. My grandmother, Mary, the domestic, lived above a retail shoe store. She had dealt with more than her share – her husband had disappeared on her, two sons fought on Iwo Jima and Bataan, the other flew bombing raids over Germany. Also, there was Poland, her homeland, ravished by Germany on one side and Russia on the other.

Robert Congemi

"I don't think my family could still have our farm," she confessed to me one day, "or even if any of them are still alive."

So to cheer grandmother up, my mother and my father, who had not been drafted because he had three children and worked in a weapons-producing factory, walked us a mile or so every Sunday from Cobble Hill to Bed-Stuy to visit grandmother, to help her out as she needed, enjoy her Sunday dinner, and have me and my brother and sister sing songs for her. It was one of her great delights in life. Her grandchildren would line up before her, she sitting in her rocking chair looking up at us, my mother and father at the little kitchen table to one side of her, my older aunt Irena at the other, and we would sing a medley of popular songs for her. They always brought great happiness and tears to her eyes.

"Sing the Nat King Cole song for me," she might say, an assiduous fan of the pop music of the time.

Or: "Bing Crosby. You know I love Bing Crosby."

"That's it," my aunt Irena, the secretary, who lived in the Bronx, would second.

And we would follow my grandmother's wishes with all the energy and enthusiasm we could muster, almost losing control of ourselves in our desire to entertain our beloved, little matriarch.

"I'm dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to knowwww,"

we crooned whether near Christmas time or far from it, say, during the hottest days of mid-August. My sister was 6 at the time and my brother 4. At 10, I was the eldest, but even I hadn't dreamt of a white Christmas like the ones I used to know. Of course, it didn't matter. My grandmother, a hitherto-tenacious Polish woman, was immeasurably pleased. Our singing took her mind off everything: as I said, the fate of her much-loved homeland, the abandonment by her husband, her sons fighting for America in island jungles and European forests thousands of miles away.

Once in a while, I went by myself with my father to visit grandmother, and during the hard early years of the war, she would talk openly to him, for after all, he was her eldest son.

"Oh, my poor people," she might begin, very knowledgeable on the subject. "Can you imagine? What a month? First, the Germans from the west, days later the Russians from the east, and then total destruction a few days after that!"

My father was never quite sure what he could say regarding such a debacle.

"And the Jews, the poor Jews," she went on. "Are there words for their terrible fate? I am proud that Polish Christians tried so much to help these poor people." She held out her hands in frustration. "What else is to be done but to risk one's life for one's neighbors of a lifetime? Of generations."

"Yes, Momma," my father said.

"And finally, the burning of Warsaw. Why? As a young girl, I visited there for two weeks. What a beautiful city, so historic!"

Tears came to her eyes, and I thought, indeed, how tiny and vulnerable a woman she actually was.

But the times she spoke regarding her sons overseas were just as upsetting. On another occasion, I was left alone with her for a few hours by my father who needed to run some errands for her. For years, grandmother had been a semi-cripple, having to drag one leg behind her and hold onto a wall or piece of furniture in order to walk anywhere, her condition, the legacy of an accident she was too poor to get attended to. So I eagerly helped her wash dishes in the sink and sweep the floor of the large, cold-water, one-room flat that was her home.

"I don't know where they are, Paul," she confessed to me. "In the Pacific somewhere is the most I know about two of them. Will we win there? Are my boys safe there?"

"I'm sure they are not in big battles," I was old enough to tell her.

"And Germany? Your Uncle Frankie flies in airplanes over Germany. Again and again. How many times does he have to do this? Until he gets killed? Enough is enough. Shouldn't I think this way?"

"Yes, yes, you should. But it will be OK, Grandma."

But, of course, it wasn't okay, and when the War Department told her by letter that her son Francis had been killed in a bombing raid over Berlin, the little old woman, who had always endured this hard life of poverty in Poland and then in America, fell into a great and sudden despair. It was terrible. She lay in her bed or sat in her rocking chair for hours and hours and thought: What would be next? Which of her sons would be killed next? Or what more could possibly happen to her homeland of Poland?

No one was quite sure what to do about this – not my father, not my mother, nor my aunt.

"I have never seen her like this," my aunt told us. "She is always so strong."

"Everyone has a breaking point," my mother pointed out.

Of course, grandmother tried at times to pretend that everything was all right; that she wasn't done in by life. She agreed to conversation or even hummed a song when she thought people might be especially watching her.

"I like The Andrews Sisters, too," she might say, apropos of nothing.

But, of course, such behavior was not very real. In my family, even small emotions were hard to conceal. So who could conceal catastrophes? We noticed my grandmother became quite negligent – sometimes she left all undone her household chores, or she slept for days in her clothing, or she stopped combing her long, lovely hair and then braiding it as was her daily habit since childhood. She ceased to read the newspapers, and didn't bother to turn on the radio.

"For her to hear the latest war report?" my father explained to me. "And feel more pain? Why bother?"

When it got to the point where we were all very alarmed, that this great and hitherto resolute woman did not seem able to rid herself of what she was feeling toward life, the family talked about what we might do. After all, she *was* the backbone and center of our family, the mainstay of our lives. We owed it to her, and we had to redeem her!

It wasn't clear who thought of it first, but somehow it came to the family that what might have a chance of helping grandmother, and really all of us, would be – why hadn't

we thought of it earlier? – to have her grandchildren … sing to her! Sing with all the conviction and energy in their young bodies. So the Sunday morning following the arrival of this plan, my family and I walked to her house for Sunday dinner as usual, my aunt preceding us there to help with the preparation for our concert. The neighborhood that day was sleepy and quiet even for Brooklyn, the war temporarily a dreadfulness far away, and after dinner, we cleaned up the dishes, rearranged a few chairs and the performance began. Grandmother had been even more disconnected than ever. Suddenly, my father gave the sign and my siblings and I took turns in the bathroom located down the hallway outside my grandmother's flat, changed into the fanciest clothes we owned and burst back into her flat, ready to perform. My brother and I had our little suits on and outrageous matching ties and handkerchiefs. My sister wore her cute little white dress, all poufy, with pink bows everywhere. Seeing us, grandmother's mouth did indeed drop open a bit, and my father explained that we would sing for her and try as we could to entertain her back into life. Afterward, I learned that my father, mother and aunt had carefully avoided having us sing songs of love related to the war, of which there were many at the time.

"No, 'Darling, Please Wait for Me,'" my mother judiciously observed.

"No, 'Don't sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me, 'til I come marching home,'" my aunt added.

That being the case, our concert started with my 6-year-old sister singing a snappy little ditty enormously popular at the time titled "Deep in the Heart of Texas." Now, it hardly needs to be pointed out that my sister had never been to Texas; indeed, I don't think she even had been to New Jersey. But there she was, in her poufy white dress and pink ribbons, almost overwhelmed in clothing material, her blond ringlets bouncing with abandon as she sang, my sister even tap dancing a little to the lyrics of the song in her shiny black patent leather shoes. With great conviction, she sang her heart out about how she was deep in the heart of Texas, knowing that sage was in bloom smelling like perfume and reminding her of the one she loved. Yes, she was in Texas where cowboys cried ki-yippi-pie-yi, rabbits rushed around the brush and coyotes wailed along the

trail. Sneaking a look at her, I could see my grandmother staring at my sister in what could only be described as a rather baffled manner.

My sister's Texas aria was followed by a song from me, my turn being recognized as the older grandson. There *I* was, this 10-year-old boy, still playing board games by myself, trying to avoid homework above all in life, but for the moment, apparently wandering around until I finally found somebody named "You," the eponymous individual in the song "It Had to Be You." With great energy, I crooned out that in finding this person "You," I had found someone who would make me be true, feel blue and even be glad just to be sad thinking of "You." I went on, adding that others I'd seen might never be mean or cross or try to be boss, but inexplicably they wouldn't do, because despite all of the faults of "You," nobody else gave me a thrill, which made me love "You" still. For me, it simply had to be "You." Looking once again at my grandmother, I now could see that she was transfixed with disbelief.

Finally, not to be outdone, my 4-year-old brother topped both his older siblings. With untoward strength of sound for such a young tyke, *he* sang the song titled "That Old Black Magic." According to this song, my brother, who seemed scarcely out of his crib, only recently eating real food, and finally getting pretty good at walking, was possessed of … that old black magic that had him in its spell, that old black magic that was weaved so well! Its icy fingers ran up and down his spine – the same old witchcraft when his lover's eyes met "mine." It was a tingle that he felt inside, like an elevator that starts to ride. Moreover, he was a leaf that was caught in the tide – whatever that meant – and it got worse. My brother, according to the song's lyrics, went down and down, round and round, in a spin, loving the spin he was in, under that old black magic called love. Of course, he should stay away, but what could he do? He heard her name and he was aflame, aflame with such a burning desire that only a kiss could put out the fire!

I will spare you, gentle reader, the climax to all this passionate but incongruous singing, except to inform you that we finished our family concert by my sister and brother and I singing en masse that we were once again "dreaming of a white Christmas, just like the ones we used to know, where the tree tops glistened and children listened to hear sleigh bells in the snow." Need I point out that we didn't know *that* many Christmases, there were scarcely any trees in Brooklyn, and I'm not certain if any of us really knew what sleigh bells were?

But it didn't matter. By this time, everyone in the room was smiling or grinning or scratching their head or starting to giggle, a giggling that just simply couldn't be controlled, and then my father started to laugh out loud. It was all crazy, simply crazy. Nobody in the family had quite realized what our concert would look like when performed for anyone reasonably sane. But, once again, it didn't matter, because when we stared at my grandmother, who was amazed beyond words, we intuited somehow that everything would be all right – or at least as "all right" as we could ever hope for. Grandmother was grinning and shaking her head now in total disbelief, too. Somehow, such a spectacle would sustain us, our family would survive and our grandmother would be a little OK once again with the world.

Mentor-Student Parallels: A Reflection

Sue Epstein, Center for Distance Learning

L ast June, I was accepted into the 15 member 2013-2014 cohort of the Work and Family Researchers Network's Early Career Scholars (ECS) Program. The goal of the program is to support recent doctoral graduates and junior faculty researching work-family issues to advance in their academic careers. A key element of the ECS program is participation in a series of specially designed workshops at the 2014 Work and Family Researchers Network (WFRN) Conference. As I reflected on my experiences with the ECS program's application process and conference, I noticed the similarities between these experiences and those of our adult students, and the ways in which my participation in this program was helpful to my work-family research, as well as my mentoring.

First, there was the application process itself. This program is open to researchers who completed their doctoral degrees within the past four years. My defense was in September 2010. Thus, this was my last opportunity to participate in a program that had been on my professional "things-to-do" list. Throughout the application process I wondered, much like my concern with the window of time closing for my participating in the ECS program, if our students feel that their educational window is closing. Might completing a SUNY Empire State College degree be viewed as a last opportunity for completing a goal?

My dissertation focused on what factors might predict whether a supervisor displays work-life supportive behaviors to his or her subordinates. This topic combined my interest in work-life issues with my content area of leadership. I usually attend conferences for management faculty where there are often many leadership sessions but fewer work-life sessions. Many of the work-life researchers are based in sociology departments and our paths do not cross. I knew that the ECS program would facilitate my developing a work-life research network across disciplines. So I thought: Do our students see their studies at ESC as a way of

creating new networks? And do they wonder if those networks will provide entry into new career and life possibilities?

Along with the sense of urgency, I also had a personal-professional (i.e., work-family) complication. I already had a long-standing family commitment for that same weekend. If I were accepted to the ECS program, I would not be able to honor that commitment; my desire to participate in the ECS program would impact my family. I discussed this with my husband and our three children. My husband and I have tried to impress upon our children that while we greatly value our family time, we also each greatly value our careers. Our children have their own interests and are accustomed to discussions of the trade-offs, compromises and sacrifices that each of us must make in order for our family to function well as a unit, as well as for each of us as individuals. In that context, I was able to explain the importance of the program to me professionally and that, if accepted, I would attend the conference. Luckily, my message was received with support from all family members! Our students often have professional and personal responsibilities that they must negotiate and trade-offs they must make as they pursue their ESC degrees. Students likely have family members whose needs must be taken into consideration along with the students' educational goals.

I was accepted into the program, and once at the conference, I was looking forward to interacting with other members in my cohort. I noticed a woman wearing a badge with our ECS program identifier and proactively approached her. As a conversation opener, I noted that we were heading to the same meeting room. Her response: "Oh no, we can't be heading to the same place. I am going to the Early Career Scholars Program and you are obviously not in the early stages of your career." I know I have several gray hairs and that I do not look fresh out of a doctoral program, but I was still startled by her comment. For our students, what reactions do they get when

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they tell peers, family and/or friends that they are in school for their undergraduate degrees? What impact do those comments have on our students and, perhaps, their motivation for and assessment of success while at ESC?

One of the most valuable sessions was a discussion with a panel of well-established, senior career work-family researchers. These scholars were asked for ideas on how early career scholars should chart successful careers. Their advice centered on early career scholars crafting individual paths that fit with individual goals, life circumstances and opportunities. Certainly the senior scholars shared their triumphs, obstacles, mistakes and wisdom from hindsight. However, the exact recommended path for early career scholars to pursue was something that couldn't be definitively charted at the conference. Similarly, as a mentor I can share with my mentees my path, opinions and thoughts but, ultimately, the mentee must craft his or her path.

I left the conference with a sense of satisfaction that I had been chosen for and participated in the ECS program. My lists of research ideas and strategies for completing my research

projects were longer than when I arrived. Most importantly, my optimism about my path, even with the unknowns, was high. Once again, there is a link to my mentoring. My mentees often express satisfaction, relief and optimism after completing their rationale essays and degree plans.

And now, just a few months post-conference, I find myself wanting to hold on to the momentum started at the conference. How can I maintain the trajectory of optimism and productivity? And for my mentees, how can I help them maintain their optimism and energy after a concurred degree – to ensure they reach their goal of graduation? I don't have the answers yet, but it is one of the areas I expect to continue to explore!

> *"Transformative learning may be defined as learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open and emotionally able to change."*
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> *– Jack Mezirow (1923-2014)*
> *In Jack Mezirow, Edward W. Taylor and Associates (Eds.)*
> Transformative Learning in Practice:
> Insights from Community, Workplace and Higher Education
> *San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009, p. 22*

On Mentoring: Coaching Academic Self-Confidence Among Adult Students

Jessica Kindred, The College of New Rochelle, School of New Resources

As a sixth grader, I objected when standardized tests asked for my sex, or as we call it now, "gender." I had recently become aware that being female was not equal to being male, especially to my male teacher at the time, who said that my objections made me a "women's libber." He assured me that the sex question was not being graded, even as I protested that it distracted me from the questions that *were* being graded. Decades later, the research has been done to demonstrate the phenomenon of "stereotype threat." Since 1995, Claude Steele and his colleagues have published research explaining that the fear of confirming a stereotype about a social identity group can undermine test performance due to the unconscious drain on cognitive resources of focus and attention (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Steele, 2010). This fear, further, can be primed or triggered simply by being asked questions about one's race and gender identity before testing.

Here is an illustration of stereotype threat in action: A young Asian-American girl who is asked for her gender before a math test is likely to do worse on the test than if she were asked for her ethnicity, due to the respective stereotypes associated with each of these groups in terms of math intelligence (Ambady, Shih, Kim, & Pittinsky, 2001). Ironically, her fear of failing to confirm the Asian stereotype of being good at math ultimately exceeds her fear of confirming the female stereotype of not being good at math, resulting in the opposite effect on test performance in adolescence (Cheryan & Bodenhausen, 2000). The underlying point is that identity cues interfere with test performance based on the cultural pressures and stereotypes associated with those social identity categories.

This example demonstrates the complex effects of identity relations on academic performance, including the partner phenomenon of stereotype threat described as "stereotype lift." For American students of non-Asian minority groups, the stereotypes invoked by questions of race and ethnicity rarely provide an opportunity for stereotype lift in terms of academic performance. To this day, despite awareness of the effects of so-called "identity priming" on academic performance, the testing services persist in reproducing categorical inequalities in test performance by requiring demographic information at the beginning of standardized tests rather than at the end. In doing so, they prime students at all levels about the categories of race and gender that they inhabit and thereby falsely depress or lift their test performance accordingly (Danaher & Crandall, 2008).

As an advisor and teacher at the College of New Rochelle, School of New Resources in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn where most of my students are African-American women, I educate students and colleagues as much as possible about the phenomenon of stereotype threat. Our students face this potential threat on many fronts, most of all through their racial identity in a culture that stereotypes and even provides extensive research to support the idea that African-American students perform less well than Caucasian-American students (Gabriel, 2010), with racial categories often standing in for socioeconomic status. Our students also face the stereotype threat associated with being adults in college, many having internalized the "old dogs can't learn new tricks" adage. Many adult students express the thought that they should have gone to college right after high school, despite their awareness of the many factors that prevented them from doing so, including having had negative experiences of school, experiencing life interruptions such as teenage pregnancy or facing the socioeconomic disadvantages of having to go from high school straight to work. Many adult students enter college with uneven academic skills, but as anyone who works with adult students will attest, they have motivation in abundance. In contrast to the findings of overconfidence among college-age students in their late teens and early 20s (Twenge, 2007), one consequence of their uneven skills is a lack of academic self-

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confidence among the students with whom I work. Low academic self-confidence, coupled with and exacerbated by stereotype threat, makes them vulnerable as students (Aronson & Inzlicht, 2004; Tough, 2014).

A few examples of this lack of confidence and its threat to student academic performance may help to illustrate this point. In one instance, I crossed paths with a student in the hallway and inquired about how his class was going. He said that he was skipping class because students were taking an exam and he hadn't studied and knew he would fail. I asked about his attendance and whether he had kept up with the work. He said his attendance had been good and that he had done all of the assignments. I told him to go and take the test, suggesting that it's better to fail with 50 than zero. I also reminded him that class attendance and assignments are a form of studying, so in fact he *had* studied. I added, "Remember this: We always know more than we think we know." This is a refrain I teach students in confidence-building workshops that I conduct

several times each semester. The student came back a week later to report that he had passed the exam.

In another instance, a student said that he thought he was passing his class and he did not want to do the required oral presentation that accounts for 12.5 percent of the final grade, so he planned to skip class that day. He said presenting in front of people made him uncomfortable. I suggested that he practice feeling comfortable about feeling uncomfortable, which surprised him. And I coached him to tell the class he was nervous about presenting and that would help him be more comfortable while eliciting the support of class members. He came back the next day saying he had done just what I said, had actually presented, and hoped he did well; and by his professor's account, he did. Both of these examples attest to the stereotype threat conditions of these students as men in a school of 90 percent women, adults facing college after years without school experience, and African-Americans in the context of higher education today.

Many of our female students express a deep fear and even a hatred of math. Almost more than any other issue, I coach students about their math anxiety. In this area, I have developed a strong perspective, a strategy and almost a script. Most students needing support about math anxiety are those who are being advised to take the requisite math class after several semesters of resistance. They say, "But I hate math!" For some, tears arise just from the word "math." I ask them if they have any evidence that they are not good at math, and most do not. I suggest that their feelings are probably not about math, but about an experience or event in a math class. Many recount traumatic moments, often early in high school, when they learned that math was not for them; often these instances involved the introduction of variables in which letters were introduced to substitute for numbers and confusion ensued. I try to engage them in considering that the grief they experience is really about math being taken away from them, rather than about math itself. I ask them to remember back to the age of 8 or 9. Most of these women remember liking math then and doing well in it, too. I often inform them about the American Association of University Women (1991) research that showed that girls do as well and better at math than boys all

the way through school, but that girls start to believe that they are not good at math around the teenage years and most opt out of math classes as soon as they are given a choice, usually in the transition from high school to college (Hill, Corbett, & St. Rose, 2010).

Then I introduce them to my "conspiracy theory" about math. It is a strong form of the stereotype threat idea. I tell them that they have been taught to hate math so that they will choose not to pursue math so that they (women and minorities) will be financially disempowered and dependent. I explain that there is a very reliable correlation between how much math you take and how much money you make; just look at the salaries associated with business and engineering compared to teaching and social work (James, 2013; Rose & Betts, 2001). I try to engage them to consider that math, like everything, is just learning: No one is born knowing math. I tell them that in a so-called "free country" such as the United States, people are controlled and contained through the shaping of fear. I ask them to consider how cultural stereotypes, marketed through cultural media, have governed their choices to avoid math, even while they experience those fears and choices as deeply personal and individual. After all this, I describe a small assignment for them to address these issues and prepare

> *They say, "But I hate math!" For some, tears arise just from the word "math." I ask them if they have any evidence that they are not good at math, and most do not.*

themselves to take and pass the math class ahead. "Write your love letter to math," I tell them. "It goes like this: 'Dear Math, I think we were once very close, but something came between us.' Then write about any memories that relate to fears and feelings about math. Conclude by saying, 'I can't wait to get to know and love you again. I think we can

have a wonderful relationship and I will open myself to understanding you.'" Students laugh when I suggest this, but many write the letter and go on to complete the graduation math requirements.

The love letter to math operates as a therapeutic device, enabling students to engage their histories while rewriting their futures. I also see it as capitalizing on the placebo effect, a powerful and often underused human potential. The placebo effect is the ability of an inert action or substance to exhibit effects on the mind and body due to the power of belief itself. Students' beliefs that what they are doing will help them is supported by such assignments as the love letter to math. In a similar vein, Aronson, Fried and Good (2002) have shown that belief in a flexible rather than fixed model of intelligence supports students in facing conditions of stereotype threat. This research suggests that learning about neural plasticity can have a powerful influence on the sense of one's self as a learner. Students who learn or believe that their brains are changing as they learn tend to learn better and earn better grades than those who believe that intelligence is a fixed characteristic. Such lessons are important in promoting students' senses of ability and confidence as they face college against the odds. In confidence-building workshops, I teach students about the brain's plasticity and also its responses to stress; I coach students in breathing deeply and well in order to communicate to their brains that they are OK, that the test is just paper and pen rather than a bear to run from. I suggest to students that they write three sentences in the backs of their notebooks every day so that when they encounter the test situation, these sentences will be there for them, as a matter of habit. The sentences are: "I have learned everything I need to know"; "I know more than I think I know"; and "My brain is my very best friend."

Note

There is a great deal written on the topic of "stereotype threat." The materials referenced in the essay provide a glimpse into research in this important area. Also, a full review of the issues of stereotype threat and a bibliography of sources can be found at www.ReducingStereotypeThreat.org.

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From Children to Adults: Applying Developmentally Appropriate Practice to an Adult Online Learning Environment

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As she enters the classroom for the first time, little Ginny feels shy and lonely. Although she attended preschool last year, this classroom is much larger. She looks around the room nervously as another child approaches and asks her about the teddy bear that is clutched in her hands. "I like your bear," he says with a smile. She holds it out for him to admire. He pats it on the head and says, "We have a bed in the house area. Let's put him in it." She smiles and runs off to the housekeeping area with her new friend, dragging the bear behind her.

Our work in early childhood is deeply rooted in the pedagogy that we call "developmentally appropriate practice." This pedagogy is grounded in research and helps the field define how young children develop and learn from birth to age 8. It provides the framework for our work with young children and families, and therefore it is deeply embedded in early childhood teacher education programs. This paper defines developmentally appropriate practice (as developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC]) and explores how it relates to the social aspects of the teaching and learning of adults in an online environment through the eyes of an early childhood teacher and mentor.

Defining Developmentally Appropriate Practice

Every day, teachers in early childhood programs make numerous decisions about teaching and learning in their classrooms. They prepare the classroom environment by setting up learning centers, design and implement the curriculum, provide resources and materials for the children, and support children as they participate in the classroom activities. As these decisions are made, effective early childhood educators continually evaluate the desired outcomes for children's learning and development. Developmentally appropriate practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) teaches

us that knowledge must inform decision-making, goals must be challenging and achievable, and teaching must be intentional to be effective. More specifically, teachers should begin with adequate knowledge about where the student currently stands in their developmental trajectory. While this information rarely comes to us before a young child enters the classroom, it can be collected through an interview with a family member/guardian or accessed through observation with formal and informal assessment instruments. From there, we set the goals for the individual child as well as the classroom as a whole. Once goals are set, we move on to the curriculum through intentional teaching. Teachers develop activities around themes, which are frequently child-initiated. Intentional teaching, although a new adaptation in the field, asks us to be selective and intentional with the learning activities we choose. Rather than setting up activities because they are convenient or fun (or provided by a publisher website), teachers make purposeful selections based on broad learning objectives.

In a preschool classroom, the teacher might develop a theme based on spring planting. He or she would develop the theme and bring it into all the learning centers so that children are immersed in the topic. They might grow plants from seeds or measure how tall an amaryllis grows in the science area; they might use garden gloves and tools in the sand and water table; they might paint using real flowers, read stories about planting and sort seeds. Within the activities, the teacher would integrate opportunities for children to meet individual goals such as using a pair of scissors, developing prewriting skills, or practicing early math skills, social skills or language arts. While the teacher lays the groundwork for teaching and learning through the classroom environment, the children self-select their activities. The children may spend all morning

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in one area or move through several activities over the course of the morning, always at their own pace.

Adopting a framework for developmentally appropriate practice leads to high-quality experiences for children through the decisions made by their teachers. Such teaching is described in the Developmentally Appropriate Practice position statement in the form of Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice across five key aspects of the teacher's role: "creating a caring community of learners," "teaching to enhance development and learning," "planning curriculum to achieve important goals," "assessing children's development and learning," and "establishing reciprocal relationships with families" (NAEYC, 2009, pp. 16-23).

These practices can be analyzed further by considering three questions from NAEYC (2009): "What is known about child development and learning?" "What is known about each child as an individual?" "What is

known about the social and cultural contexts in which children live?" (pp. 9-10). These questions require us to review our knowledge of child development on a regular basis, and take time to learn more about the individual needs and interests of each child with great attention to their cultural contexts.

While not designed for an adult learner, these practices and guiding questions continue to inform my work as a mentor as I attempt to facilitate learning and success in an online environment. As an early childhood educator by trade, applying developmentally appropriate practice to my work in a *traditional college classroom* was intuitive. Laying the groundwork for a semester by creating a caring community of learners was especially important. For young children, it happens naturally as they form small groups in learning centers such as in a dramatic play area, around a water table or in a block center. They make friends over a lump of clay and as they mold pretend meals of pizza and spaghetti at the sensory table. When we focus on the goals of social development, relationships are formed naturally. In a traditional college classroom, this could be achieved by encouraging students to share their experiences through warm-up exercises, cooperative learning activities, small group projects, simulations, case studies or collaborative activities. It's clear that students in early childhood programs enjoy the same type of open-ended group activities that we expect them to provide for young children. Transferring these skills to an *online environment* was a little more challenging for this mentor.

As Channell logs into her online classroom for the first time, she is excited and very nervous. One by one she pages through the course documents, and the anxiety begins to build. "Will I ever be able to do this?" Finally, she makes her way to the first written assignment. She reads, "Remember an experience from your early childhood. In two-three pages, tell us about the experience and how it applies to the readings. You will revisit this essay at the end of the course." She thinks, "I can do this." With a confident smile, she begins to type.

From Children to Adults

How does a mentor transfer the knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices for young children into their work as an instructor in an online environment? My first few terms as a mentor online were challenging. Trading in my cart of manipulatives and cooperative activities for a keyboard felt awkward. My courses were too structured or perhaps too linear for my taste. Offering feedback (especially when the work was substandard) was very difficult, and I knew that it was hard for my students, as well. Instead of handing back a paper with a smile and a pat on the back, I was emailing them feedback knowing that they might open the email at work or late in the evening with no opportunity to ask immediate questions. It is much easier to hear feedback from someone you know and respect than to read an email from a stranger. My goal was to adapt my teaching style so that I could maintain my strengths by defining what was developmentally appropriate for my adult learners, primarily in terms of building relationships through a caring community of learners. Over time, I began to see how the developmentally appropriate practice for young children applied to adults.

The basic tenets of developmentally appropriate practice (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) still apply: Knowledge must inform decision-making, goals must be challenging and achievable, and teaching must be intentional to be effective. Knowledge informs decision-making in a number of ways, from knowledge of adult learning theory to knowledge of course content, to knowledge of the broad curriculum and how the courses connect for students. Goals, typically in the form of learning objectives, are measurable but flexible so that they can meet the individual needs of our diverse learners. Just as we spend a lot of time analyzing what to teach young children, our online courses are designed with care, so that the balance of teaching and learning shifts to meet the mature needs of adult learners. While the language and style shift, techniques such as setting the groundwork through a social presence, developing the sense of community,

and maintaining the community through productive collaboration remain similar for children and adults.

Begin With Social Presence

This refers to the degree to which participants feel socially and emotionally connected with others in the community (Swan et al., 2008) and is observed in students' emotional expression, open communication and group cohesiveness (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 1999). In additional to a warm, personal introduction to the course, the instructor posts regular announcements and messages for the class. Active engagement in a discussion offers an important opportunity to offer guidance though open-ended questions that promote learning. This can be facilitated through an active social presence similar to those found in early childhood programs, where teachers move around the room to offer guidance and support as the children build skills. The teacher checks in regularly to encourage conversation, language and problem solving skills that might not happen without the support of an adult.

Develop a Sense of Community

According to *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009), when we develop a sense of community, all participants can contribute to each other's well-being and learning as well as value and respect each other's abilities and talents. Students, whether children or adults, need an opportunity to share background information and learn about their peers. Learners form common bonds with their classmates and

begin to establish relationships. For young children, this community is developed around a lunch table or in a small group where one child talks about their new puppy. In an online class, this might happen in an open forum where students apply the course content to personal experiences. Discussions are a great opportunity to develop a sense of community, which is further facilitated by an active instructor. Of additional importance, Layne, Lee, O'Connor, Horn and McFarlin (2010) cited "interaction with faculty" and a "shared sense of community" as among the most important qualities related to student retention (p. 142-143). When there is a sense of community, students feel valued.

Maintain Community Through Productive Collaboration

Students continue to build a sense of community with each other through opportunities for collaboration such as group projects, role play scenarios or debates. Structured peer-review also offers an opportunity to develop a community. Coaplen, Hollis and Bailey (2013) offered specific suggestions for assignments that would provide opportunities for encouragement and commentary such as Web pages, narratives, auto ethnographies and researched essays. For young children, this might look a little different, but effective early childhood teachers know that teaching young children to work together and encourage each other is an important social skill. Productive collaboration offers opportunities for young children as well as adult learners to further develop skills as they give and receive feedback in a supportive group of peers.

For this mentor, developmentally appropriate practice and work with young children was just the beginning. With time, best practices for teaching in early childhood programs have come to be understood as relevant to adult learners in an online learning environment, especially in terms of the desire to create a caring community where students are comfortable with their peers. With some adjustment, the knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice does inform our work with adults in an online learning environment. Whether you are a young child entering a preschool classroom for the first time or an adult learner logging onto an online course

for the first time, the need to connect in a meaningful way sets the groundwork for a successful learning experience.

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Finding My Way: One Mentor's Journey

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"It is good to have an end to journey toward, but it is the journey that matters in the end."

– Ursula K. Le Guin (1969, p. 209)

Introduction

Preferring to choose where my spirit and curiosity beckoned, I have rarely followed a road map to guide my academic pursuits. One might say I was fortunate not to have to choose a path until I was ready. Others could argue that this is not the most efficient way to reach a destination. Tracing my academic journey and reflecting on my accomplishments while putting together my third self-report as a part-time mentor, has given me the opportunity to re-examine each treasured turn along the way. Perhaps my journey can provide some insight into this role we undertake as mentors.

As a student ('99), tutor and mentor, I have been affiliated with SUNY Empire State College for almost 20 years, and I am still learning. I took a circuitous route to ESC, where I, like many of our students, was finally able to put together my transcript studies and experiential learning to complete a bachelor's degree in cultural studies with a concentration in modern literature. An avid reader since early childhood, I had always enjoyed literature – especially the sci-fi fantasy of Ursula Le Guin, so much so that I believed my strengths were in math and science. This, along with Thor Heyerdahl's *Kon-Tiki* expedition, inspired me to choose oceanography as my first of several majors. Although literature has always played a key role in my life – opening doors to new worlds and encouraging empathy for my fellow human travelers – the enjoyment derived from reading had to build and simmer for some time before I could appreciate the intricacies of textual analysis and the satisfaction that one can derive from a well-crafted sentence.

Beginning the ESC Journey

As an undergraduate at ESC, I was recruited by my mentor to engage in a practicum as a peer writing tutor. The experiential learning of that year was transformative. In addition to my writing skills, I discovered I had a wealth of patience and that much joy could be derived from sharing knowledge with others. Reflecting back on my experience, I identified several features my struggling students had in common. As expected, many students had insufficient knowledge of standard academic grammar. However, poor time management skills and life's demands, which often led to rushed, unedited work, frequently factored into the equation. Many also were unaware of the role good diction and logic play in clear writing.

I soon found that clarity played a big role on both sides of the desk. At times it was necessary to ask instructors to explain assignments that students were having difficulty deciphering. The significance of clarity has continued to guide me now that I am on the other side of the desk. Today, I try my best to develop clear assignments, but there are always times, e.g., after several students have gone astray, that I, too, have to revise my instructions. After all, if I expect clarity from my students, the least I can do is model it myself.

English Language Learners (ELLs) presented additional issues to address. Although I had strong native language instincts and a fairly good awareness of grammar rules, I often found it difficult to explain the concept behind the rule to these students. This concern led to the next step in my journey.

ELL Experience

After obtaining my ESC bachelor's degree, I enrolled in The New School's Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages certificate program. This rigorous program, which culminates in a semester-long teaching practicum, required the completion of eight classes in such studies as language acquisition, the sound system of North American English, teaching writing, methodology in the classroom, needs assessment and English grammar. In the grammar study, we analyzed each part of speech in depth, noting exceptions to the rules and formulating concept questions and creative exercises to help students grasp the governing complexities. My certificate was awarded in January 2001, but by February 2000, I had already started teaching English to the parents – mostly Mexican immigrants – of children enrolled in a Staten Island Head Start program, and soon after had secured a position in the continuing education program at CUNY Brooklyn College, where I taught grammar, writing and pronunciation in a full-time English as a Second Language program that mainly catered to adult I-20 students from around the world. This program gave me the opportunity to apply knowledge gained from my New School studies. I challenged myself to present the material in creative ways that would allow students to use the language authentically and developed exercises that

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tapped into the funds of knowledge that my adult learners, many of whom held advanced degrees from their own countries, brought to the classroom.

While on staff, I also received training in two popular, yet very different, methods of language teaching: Caleb Gattegno's "Silent Way" and the "Rassias Method," developed by John A. Rassias. The opportunity to sharpen my teaching skills and knowledge of the English language was clearly beneficial; however, it was the students themselves who provided added enrichment. Suddenly, I had the world in my classroom. Not only did I become more aware of cultural differences and how America and Americans were perceived in different parts of the world, but as expectations, common experiences and struggles were shared, my awareness of the human experience deepened. The empathy nurtured during my undergraduate literature studies at ESC blossomed anew in my ELL classroom.

Return to ESC:
Writing Tutor and Mentor

While still teaching at Brooklyn College and before completing my Master of Arts degree in English with a concentration in rhetoric and linguistics, I returned to ESC as a part-time tutor at the Metropolitan Center's Writing Better Center. Eventually I was tapped to be a part-time mentor at the Staten Island unit, first as a generalist for the educational planning process and later when the unit expanded, as a mentor in cultural studies with a focus on writing studies. Over the years my education, positions held, and various scholarly pursuits – the bends along my path – have enabled me to expand my teaching repertoire beyond the realm of writing. As I proceed, I will be noting each of these links and connecting them to the ESC studies they influenced. However, since writing put me on this path, I feel it is appropriate to start with a brief exploration of my growth as a writing instructor.

My graduate studies in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and second language acquisition prompted me to probe how students respond to teacher commentary during the revision process in second language (L2) writing classes and Vygotskian theory as it has been applied to L2 learners – a subject I explored independently as one of the three topics on my final master's exam. Although

the context of the former exploration was limited to L2 learners, much of what I found holds true for native speakers, as well. Lev Vygotsky's argument that language develops and can improve from supportive social interaction, especially his belief in potential learning (the zone of proximal development) over what can be immediately apprehended without interaction, supports my own belief in students' innate potential. Whenever possible, I capitalize on this process by grouping and pairing students to interact on a particular task. Viewing my role as facilitator, rather than lecturer, also was supported by my WAC study, which confirmed much of what I had already discovered as a tutor and teacher.

Writing is a process that is best approached when students are given myriad opportunities to write, explore and revise their work. To this end, I have designed my ESC writing studies to give students the opportunity to revise their work throughout the term. Through peer-responding sessions and discussions of exemplars, which focus on such issues as purpose, audience, strategy, logic, credibility, diction and tone, students come to better understand the elements of writing and the decisions good writers make to appeal to their audience. Many first-time college students often arrive with simplistic views of the world. Being able to see the underlying complexities of an issue is crucial to intellectual growth; therefore, I also prompt students to discuss the relevance of an author's ideas.

My approach to student writing is gentle at first, but I do not neglect the skills students need to write meaningful, coherent, cleanly edited essays. The key is to guide them step by step through the writing process. In order to encourage more thoughtful revisions, current pedagogy recommends that first draft comments be limited usually to those pertaining to the substantive issues of content, clarity, focus and development. I, therefore, delay calling students' attention to most grammar and mechanical issues until the second draft, where the rules are then brought to the students' attention in the context of their own writing. In graduate school, I submitted a paper in which I researched studies that attempted to answer whether separate grammar instruction had an effect on student writing. I set out to find a magic formula, but instead found much disagreement over this issue. While scholars continue to debate the

merits of separate grammar instruction in writing studies, students, both ELLs and native speakers, continue to demand it. Although I realize that students see it as the panacea it is not, I think separate grammar instruction can be beneficial if it is taught in conjunction with student writing issues. However, mastery of these rules is a slow process, especially for those students who start with a huge deficit. These students need encouragement to continue with what for them can be a very frustrating experience. One way to scaffold their development is to allow students to begin the writing process with rhetorical strategies that enable them to draw on the funds of knowledge they already possess. I, therefore, start by having them write a personal narrative and a process analysis essay – which draws on their experiential learning – before moving on to more advanced strategies that have students synthesize their ideas with the written work of others, such as comparison/contrast and argumentation.

Process is one component, but students also need emotional support. In the article, "Ranking, Evaluating, and Liking," which appeared in *College English,* Peter Elbow (1993), a major proponent of WAC, posited the following: *"good writing teachers like student writing* (and *like* [emphasis mine] students)" (p. 200). If we cannot believe in a student's potential, how can we expect that student to believe? Encouragement is a positive tool.

TESOL Studies

As a new mentor, I quickly learned that study offerings were driven by student interests and needs, something I had experienced myself as an ESC student. It wasn't long before my background teaching ELLs became known and I received requests to develop a study in TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) pedagogy, which has been popular primarily with our Staten Island bilingual paraprofessionals. This study introduces students to theories of language acquisition and provides them with current pedagogy and methods. Through my continued membership in the TESOL international association, including several online Listservs in areas such as applied linguistics, bilingual education and adult TESOL education, I have stayed current with pedagogical methods, available resources and the political issues that affect these students. For example, it

is important for those teaching ELLs to be aware of the significant role played by language ownership, identity and motivation. One of my mentees, a bilingual paraprofessional, was so moved by this component that she designed her bachelor's degree program with a concentration that she called "youth services in the bilingual community." To accommodate her needs and those of another student, I designed an additional study in Issues in Bilingual Education. This study has been particularly appealing to bilingual educational studies students. It wasn't long after that when I was inspired to offer students a holistic view of the field of linguistics.

Studies in Linguistics

Linguistics is particularly appealing to me because it undergirds TESOL and rhetoric. While applied linguistics, as noted previously, appeals to my desire for social justice, I also am attracted to structural linguistics. For this, I credit my early proclivity for the patterns and logic found in mathematics. The first tutorial I designed to incorporate my knowledge in these fields was The English Language, which combines the genealogy of the English language with modern English grammar. This study fits well in literature, writing, and English concentrations by providing a means for students to meet the *historical perspective and knowledge* cultural studies guideline.

As my readings of works by linguistic scholars such as Noam Chomsky, Steven Pinker, Peter Trudgill, David Crystal and others progressed, I decided that students could benefit from a complete study in linguistics that would expose them to the myriad components of human language, not just the English language. This study laid the foundation for subsequent studies in sociolinguistics, designed originally to meet the needs of two students, one with a degree concentration in language studies and the other with a concentration in intercultural studies; and phonetics and phonology, which I tailored to meet the needs of our growing population of students interested in pursuing speech pathology in graduate school.

Creative Writing

Fortunately my cultural studies area of study encompasses a variety of disciplines. Creative writing studies have provided me the opportunity to follow another curve in the road. Two of my own graduate classes: Creative Writing and Autobiographical Writing, served to re-energize my creative passions. For several years, I have offered studies in Memoir Writing, Creative Writing, and in the hope of fostering student appreciation for the natural world around us, Creative Nature Writing. Feedback from this study has been encouraging: In their final reflective papers, students comment on their increased attention to detail and their newfound awareness and enjoyment of their natural environment. Creative writing studies provide students with additional skills, as well. The more students write, the better their writing becomes. When students learn to think like writers, they become better readers.

Studies in Literature

Although I chose not to concentrate in literature in graduate school, my passion for it has not diminished. In addition to studies in rhetoric and linguistics, I was able to include several classes that focused on Faulkner, Shakespeare, and classical and biblical foundations. The studies I have developed in literature have provided me with yet another treasured twist in the road. The first literature study I designed, The Modern Short Story, drew from my love of this genre and a study group I took as an undergraduate at ESC. Since then I have added several other studies in literature, such as World Literature: The Short Story, New York in Literature and Issues in Literature. I especially enjoy the student discussions that these studies engender. As an emissary of the humanities, it is deeply satisfying when I witness students' understanding broaden and their compassion grow.

Inspired in part by my belief in the power of literature to engage readers and augment their knowledge of history and society, I developed a study in West African Literature and Culture to meet the Other World Civilizations general education requirement. This study was inspired in part by my affiliation with the late John Thompson, professor of English emeritus (Stony Brook University), whom I served as an amanuensis from my student days until his passing in 2002, at which time I continued to work with his wife, a professor of library science, and later, his daughter. This seamless connection has given me continued access to Dr. Thompson's correspondence with

West African writers and scholars, including the Ghanaian poet Kofi Awoonor, who was so sadly killed in the December 2013 mall shooting in Kenya. I also was given quite a few books from Dr. Thompson's African collection. Reading through this collection and searching for other material to balance the study broadened my academic scope and gave me a greater appreciation for literature from non-Western traditions.

At present, I am working as co-editor with Dr. Thompson's daughter, who wishes to publish a book of her father's essays, poems, short stories and numerous book reviews dating from the late 1930s to the early 1980s. The book reviews, originally published in various scholarly journals and magazines including *The Kenyon Review, Partisan Review, Harper's, The New York Review of Books,* and *Commentary,* have been particularly edifying, especially in relation to mid-20th century American culture and literary criticism. Dr. Thompson began his studies in the late 1930s as an undergraduate at Kenyon College under the tutelage of John Crowe Ransom, a leading scholar, whose book *The New Criticism* (1941) gave name to a once popular approach to literary criticism. As a result of my readings for this project, I have gained an appreciation for the book review as a window to literary theory and intellectual culture. There may be a study in all this somewhere; however, I have not yet taken the time to develop one.

Conclusion

Here my journey rests for now. The destination has been clarified, but since the journey is still in progress, there will be new pathways to explore. I welcome these opportunities for continued intellectual growth, for they are what truly matter. As an alumna of ESC, I have been fortunate indeed to have received the inspiration and confidence to forge my way forward, and as a mentor, I have been grateful for the opportunity to do the same for my students.

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MOOC Talk: A Connectivist Dialogue About Our Metaliteracy MOOC Experience

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Introduction

In the fall of 2013, SUNY Empire State College and the University at Albany offered a collaborative massive open online course (MOOC) about metaliteracy (see http://metaliteracy. cdlprojects.com). This project emerged from the work of Tom Mackey and Trudi Jacobson to develop a metaliteracy model that promotes collaboration and participation in today's interactive, mobile and social media environments. After considering other platforms for the MOOC such as Coursera and Canvas Network, this particular open environment was developed using the original connectivist format inspired by the early innovators of this movement including Dave Cormier, George Siemens and Stephen Downes.

"Metaliteracy MOOC" was the third connectivist MOOC offered by Empire State College and the first made available at the University at Albany. At the start of this project, Tom and Trudi assembled a team from both institutions to develop and facilitate the MOOC, including faculty, administrators, librarians, an information technologist, an instructional designer and a programmer. Center for Distance Learning Mentor Betty Hurley had developed the first two MOOCs, both connectivist, in the SUNY system, "Creativity and Multicultural Communication" (see http://www.cdlprojects.com/cmc11blog/) and "VizMath" (see http://www.cdlprojects.com/math/). Metaliteracy MOOC followed a similar open design, promoting interactivity among participants based on key themes related to the metaliteracy framework. It featured synchronous webinars by national and international scholars, such as Sue Thomas, Char Booth, R. Brian Stone, Paul Prinsloo and Bryan Alexander (the complete list of presenters and topics can be viewed at http://metaliteracy.cdlprojects.com/outline.htm). The connectivist nature of this MOOC will be explored in more depth later in this piece.

This collaborative essay is a connectivist dialogue among several key facilitators of Metaliteracy MOOC. It is based on a presentation developed for SUNY's Conference on Instruction &

Technology (CIT) 2014 at Cornell University titled "Metaliteracy in Practice: Strengthening Learning Through a Connectivist MOOC" (slides from this presentation may be accessed at http://www.slideshare.net/tmackey/cit2014-2). Each author takes a lead in one section of the essay based on the presentation areas developed for the discussion at CIT 2014. This connectivist presentation is intended as a give and take of ideas – a sharing of reflections and insights about this exploration of metaliteracy in a MOOC format. This writing team invites you to continue the conversation at Metaliteracy.org, our primary site for all things metaliteracy.

About the MOOC

Metaliteracy MOOC was developed in the summer of 2013, while Tom Mackey and Trudi Jacobson (2014) finished the manuscript of their co-authored book *Metaliteracy: Reinventing Information Literacy to Empower Learners.* The MOOC reflected the theory and practice examined in the manuscript and was envisioned as a way to connect learners from both institutions while reaching a broader audience of participants. This open space was designed to unite students at Empire State College and the University at Albany with lifelong learners from any location in the world and professionals in higher education, particularly in the field of library and information science (LIS). Several related projects were underway, as well, including an evolving Metaliteracy.org blog, which featured the expanded metaliteracy learning objectives and a competency-based digital badging system (more information is available at http://metaliteracy.learningtimes.net). The blog, learning objectives and badging system all emerged from the work of the metaliteracy learning collaborative that was formed as part of the SUNY-wide Innovative Instruction Technology Grant (IITG) we received in 2013. During the same summer, Trudi Jacobson began serving as co-chair of the Association of College & Research Libraries' (ACRL)

Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education task force to take a fresh look at the standards originally published in 2000, which needed significant revision or reinvention. Since metaliteracy was identified as an influence on this process from the start, Trudi's leadership on the task force generated additional interest in the MOOC from library professionals in the field.

Our connectivist MOOC became a hub for activity that welcomed a total of 554 registered participants from around the world. By the end of the MOOC, 454 of the registrants received newsletters that were generated by the gRSShopper programming. The newsletters included links to all of the contributions from

(top) Jenna Pitera, and (bottom) Trudi Jacobson, Tor Loney and Nicola Allain participating in the first MOOC Talk at the University at Albany.

the learners who engaged in the MOOC activities. This included 118 registered blogs and a total of 72 blog posts. In terms of student participation, we primarily reached students from two Information Literacy courses at the University at Albany and one graduate student at Empire State College. Our original goal to connect students from both institutions was not fully realized, since we did not have any undergraduates from Empire State College register for the MOOC, and ultimately, many of the UAlbany students dropped the course. The meta-analysis produced by the one graduate student from the MALET (Master of Arts in Learning and Emerging Technologies) program at the School for Graduate Studies at Empire State College provided an excellent opportunity to analyze the MOOC on a deeper level through the lens of a graduate student research project.

Tom Mackey

What is metaliteracy and how does this idea relate to connectivism?

Metaliteracy challenges traditional notions and assumptions about information literacy within the collaborative and social contexts of new media environments. The confluence of emerging social technologies and related literacy formats, from digital, to mobile, to media literacy, requires a radical redefinition of what it means to be information-literate in the 21st century. In *Metaliteracy,* Trudi and I (2014) argued that, "Metaliteracy expands the scope of traditional information skills (determine, access, locate, understand, produce, and use information) to include the collaborative production and sharing of information in participatory digital environments (collaborate, participate, produce, and share)" (p. 1). This is a fundamental shift from simply accessing and navigating information, to creating and distributing it in various portable, virtual and multimedia forms as critically-engaged digital citizens. The idea of a *meta*-literacy also has implications for literacy itself because it unifies related literacy characteristics within a comprehensive framework. For instance, metaliteracy promotes critical thinking, reading, writing and research, while also considering the learning that takes place while producing, sharing, collaborating and participating in online communities and social media environments.

Metaliteracy is an evolving open model that defines information in multiple forms, including visual, textual, aural and virtual, while understanding the multiple modalities of mobile, digital, multimedia, social media and social networking. Further, metaliteracy is an empowering learning theory that promotes metacognitive reflection in these dynamic, collaborative and open spaces.

While grounded in the critical thinking perspective that is core to information literacy, the metaliteracy concept charts a new direction by strongly emphasizing the importance of metacognitive reflection in the production and distribution of information in participatory environments. Information literacy has focused extensively on how to search and evaluate information, but the metaliteracy model expands the emphasis to creating and sharing both individual and collaboratively produced documents in networked environments. Of course, search and retrieval in these spaces also is important, but metaliteracy builds on these competencies while supporting broader knowledge acquisition and participation, and not just discrete skills development. This approach also links relevant competencies from related literacies such as visual literacy, media literacy and digital literacy in an inclusive construct, rather than inventing a new literacy type every time a new technology emerges. Thus, metaliteracy allows for the exploration of associated literacy characteristics within a common model, avoiding the disconnect between competing or unrelated models that fail to address the needs of the whole person in today's interactive social spaces.

Since metaliteracy promotes metacognitive reflection and participation, learners empower themselves, prepared to actively engage and think critically in collaborative social spaces. Such an approach requires teaching and learning strategies, including learning objectives that support the development of active and reflective practice. The experience of participants in social media and online communities does not automatically create metaliterate learners. Rather, educators need to develop ways to facilitate and cultivate this approach. This requires us to rethink how we teach with technology and how we prepare learners to engage with ever-evolving open learning, mobile and social media environments.

Several related projects have explored metaliteracy in practice by using collaborative resources for internal team-based communications among members of the metaliteracy learning collaborative, and in developing new environments for learners, such as the digital badging system. This MOOC explored metaliteracy in both theory and practice. This open space was much more than a platform to present the ideas since it was an interactive environment that invited participation from others in a collaborative social network.

The inspiration for designing a connectivist MOOC was provided by the pioneers of this movement, including Siemens, Cormier and Downes. According to Siemens, connectivism is about learning in networked environments that are decentered, collaborative and social. This is a shift from what the individual can learn and know independently, to ways of knowing through connections that are made with others in networked spaces. This learning theory is ideal for social media environments and ultimately inspired the development of connectivist MOOCs, which leverage a wide range of social media resources, connecting learners from multiple locations for collaborative and participatory learning. In contrast, "xMOOCs" such as Coursera, edX and Canvas Network push content out to users through a common platform, similar to a structured learning management system (LMS). The xMOOCs feature open content, including well-produced videos that are organized in pre-defined modules. The connectivist MOOC or cMOOCs, however invite participation from all users, beyond threaded online discussions, in a decentered social space that aggregates contributions from blog postings, Twitter feeds and social bookmarking sites. In a cMOOC, the learner is truly at the center, making decisions about what to access and read, which resources to explore, and most importantly, how to contribute to the dialogue through text, image, audio and/or multimedia.

The connectivist MOOC design aligned nicely with the goals of metaliteracy to engage in social interaction through the original production and sharing of user-generated information. The Metaliteracy MOOC team was especially interested in a collaborative space that allowed for multiple conversations from many participants, while being connected

through the common location of the MOOC itself. Similar to the two previous MOOCs offered by Empire State College, we created a front-end website that is hosted on Bluehost, and used the back-end programming of gRSShopper developed by Downes to combine resources and allow for interactivity among users. gRSShopper is essentially an RSS aggregator that allows participants to engage with several different social media resources, such as Twitter and WordPress blogs, and then aggregates or combines these communications in a daily newsletter that features the most recent postings. Rather than push out content to users, the participants created much of the content themselves and shared their observations and insights in a collaborative dialogue. The user-generated information was developed in response to content we created or linked to via the MOOC, or through the interactive MOOC Talks that took place via Blackboard Collaborate.

Although we met many of our goals for this project, and we were continuously inspired by the experience itself, there also were many surprises along the way, and some disappointments in how we ultimately engaged and connected our learners from the University at Albany and Empire State College.

Trudi Jacobson

How is metaliteracy informing the national dialogue about information literacy and how did Metaliteracy MOOC "flip" the classroom at UAlbany? How do you think our intent for the MOOC aligned with the reality of the experience?

Let me start with the role of metaliteracy in the revision of the Association of College & Research Libraries' Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education. First, the new document does not take the form of standards. Rather, the task force responsible for the work felt that a framework, which offers important elements to be taken into account, but not the rigidity implied by standards, would allow institutions to best address their own specific needs.

The work of the task force has been informed, in part, by a previous task force (of which I also was a member), which identified key ideas that should be considered when the revision process started. Two of these

elements were the important role of affectivity in becoming information literate, and the need for an expanded conception of information literacy due to dramatic shifts in the information ecosystem, a conception encompassed by metaliteracy.

The ACRL Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education includes a new definition of information literacy that reflects metaliteracy's concern with both metacognition and the role of learners as information producers, often in conjunction with others, in an interactive information environment. The definition is:

> Information literacy is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning. (ACRL, 2015, Introduction section, para. 5)

The new framework uses threshold concepts (Meyer & Land, 2003) to outline those areas most important for learners to understand about information literacy. Using the work of Townsend, Brunetti and Hofer (2011), both as published and from an ongoing Delphi study, as a starting point, the task force shaped six threshold concepts that learners need to understand in order to be information literate: Scholarship as Conversation; Research as Inquiry; Authority is Constructed and Contextual; Information Creation as a Process; Searching as Strategic Exploration; and Information Has Value (ACRL, 2015, Introduction section, para. 2).

Each threshold concept is found within a "frame," which includes the definition of the concept, sample knowledge practices or abilities that learners developing their abilities would have, and dispositions that would be present in successful learners. Elements of metaliteracy can be found throughout all six frames.

Those who followed the transparent creation process engaged in by the task force are aware that metaliteracy has been included from the beginning. This has caused a number of colleagues in the field to feel the need to learn more about the concept of metaliteracy, both by reading our work, but also by

participating in Metaliteracy MOOC. The MOOC attracted a large number of librarians who sought to better understand this new framing of information literacy. Not only did they actively participate in the MOOC Talk chat sessions, but some also blogged about what they were learning, and they took their reflections to online venues beyond their own blogs, such as to Twitter.

The new framework is radically different in intent, form and approach from the standards, which has caused a wide range of reactions-- everything from excitement to open curiosity to anxiety. The MOOC served, and continues to serve through its enduring online presence, as a rich source of information about one important component of the document.

I also was asked to address how our MOOC was used in two undergraduate information literacy courses at the University at Albany. Another instructor and I incorporated it into our courses in different ways. My colleague used the MOOC as an element in his quarter-long, 1-credit course without radically altering the course itself. He taught on Wednesdays during a two-hour time block, which fully encompassed the MOOC Talk time slot. He had the students watch those MOOC Talks that occurred during his course right in the classroom. They were able to interact with the speakers in real time.

I tried something totally different. I built a blended course around the MOOC. Rather than lasting just a quarter, it became a 2-credit, semester-long course. The MOOC became the course, though I planned three in-person meetings to introduce students to the structure and content of this unusual course, and to provide time and support for students to work on one team project that existed beyond the MOOC. It is important to keep in mind that all the students were taking the course to satisfy a General Education requirement.

Due to the connectivist nature of the MOOC, students were expected to create their own experience. I required them to start blogs and post on them regularly, in connection with the MOOC content. There were several required readings from the MOOC reading options to ground them, but they were instructed to select all others, in order to shape the learning that would be most meaningful to them. They also were assigned to pose questions of those

giving the MOOC Talks, which presupposed that they would prepare, to some extent, before each talk.

To be blunt, the undergraduate students had a very difficult time with the cMOOC. They were not used to the extraordinary amount of self-direction allowed, indeed demanded, by the course. When I was first introduced to the idea that readings were to be selected based on individual interest, I was nonplussed. The students, on the whole, took this to mean that they didn't need to do any readings. They found ways to ask questions of presenters that didn't require much preparation. Their blog posts were mostly brief and superficial. And approximately half of the students ended up dropping the course because of the disconnect, for them, between this course and what they expect of a college course. When queried at the beginning of the course, none had taken blended or online courses. In retrospect, the in-class preparation insufficiently acclimated them to the environment, but the problems exceeded this one issue.

Nicola Allain

Are there important links we should consider between the experiences of adult learners and cMOOCs?

As an educator working primarily with adult learners in online modalities, I find it fascinating to see the differences in student experiences and expectations depending on their learner characteristics. Malcolm Knowles' Andragogical Model proposes six assumptions about adult learners that frame the way we work with these learners: 1. the need to know. Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it. 2. The learner's self-concept. Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions, for their own lives (and need to be treated as being capable of self-direction). 3. The role of the learners' experiences. Adults come into an education activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience from that of youths. 4. Readiness to learn. Adults become ready to learn those things they need to know and be able to do in order to cope effectively with their real-life situations. 5. Orientation to learning. Adults are life-centered (or task-centered or problem-centered) in their orientation to learning. 6. Motivation (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson,

2005, p. 64-66). Adults are responsive to some external motivators, but the most potent motivators are internal pressures.

I have two observations about the struggles undergraduate students expressed in "finding their learning pathway" through the cMOOC. The first is that the connectivist MOOC model seems particularly well suited to adult learners, and that many cMOOC participants thus far seem to possess the learner characteristics associated with adults and the andragogical model. By contrast, the xMOOC instructivist model (that replicates the large on-ground lecture hall in an online environment) provides a learning modality that is perhaps more familiar to the traditional classroom-based undergraduate student, and thus easier for them to experience both cognitively and in terms of learning modality. My second observation is that preliminary research in the field indicates that MOOCs are primarily serving learners with college degrees. For example, Coursera data shows that 76.2 percent of Coursera MOOC takers already have college degrees (Koller, 2014).

Jenna Pitera

Why was it important for us to develop this environment as a connectivist MOOC? How did the MOOC Talk format contribute to this design?

As we evaluate our Metaliteracy MOOC experience, these are both important questions to consider. Our group explored a number of different platforms before we came to the connectivist format. We looked into the Canvas Network MOOC platform, Coursera and other, more traditional, xMOOC providers. Our goals in creating a MOOC on metaliteracy were to really embody the principals of this model while teaching about its practice. This required us to have a collaborative, discussion-based format, where the participants of the MOOC could learn from each other and reflect on each week's themes. We didn't want to present a video lecture absent of metacognition. We wanted speakers, rather than lecturers, who would present a concept that students would reflect on, elaborate on and process throughout each week. This led us to the connectivist format. Participants in a connectivist MOOC establish their own learning goals. They interact with the material on a level and frequency

comfortable to them. We did not want to prescribe one set of assignments or learning goals because of the breadth of students participating in Metaliteracy MOOC. Our students subscribed to RSS feeds, met in a variety of social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook using pre-assigned hashtags and keywords, collaborated both during our MOOC Talks and as they blogged about them, did assignments in their home campus credit-bearing courses, or interacted with the concepts presented within them in other ways they found interesting.

We decided on the term "MOOC Talk" to describe our weekly course meetings. We did not want to use the phrase "lecture" to pronounce how we were presenting material because we did not want to create a division between teacher and learner in our MOOC. In our environment, speakers would be presenting ideas that students would reflect on, research, learn about and interact with, hopefully becoming teachers themselves to other participants. We wanted our gatherings to be discussions: two-way communications where students could interact with speakers, generate their own ideas, and present their thoughts and questions to the weekly speaker in real time. We established a meeting time of 12 p.m. EST, a schedule that seemed to best suit a global audience. While attendance for each synchronous session varied, it was always respectable, and sometime higher than others. All of the MOOC Talks featured an interviewer, a speaker, and a forum and social media moderator so that we could manage questions and allow everyone's voice to be heard. Each MOOC Talk generated a lot of energy around the week's lesson, and having students participate in real time gave us, and MOOC facilitators, great feedback on what interested students and how well they understood the concepts, which generated new ideas and perspectives.

Michele Forte

How did the conversations in these spaces disrupt the expectations and flow of the experience?

The question sends my thoughts in a few different directions. I am thinking about a number of other MOOC-centric presentations at CIT. From these presentations, I concluded that the "disruptive strategies" identified

by Nicola are welcomed by our MOOC participants. Our colleagues at CIT focused on strategic use of video, while we used the "talks" to challenge the asynchronous nature of this cMOOC, an approach mirrored in "World in Conversation," a project hosted by Penn State, focused on encouraging artful, deep facilitation within potentially chaotic environments or around topics likely to incite and invite emotional response. It finds its origins in student unrest and racial and ethnic divides on campus in 2002, and has grown to deliver badges based on the competencies associated with, among others, "building connection." Even when the conversations are virtual, proponents of the site note, as we did, that well-facilitated conversations are location-agnostic.

When we review distinct characteristics of each MOOC format, cMOOCs are characterized by opportunities for synchronous connection. One such opportunity came in the form of synchronous talks led by researchers, writers and teachers on themes appended to the larger topic of metaliteracy. While these talks froze the asynchronous nature of the larger course, they not only created stepped moments in time for these deep connections to organically evolve, but they also enhanced the inherent opportunities of a cMOOC.

Our intention was to engender dynamic, participatory sessions; the talks were generally led by the featured speaker of the week. As facilitator for two of the sessions, I collaborated with speakers to help frame and chunk questions in advance of the session. During each session, which lasted one hour, I worked to highlight the organic connections between questions and comments in the chat box and those being sent into my colleagues via email, tweets and so forth. The art of facilitating a discussion in which all participants feel connected is often not intuitive, however, and I struggled at various points with how to accomplish this charge.

The topic for the first synchronous session that I facilitated was "Openness and Metaliteracy," led by Mark McBride, then of Buffalo State, now of Monroe Community College (both SUNY institutions). I also co-facilitated the session featuring Sue Thomas titled: "Tech: Nature Literacy: Technobiophilia." Thomas' talk was framed by investigations of representations of nature and nature-derived

metaphors in cyberspace. Metaliteracy MOOC was the first venue in the United States that coincided with the launch of her new book, *Technobiophilia: Nature and Cyberspace* (Thomas, 2013).

So that I could be in the same physical location as two of my co-authors here, Trudi and Jenna, I chose to drive to the University at Albany to join them. While I appreciate the flexibility of the Internet, and the degree to which that translates into access for many of the learners in this cMOOC, I decided that being in the same room as my colleagues would be beneficial. It was a prescient decision: As I worked with the speaker in the live session, I heavily relied upon Trudi and Jenna's skills as moderators and co-facilitators. They helped to monitor the chat area, vet questions coming in from students via email and helped me monitor the time that inevitably flew by. This description makes the sessions sound orderly – tidy, even. What I did not anticipate was how unwieldy the talks actually felt, and how much focus and flexibility the sessions actually demanded.

While the synchronous disruption of the otherwise asynchronous cMOOC temporarily froze one aspect of this modality, it nonetheless did not thwart the creation of constellations of meaning within and subsequent to that synchronous session. In effect, the synchronous, cMOOC Talk sessions at once provided and, like the MOOC format itself, further disrupted this sense of coherence.

Of the two, the Thomas session was a bit more scripted. If the question and answer portion of the talk got off to a slower start, she sent questions that I could use to prompt discussion. In retrospect, I realize that I asked for these questions to disrupt my own anxiety over potential radio silence, as it were: I trusted neither my own facilitative abilities, nor was I confident that participants would, as it were, participate.

As it goes, I was not prepared for a relative failure of technology and how that failure disrupted the disruption of the session. More than once, Thomas' entire screen froze, and she was dropped from the session – mid-sentence, and at most inopportune moments. We eventually determined that her webcam was causing the blip, but until that point, and after the first two interruptions, I could feel

my own anxiety rising as I rather quickly, and somewhat inelegantly, tried to fill in when she dropped out of the conversation.

While the session led by McBride did not suffer the same failure of technology, the seamlessness of the interface ironically contributed to a different kind of disruption – and a little bit of chaos. Because all systems were concurrently running, I was aware of the simultaneity of the chat box and the ongoing presentation, student questions, our team questions and the new learning and topics created by all of these interactions. Here, then, form and content were aligned: Through remixing, refreshing, reusing, revising and redistributing, the concurrent conversations evolved into new, yet connected threads.

The many concurrent dialogues were taking place with or without me, and I was quite aware that I could not control these sessions – and of the most important distinction between managing and controlling, Trudi and Jenna were talking to me, to each other, and to the students from the University at Albany participating in the MOOC. I also knew that the audience was diverse: both faculty colleagues and traditional students were participants, and with them, they brought implications of race, class, gender and varying learning styles, abilities and challenges. Therefore, I could neither rely on the "teacher voice" nor could I default to academic jargon and be confident that all learners were either accommodated or interested. Lastly, I neither knew all of the participants, nor could I see them. I couldn't rely on what I hope are fairly well-honed abilities to negotiate a room and determine how group dynamics affect individual participation. Reflecting now about the strengths of learner contributions in a cMOOC, I suppose the real question is why I felt responsible for this accommodation at all.

Tom Mackey and Trudi Jacobson

From the perspective of the course facilitators, how did you think about the MOOC Talk format?

The interactive sessions were designed for an international audience of participants in real time and featured experts in the field. All of the speakers were paired to create a dialogue or "talk" that went beyond the one-way presentation of materials. All of the talks

also included a brief introduction to situate the discussion within the overall context of the course. We planned for a seamless experience during the synchronous sessions, but this did not always take place. As Michele noted, a few talks included several glitches. Interestingly, our perception of the live sessions was that Michele always handled the situation masterfully, even though she thought it did not go as well as expected.

Metaliteracy MOOC was primarily an asynchronous experience, but the MOOC Talks allowed for a synchronous component that felt like we were broadcasting live. As much as we planned for these real time events, the live "on the air" dimension of the talks included a few additional technology challenges. For example, the team sessions at the University at Albany were at times problematic because of issues with wireless access, and early on we learned that Prezi presentations and links to video were too much for Blackboard Collaborate to handle. We responded to all of these challenges on the fly, while each session was being recorded, thus documenting every glitch, but overall it worked, and the bumps along the road became a part of the experience itself. In many ways, our use of both synchronous and asynchronous technologies and our ability to adapt along the way demonstrated the very kind of metaliterate learning we have been promoting. The ability to adjust to evolving technologies is a key aspect of metaliteracy, and requires ongoing reflection, collaborative problem-solving and individual willingness to try new things.

Nicola Allain

Can you describe the MOOC metacognitive analysis provided by your graduate student in the MALET program?

Metaliteracy MOOC presented the perfect opportunity to begin a research program in the emerging field of massive open online courses as our inaugural cohort of graduate students in the MALET program approached the critical stage of selecting its final thesis project research focus. At this stage of the program, students are indicating a strong interest in open and online learning, learning analytics and assessment, exploring new environments for learning and creative approaches for adult learning and workforce training. MALET MOOC research is currently falling within

the first three categories, with students demonstrating a strong interest in conducting original research in the field (Allain & Gal, 2014).

The Metaliteracy MOOC project afforded us the opportunity to engage graduate student research within a credit-bearing study. In addition, I participated as a co-facilitator of the MOOC, which gave me a high level of engagement with the material, process, analysis and learning experience.

The MALET graduate student from the first cohort who elected to enroll in the metacognitive analysis of the MOOC has a strong interest in efficacy and assessment in learning environments. It therefore seemed particularly fitting for the student to undertake a metacognitive analysis of his own learning within this connectivist environment. He was interested in examining the efficacy of the MOOC, and whether or not it would promote self-efficacy in learning for students. As he put it: "Is the MOOC doing an effective job of teaching me about the various literacies and giving me an idea of what metaliteracy is?" In order to analyze the MOOC within a metacognitive framework, the student was expected to meet the following learning outcomes:

> In addition to enrolling in the MOOC and completing assigned educational activities, you will conduct a metacognitive analysis of the MOOC, with the following foci: (1) evaluation of the efficacy of the learning environment; (2) analysis of approaches to assessment, both actual and potential; (3) a metacognitive analysis of your learning in the MOOC. You will also complete a related research project and literature review of your choice. (Allain, 2013, Learning Outcomes section, para. 1)

The student was also asked to read several scholarly articles on metacognition, metacognitive theories and metacognitive development, in addition to the required and recommended readings for the MOOC.

The methods and criteria for evaluation were as follows:

> Each of the learning activities requires the application of graduate level research, metacognitive reflection, writing, analysis, and evaluation. Specifically, the student

is expected to apply the knowledge acquired to demonstrate a graduate level metacognitive analysis of the Metaliteracy MOOC while conducting an evaluation of the efficacy of the learning modality, analysis of approaches to assessment, and apply this to the research project of his choice. In evaluating these, the instructor looks for evidence - in reflective blog posts, social media sharing, MOOC participation, assessment activity, evaluation framework, and final project work - that the student is applying the course theories, ideas and knowledge acquisition to the learning activities. The student must apply a progressive gathering of readings, research, reflection, and MOOC resources to support the metacognitive framework of this study. The successful research project will fit the scope of this study, and incorporate theory, research, applications and analysis at the graduate level. (Allain, 2013, Methods and Criteria for Evaluation section, para. 1)

In addition to this delineation of methods and criteria, I used a comprehensive rubric to evaluate the metacognitive reflections.

The student's analysis pointed to two issues with the MOOC learning expectations in relation to self-efficacy. They both relate to the methods and criteria for evaluation. Discussion participation was encouraged, but not actively a part of the credit-bearing learning assessment. Contributions to the conversation were assessed in both the undergraduate and graduate credit-bearing modalities. However, responses to other contributors were not explicitly stated as grade-bearing requirements. The student reflected that this was a disincentive for self-regulating learners, who would focus, rather, on the learning activities that would affect their course grade. He also concluded that this was a strong detriment to the development of robust, active discussion forums throughout MOOCs active lifespan. In addition, he felt that the fact that he was graded on his contributions to tweets and blog posts, and not on his review and responses to other posters, meant that he focused more on creating his contributions than connecting to others engaged in the MOOC (Brown, 2013). I think this is a failing of the learning contracts created for the enrolled students, and not Metaliteracy MOOC in itself. For future

variations on this type of study, I recommend allocating a percentage of the grade to substantive discussion and social media responses to other learners' work in the way that we generally do for Center for Distance Learning and MALET online courses.

I would like to conclude with the student's thoughts summing up his experience:

> *Through the processes of creating this live blog and gaining presence in social media, I am effectively displaying the efficacy of the MOOC. When I first received information the on the class, I was told that I would learn about the various literacies associated with the overall understanding of Metaliteracy. This MOOC offers a plethora of resources that introduce a number of different literacies. While not every piece of information is new, the different viewpoints allow for a reintroduction of many previous held notions. This MOOC shows a consistency, in terms of content presentation, activity offerings and student participation that is hard to match in other MOOCs I have seen. I am proud that I have been able to take this MOOC and can easily say it has been comparable to traditional classes in a variety of ways. Metaliteracy is a new take on the way we learn and utilize the information that is around us and provides valuable 21st century skills and knowledge.*

Conclusion

The development and implementation of Metaliteracy MOOC was an inspiring collaborative experience for our entire team. This project united two institutions within the SUNY system, Empire State College and the University at Albany, to create an original online space that was independent of any particular platform or learning environment. We built on the initial success of our colleague Betty Hurley, who paved the way with the first two MOOCs in SUNY, to develop an open and integrated site using George Siemens' gRSShopper open programming. This "homemade" project embodied the spirit of openness by allowing for collaborative teaching and learning on many levels. This cMOOC enabled an exchange of ideas among administrators, faculty, librarians, instructional designers and learners. It also prepared us to cross boundaries between academic professionals and lifelong learners

interested in the same topic. In addition, we bridged distances through interactive MOOC Talks that connected us both synchronously and asynchronously with scholars in the U.K., South Africa and throughout the United States. The cMOOC format provided a networked environment for us to reflect and integrate the key elements of metaliteracy: empowerment, metacognition and emerging technologies, as well as participation, production and sharing in open learning environments.

At the same time, the cMOOC made it difficult for some students accustomed to a traditional campus-based setting to fully engage in this decentered and somewhat fluid experience. In addition, the primary curricular focus on the theoretical dimension of metaliteracy may have resulted in a cMOOC that was less approachable to some participants than a competency-based resource, such as our related and evolving digital badging system. In moving forward, future research will need to examine some of the challenges related to the interactive cMOOC experience. By doing so, we will improve learner success in these environments as measured by active engagement, retention and evidence of metaliterate learning. Our next project will build on this first cMOOC by developing a Coursera MOOC that fully integrates with our competency-based metaliteracy digital badging system. As that project progresses, it will be worthwhile to observe how our experience with the cMOOC described in this essay, and all of our collective insights, will inform how we develop a MOOC using the Coursera platform, to further advance metaliterate learning.

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History, Memory and Power

Anna Barsan, Metropolitan Center

Anna Barsan is a New York City-based artist and media educator working in film, installation and live video performance. She is the co-creator of SIGNIFIED, a documentary series and digital archive of LGBTQ testimony; founding member of Elektric Breakfast, a women's visual arts collaborative working in video performance and multimedia installation; and a board member for the activist organization Queerocracy.

Barsan's work explores concepts of identity, social control and art as activism. Rooted in a documentary practice, Barsan deconstructs personal histories, collective memory and power structures to identify the distinct elements that form them. By doing so, Barsan's artistic intervention invites her audience to actively participate in reassembling these narratives with a greater awareness of their impact on the individual and on the collective conscience.

As a media educator, Barsan travels nationally and internationally to facilitate media literacy and advocacy workshops for journalists, educators and political actors. She holds an M.A. in film and new media studies from The New School and a B.A. in international relations and social justice from the University of Michigan. She works with students in film and media studies at SUNY Empire State College and is currently collaborating with mentor Ruth Goldberg on the Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship.

SIGNIFIED
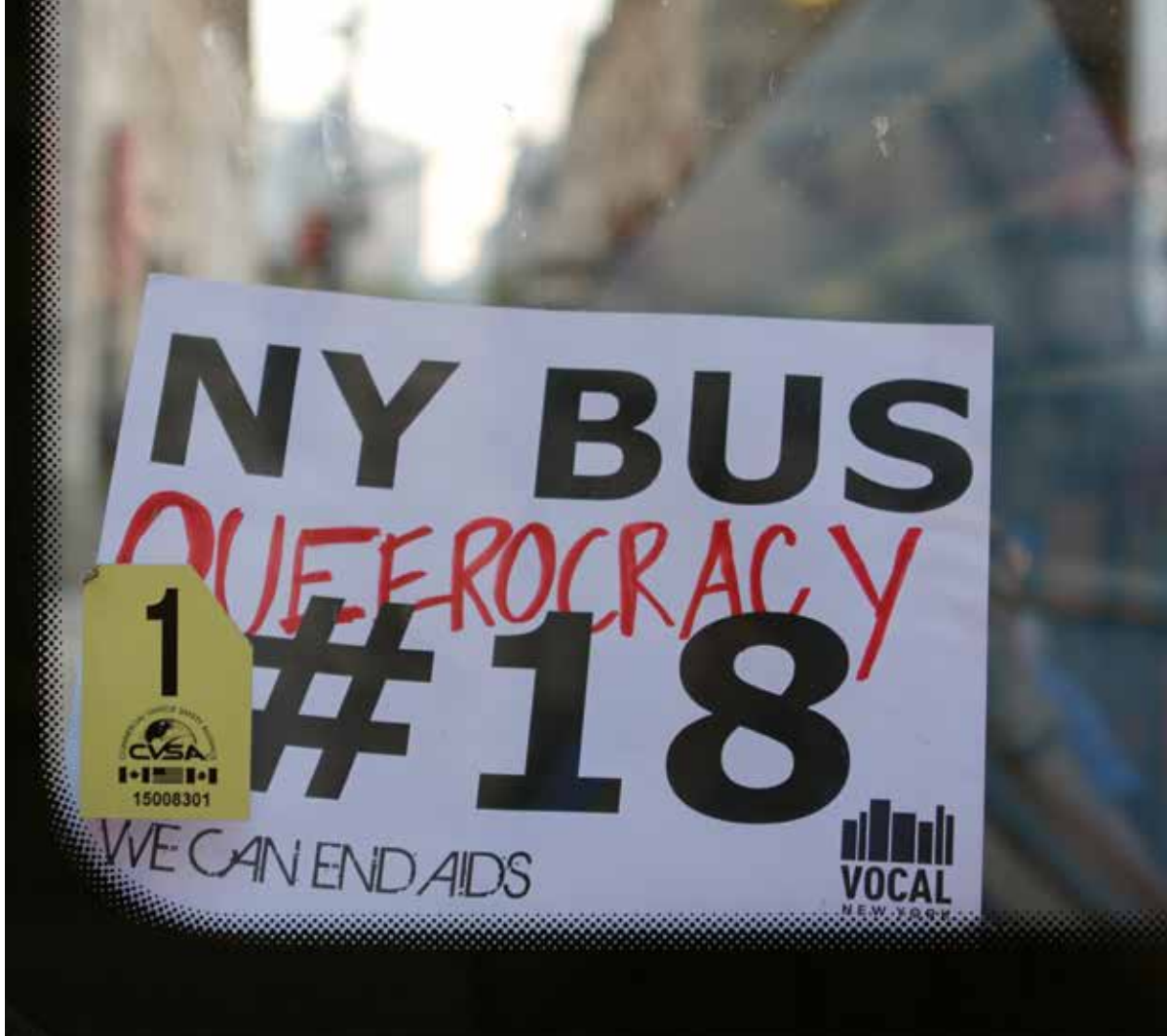
SIGNIFIED is a documentary series that highlights the work of queer identified artists and activists who are fostering, enriching and sustaining vibrant and diverse communities. The first season of interviews premiered with The Guggenheim Lab in fall 2011 and has since expanded internationally,

featuring over 20 interviews in Argentina, Colombia and Cuba. The series is available in both English and Spanish and has been viewed over 40,000 times in more than 60 countries.

SIGNIFIED was borne out of a desire to provide a common space and language to examine existing power structures,

as well as document radical forms of artistic creation, collective education, and the transformation of mechanisms that police queer bodies and communities. The series is co-directed by Anna Barsan and Jessie Levandov, and is available at:
www.thisissignified.com.

Soundtrack '63

Soundtrack '63 is a multimedia, live music performance that engages viewers in a cultural and artistic retrospective of the Civil Rights Movement. The show features spirituals, protest songs and popular music throughout the 20th century performed live by an 18-piece orchestra. The music is accompanied by a three-channel video installation consisting of archival footage and animation.

During the performance, Barsan's role as the VJ was to control the videos live and add additional visual effects using Modul8 software and a MIDI controller. Live-control of the videos allowed the images and music to work together to immerse the audience in an interactive audio and visual experience. The visuals and multimedia installation were created in collaboration with Mitra Bonshahi and Erin Culton. The performance was originally produced by 651Arts with Creative Director Chen Lo. A highlight reel of the performance can be viewed at: **www.soundtrack63.com.**

Billboard Drone

Billboard Drone is a publicly projected split screen video featuring aerial footage of drone strikes, animation of the MQ-1 predator drone, and images uploaded to Flickr from recorded longitude and latitude locations of U.S. drone strikes.

The first public projection of the piece took place at ReFest: Art and Technology Festival where Barsan curated "The Invisible View," which examined technological processes of "seeing" (i.e., infrared imaging, facial recognition technology, race and gender profiling, social media activism, drone surveillance) and their influence on representation, identity and social control. More information about the project can be found at: **www.annabarsan.com.**

Cyclus

Cyclus is a work in progress. It is a multi-channel experimental documentary consisting of archival, verité, essay and narrative elements. The film is split into three parts that explore cycles of destruction and renewal through a personal, societal and environmental lens.

The story follows a young woman navigating the personal loss of a relationship set within a larger global context of growing militarism, consumerism and ecological collapse. Destruction by means of violence and warfare is explored through archival footage while abandoned landscapes, factories and homes of Detroit are used to depict a not-so-distant post-apocalyptic future. Verité footage captures a number of recent marches and protests in New York that communicate a rising sense of urgency and restlessness under growing state violence. Picturesque landscapes speak to an idealized past, memories of what we have lost, as well as hope for what might be restored if we act quickly in the face of the destruction and violence that surrounds us.

Additional examples of Barsan's work may be viewed at: www.annabarsan.com

From the Wilds of Sabbatical: A Reflection on Transformation

Kim Hewitt, Metropolitan Center

After I was awarded continuing appointment, I was thrilled to receive a full-year sabbatical for 2014-2015. Unfortunately, this is a rare occurrence at SUNY Empire State College, largely because the college funds an extremely limited number of half-year sabbaticals each year and because few professors, who tend to have moderate paychecks at public universities, are able or willing to bear the financial stress of a full year at half pay. Regardless of the lifestyle sacrifices I made, I reveled in being awarded a space of time to devote to my intellectual development, and I am grateful to Empire State College for funding my sabbatical. One of my professor friends and I remind each other often of the good life we lead as professors. When we find ourselves complaining about how hard we work, or about a particularly galling dilemma at work, we are fond of reminding each other "It ain't coal mining." No black lung, no crawling on our hands and knees in small, dark spaces, no danger of the mine blowing up. Compared to many lives, ours is downright luxurious. We don't keep early hours unless we want to, and our schedules are fairly flexible. We get to think, write, read and (hopefully) contribute to society by educating students in many different ways, and most importantly, we care about our jobs.

However, unlike traditional colleges, the ESC model embraces mentoring, which is rigorous, exhausting work both intellectually and emotionally, and most mentors put in far more than 40 hours most weeks. We are constantly racing to meet term deadlines, pressured to fulfill ever-ballooning roles in service to the college, and striving to improve the quality of our teaching and interactions with students, while trying to find time for scholarship. Simultaneously, as mentors at a nontraditional institution that puts mentoring at the core of its attempt to recruit students, we are expected to recognize and respect our students and their life experiences in their many roles as people with full lives. Mentoring often involves the emotional work of supporting students as they struggle to balance their jobs, families, religious lives and roles as mothers, fathers, caretakers, artists, community activists, etc., etc., with their studies, *and* calming and encouraging students who often face anxieties and fears about the educational process. In spite of the challenge of this work that goes beyond the intellectual tasks of teaching, here at Empire State College we don't have the breaks of a traditional college, so it is a 12-month job without spring break or summers off, or even major time off for winter break. I had known a sabbatical would be crucial in finally offering time to develop my scholarship and also to stem the smoldering burnout I felt from working with students without a meaningful break for eight years. I had no idea just how important a sabbatical would be to redefining my relationship with my work.

I knew work was stressful and occupied most of my waking hours, but I had no idea how stressful until I was finally able to shed the habit of checking work email, fretting over what studies students were or weren't taking, meetings, changes in policies and procedures and a hundred other bureaucratic details and effluvia that plague my days at work. I finally weaned myself away and was able to focus on not just the details of my scholarly research, but the larger meanings and importance of my scholarly work. I felt my mind and body relax. I spent hours every day reading, learning, writing and putting my research in a broader (and much needed) perspective that I hadn't been able to see in the fragmented and tiny time slots available while working. I hadn't had the time and energy available for this kind of work since I had been in graduate school. I felt my mind open into a kind of creative thinking space I hadn't experienced in nearly 10 years. I was able to read and digest ideas and grasp a deep understanding and original synthesis of ideas. I played with ideas and made connections and wrote in ways that were productive and enjoyable. My intellectual

Kim Hewitt in front of a redwood.

PHOTO CREDIT: JASON PARMER

world expanded tremendously as I voraciously consumed works that had been on my reading list for years.

It felt wonderful. For the first three months, I was happy to once again exercise my mind in serious and creative intellectual work. Then, another shift occurred. Relieved of the stress of my job, I remembered that life can be fun and can offer endless possibilities for growth. *I felt alive in ways I hadn't in years.* Even more astoundingly, after about three months, I felt a major transformation in my view of higher education, and a major shift in how I define success at my job.

I was able to step back and really consider the ways in which work had been undermining my work. What do I mean by that? Caught up in the grind – the details of registration, the retention rate, the clerical processes of checking degree programs, and graduation checks – I had forgotten the human piece of education. Pressed into the assembly line-like calendar of registration, grading, preparation and meetings, I had lost sight of the deep possibilities of education for students who on the one hand had rich life experiences

to bring to their work with me, and on the other also were caught up in jobs, financial pressures, family responsibilities and deadlines. Often they were too caught up to stop and ask themselves what they really want from their education or in their lives. I understand that many students at Empire State College aren't looking for anything more than a piece of paper that shows a degree. They aren't necessarily seeking a new world view, or to become better people, or to contribute to society in a way they have dug deep inside themselves to figure out. They may not even be looking for happiness or fulfillment. Some are resigned to trying to succeed in a society that requires credentials, regardless of one's life experiences or depth of learning, values or wisdom.

I also had relegated myself to this mechanistic view of higher education and society. Driven by a student-as-customer model in which my job is to be knowledgeable, efficient, pleasant and agreeable, I had allowed students to treat me like a faceless source of information. Indeed, I had resigned myself to that role. I had become a tool in a grinding process of making pieces fit. The assembly line system of measuring success by production and profit (or that is, enrollment numbers, SALE [Student Assessment of Learning Experiences] results and graduation rates), no matter how hollow, had captured my attention in my pursuit of tenure, and I had achieved that goal. At traditional institutions of higher education, faculty like to think their task is to put all their years honing their intellect to work in their area of expertise. At ESC, our ideals go beyond that to strive to facilitate lifelong learning using innovative methods for students who are often the least acclimated to higher education. Instead of forcing students into a standardized box, we seek to adapt our methods to the needs of the student (hopefully without sacrificing academic rigor). Not all students want a transformational experience, but we give lip service to that prospect at ESC, and in my ideal world, education broadens and stretches a person's world view in ways that aren't always convenient or comfortable. Education should change people. As an ideological stance, I find this idea that we help students become who they want to become, in ways that suit them (rather than in ways that suit the social pressures they live with), a satisfying and radical critique of the values

of a capitalist, consumer-driven, profit-driven society that values data-driven outcomes more than processes. However, in an effort to earn the reward of tenure, I had focused more on measures of performance that skirted difficult questions for students and me.

At ESC, we kick around the term "transformational education." Transformation and the question of what changes a person has been an interest of mine for many years. Part of my sabbatical was aimed at tackling a reading list I had constructed to explore the research on transformational experiences particularly relevant to learning. I am an academic, so books are my friends, research is my skeleton, intellectual dialogue is my blood, ideas are my breath, and I wanted to study everything that had ever been written about transformational education and experiences.

But I found my insights on the beach in California.

As I sat on the sandy coast in Humboldt County, California, softly enclosed by a chilly fog, I wasn't pondering intellectual ideas or the research about transformation. I was enjoying a rare moment of hanging out in nature, caressed by the sound of the ocean, embraced by the gray ambiance. I felt content and whole and part of the world. I was well-rested and relaxed. In my mind, I had images of the majestic redwood trees I had seen on my hikes, each one uniquely gorgeous. As I marveled at them in awe I had thought, "If only I could see each one of my students this way: each one unique and beautiful in her own way." As I

If you care about something, you are engaged with your heart, your body, your whole being. If it touches you, it has the power to transform you.

enjoyed a serene moment on the beach, I felt a sudden surge of warmth for my students, and looked forward to my future work with them with contentment and even delight.

Sitting on the beach, I had a minor revelation and transformational experience. I realized that the main thing keeping me from seeing the beauty in each student and feeling that delight every day at my job, is my own busyness and how caught up I get in the frantic factory-pace of my job, which is always demanding more of my time. How ironic! I hadn't even touched my reading list on transformation yet and I had found part of my answer experientially. Space and time to relax and reflect had allowed me to experience a heartfelt response to my students. Instead of intellectually consuming the ideas of what it means to be "student-centered," I gained an intuitive knowledge of what it means to respond to students from my center, on a real and deep level. Unfortunately, that had often been missing in my daily life at ESC because I had been so damned busy trying to perform up to the measures of success for so many years. It was a real aha moment.

What transforms people? A vast amount of research supports the idea that transformational learning arises from experiences that engage more than just a person's mind. Research shows (specifically) that emotional engagement enhances learning. It seems obvious, doesn't it? If it matters, you learn about it. The topics of education (math, reading, history, literature, science, etc.) can matter in many different ways and engage many different parts of a person. When students see that a topic is relevant to their lives, they learn that it isn't just the information that matters; it is what they do with it that matters. Isn't that one of the ideas we strive to pass on to students?

If you care about something, you are engaged with your heart, your body, your whole being. If it touches you, it has the power to transform you. That's the power that many works of art hold, and that is the power of education that engages students on more than a mental level, or of a mentor who can be fully present and centered, rather than a cog in a machine spewing out guidelines.

I'll suggest that an aspect of being centered is being able to engage with many parts of one's self and being grounded within one's whole self, as I felt on that beach. Being grounded surely means different things to different people, but for me it means having a balanced and relaxed acknowledgment and respect for all parts of myself: heart, body,

spirit as well as mind, and the ways all these dimensions are entwined. In that moment on the beach, I understood the idea of teaching the whole student with my whole self, because I felt whole. It's not that I hadn't understood that idea in my head – of course I had! But now I really got it, not just in my mind, but in my body, in my heart. If I am relating to my students on a mind-level only, then I am literally committing an act of violence against my students and myself, by denying parts of them and parts of myself that are important for existence as full human beings, and important for growth and transformation.

I don't have any answers yet for what this realization means for my daily teaching and mentoring life, or my college service, let alone what it might mean for others. What I do know is that I can't go back to the exhausting work week of student appointments, endless meetings, cramming in study preparation, hurried review of student folders, and nights and weekends filled with catching up on email and DP and document reviews, and trying to keep up in my field, while in between I try to maintain a social life, nurture my relationships, exercise and stay healthy, maintain a household and pursue my own personal spiritual and intellectual goals, with never enough time to do all of it. *It's an act of violence against me and my students.* Not only do I lose sight of the larger meaning and purpose of my scholarly research and my teaching, but I lose sight of my students as complex human beings, each uniquely miraculous in his or her own way. I also lose a crucial sense of enjoyment of life. For the eight years I have been at ESC, I have repeated the mantra "I just need to get through this week / this month / this term …" only to have the next week, next month and next term be just as busy as the last. Before my sabbatical, I knew my job was relentless and stressful, but until sabbatical I didn't realize just how stressful and relentless. It had actually been diminishing the quality of my life and causing a rift in my being as I tried to knit all the many fragments of my work and life together into a competent performance. It caused me to be relentless as I pursued tenure, giving myself no quarter to leave an email unread, or a student question unaddressed, or go on vacation during the teaching term. (But when does that leave time for vacation at a college that doesn't have a spring break, has few lengthy holidays, and requires summer

teaching?! It leaves Faculty Reading Period, during which I am grading final papers, filing grades and preparing for the next term!)

Note that I say all this as a faculty member with well-developed time management and priority-setting skills. I was always proud of my ability to circumscribe limits with students, to organize my time with students carefully, and of my high student evaluations, and I was proud of my college service. Although not a visible "mover and shaker" at the college, I frequently left work cheerfully saying to the evening receptionist: "I certainly earned my paycheck today!" Once in a while, I even felt that I had created a space of rapport with students and facilitated a meaningful learning experience, whether it was a concept about the importance of historical context, or witnessing a student's self-awareness that arose from a conversation about degree planning. Those moments of satisfaction sustained me, but were often washed away by a vast sea of clerical work, administrative policy and procedure work, and low-level tasks performed on a daily basis.

Being able to escape the incessant pace of work at ESC during my sabbatical allowed me to envision a different kind of life for myself, and a very different approach to my work at ESC. Instead of a 40- to 60-hour work week in which I am always rushing to catch my breath and struggling to be a thoughtful, present mentor, colleague and citizen of ESC (while, unfortunately often choking back frustration and anger at my lack of time), what would happen if I was truly able to be centered and wholly present? After all, I am not only an academic mentor or a history and cultural studies teacher. I have a doctorate, but I also have emotional, physical, spiritual dimensions and my own life experiences. What if I were able to be wholly myself when I interact with students? How would I envision an interaction that values the balance of give-and-take between mentor and student *both* coming to the relationship as rich, multi-dimensional beings? Wow. Imagine that for a moment. What would it look like? How would that play out when a student sits down with a mentor and says "I am trying to decide what to take next term?" or "I want to talk about planning my degree?" How would that manifest in a study group when I teach students about the Great Depression or World War II or the Armenian Genocide? What possibilities

might develop for transformative experiences that engage students on many levels besides the mental?

What would be the quality of my interactions with students and colleagues if I was deeply grounded and thriving – intellectually, emotionally, physically, even (do I dare say it?) spiritually – and able to share that in my ability to be attentive as a centered human being?

I realize we face budgetary challenges at ESC. All of us in the college community are constantly being asked to do more with less. But if we're serious about transformational education at ESC, then a major shift has to occur. We can't continue to be a machine that expects faculty and staff to be cogs that self-oil and perform according to the charts and numbers, regardless of the human toll. In order to treat students as humans on the path to transformation (if that is our goal), instead of enrollment numbers and graduation statistics, then we need to role model that possibility of transformation and be able to envision it – perhaps even manifest it – when we work with them. For that to happen, we need time to catch our breath, for our families and communities, to take care of our own physical and mental health, to sit on the beach, and do all the things that make us human – in short, have fulfilling, rich lives as well as read, write, learn … and be whole and centered ourselves, so that instead of merely surviving, we are *thriving*. We need a system that will value the quality of mentoring as a measure of success rather than numbers, and we need a system that will allot the resources faculty need to build trust and rapport with each student, so

> *What if I were able to be wholly myself when I interact with students? How would I envision an interaction that values the balance of give-and-take between mentor and student* both *coming to the relationship as rich, multi-dimensional beings?*

that we can be fully supportive of student's needs, while not curtailing our own growth as individuals who are more than tools in the impersonal box of an institution. It's difficult to create a quality learning experience for each student without paper for the copy machine or an evening receptionist, but it is nearly impossible with a workload that precludes being able to maintain a balance of work and personal life. Mentoring and learning requires time to be thoughtful and develop ideas. The process of transformation, for students and faculty, requires the time and space to digest what nurtures us.

In the almost 10 years I've been at ESC, I've heard endless complaints about workload, but I've seen little change. Eventually, mentors find ways to cut corners and ways to abbreviate their work and truncate their own selves to tackle the workload. They have to in order to survive. I think students suffer when this happens. I think the institution suffers and I think each one of us suffers, too, as well as society as a larger entity which is robbed of the presence of creative, fully-realized humans who can go forth to transform society. I am tired of the tension between our ideals and our practice. If we want to consider the value of transformational education and the value of mentoring seriously, then it's time for our work habits, and expectations placed on faculty and staff to evolve.

I am lucky enough to have tenure. From here on out, my relentlessness will not be geared toward achieving the checklist that will be rewarded with job security. My pursuit will be a balanced, centered life in which I am able to bring my whole self to my students and colleagues, so that we may all benefit. I heartily wish that reorganization of the college will guarantee each and every one of my colleagues a sabbatical every seven years, and every summer off, so that they may stave off burnout, live rich lives and work with students in a holistic manner. Otherwise, I don't know how it is humanly possible to maintain any illusion of working with students in a way that maintains – and sustains – the integrity of both mentors and students.

How to Cultivate "Cultural Openness" Among Adult Learners: Practical Examples From the Buffalo Project

Rhianna C. Rogers and Aimee M. Woznick, Niagara Frontier Center

Introduction

For the past several decades, scholars and university administrators nationwide have contemplated how to make higher education a more open, accessible and inclusive place, particularly for those who have been historically excluded from the college environment. In recent years, the push to graduate a more diverse population of students has taken on new urgency, as the United States is experiencing a dramatic shift in cultural demographics and needs to double the number of college graduates over the next two decades in order to remain competitive in the global economy (Lederman, 2009). In fact, President Obama (2010) has vowed that America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates by the year 2020. This project cannot be realized without opening the doors to higher education to a broader segment of the nation's population.

Yet barriers to a college degree still exist for many, and one of the most significant barriers is the lack of cultural awareness that diverse students encounter upon entering the (physical or virtual) classroom. Decades of educational research have demonstrated the link between student engagement and persistence to graduation, but students cannot effectively engage with their peers if they do not feel comfortable interacting with individuals from different backgrounds. At the same time, cross-cultural competence has become a fundamental job requirement in the world marketplace. As a result, openness to other cultures is not just important for student success, but a key outcome of a college education.

Though questions of diversity in higher education have been explored at length with regard to traditional-aged populations, less attention has been directed toward the role of cultural understanding in the academic lives of adult/nontraditional students. In this study, we wanted to know whether SUNY Empire State College's Niagara Frontier Center (hereafter referred to as NFC) students perceived the college as a "culturally open" place, how being culturally aware fit into their own levels of cultural understanding, and what steps we could take to foster an inclusive environment where students could learn to skillfully negotiate diversity in their academic, professional and personal lives.

Toward this end, Rhianna Rogers launched the "Buffalo Project" in 2012 as a full-scale ethnographic study of adult and nontraditional student perceptions of culture at NFC. The data collected from the project's survey was used to inform the development of co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities at NFC that were meant to enhance student engagement and cultural understanding. In 2013, Aimee Woznick joined the project in an effort to expand upon its initial success and to use the research to enhance NFC's academic and student support services. This paper will detail our approach to garnering student perspectives, describe lessons learned and document practical strategies for implementing student-centered programming projects, such as this one, in other learning environments. It is our perspective that when students are provided with opportunities to interact with their diverse peers, they are able to build cross-cultural competencies, thus enhancing their overall learning experience.

Defining "Culturally Open"

In order to contextualize this project and its goals, it is important to first define the phrase "culturally open." Scholars across the disciplines have discussed the role of cultural openness, usually deeming it a form of intercultural competency (Bennett, 1993; Byram, 1997; Chen & An, 2009; Deardorff, 2006, 2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Shankarmahesh (2006) expanded upon the ideas of Sharma, Shimp and Shin in this way: "Cultural openness is

Rhianna C. Rogers and Aimee M. Woznick

determined by willingness to interact with people from other cultures and experience some of their artifacts" (p. 149). Many of the current terms used in educational research (such as "multiculturalism," "cultural sensitivity" and "cultural awareness") imply tolerance of "others" but not experience with or adoption of different peoples' cultural norms, beliefs and attitudes. The use of the term "culturally open" for this project implies our desire to be inclusive of all representative student cultures at NFC, as well as to encourage the creation of programs that extend beyond the concept of mere tolerance and truly bridge cultures.

How Does Cultural Openness Apply to Adult Learning? Examples From the Buffalo Project

In order to understand the application of the theory of cultural openness to the adult learning environment, this paper will explore how our research on the Buffalo Project led to tangible results for our students. This research project initially grew out of an academic year (AY) 2010-2011 pilot study presented at the 2011 Empire State College All College Conference in Saratoga Springs, New York. As an invited participant in the plenary session titled "Empire State College as an Open University: Open to Whom?" co-principal investigator, Rhianna Rogers, presented a talk titled "Is ESC's Niagara Frontier

Center (NFC) a Culturally 'Open' Center for Learning?" in which she discussed her informal observations of student perceptions of culture at NFC. Finding the research helpful for developing student-centered courses and assignments, Rogers, with the help of student research assistants Maria Tripi (AY 2010-2013) and Vincent Caito (AY 2010-2011), expanded this into a formalized Institutional Review Board research study of NFC student perceptions of cultural openness. In its second year (AY 2012-2014), the Buffalo Project expanded to include Aimee Woznick as co-PI (AY 2013-2014), and has been successfully impacted cultural understanding and the development of student-centered programming at NFC since its inception.

The premise of this research project is twofold. First, the project builds upon the mission of SUNY Empire State College (n.d.), which states that ESC aims to provide "rigorous programs that connect individuals' unique and diverse lives to their personal learning goals" (College Mission section, para. 1). It also advances the college's commitments to "promot[e] social justice and a sustainable world through responsiveness to human and social circumstances" and to "ensur[e] a healthy democracy that recognizes and respects diversity in all its forms" (Our Commitments section, para. 1). It does so first by assessing the current state of cultural openness among students at NFC through a student survey, and then by using that data to inform the development of programming directed at fostering cross-cultural understanding. Secondly, this project builds upon recent sociocultural research into student engagement and retention in collegiate settings. Decades of research stemming from Vincent Tinto's seminal work on the causes of student attrition have suggested a positive link between student engagement and degree completion (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea ,2008; Tinto, 1990, 2006-2007). Toward this end, the researchers sought to discover and develop student activities that would afford opportunities for co-curricular and extracurricular engagement, while simultaneously providing students with experiences that would enhance cultural understanding. Utilizing the aforementioned information, the following research question was developed for this project:

How can ESC/NFC become a more "culturally open" regional center?

Based on this question, we developed the following research objectives. Our hope is to:

1. *understand* and/or construct a localized cultural history for ESC/NFC students and faculty in the context of the surrounding Western New York cultural populations

2. *comment* on the role of culture in each representative demographic group at ESC/NFC and the greater Buffalo region

3. *determine* what elements of "cultural openness" have been identified in or around ESC/NFC that may have positive or negative impacts on the learning processes for diverse populations.

The results of the student survey[1] were disseminated in presentations and administrative meetings, and feedback was solicited from students, faculty and administrators throughout the course of the research project. This dialogic process enabled the Buffalo Project to make a direct impact on the culture of NFC. Faculty and administrators alike have been able to use the project data as a way to gauge student interests and implement activities that reflect students' needs and desires in the college environment. By using this data and continuing to administer student surveys in the future, NFC aims to increase student participation in onsite activities and empower students in their college experience.

To cite just one example, NFC's committee responsible for planning events, the Program Committee, had long lamented the poor attendance at, and seeming lack of interest in, some center-based student events. When the Buffalo Project survey revealed that students were eager to have a stronger voice in the planning of student events, the committee added both a student and an alum representative to better articulate diverse student interests. These representatives have not only brought fresh perspectives, positive energy, and new ideas to this committee, but they also have gained valuable leadership experience themselves through their active involvement in the planning and execution of events. And the change has not gone unnoticed. Since the initial pilot study of this project through to the formal research survey

(AY 2010-2014), attendance at events has risen and students, staff and faculty have regularly provided positive feedback on new activities.

Lessons Learned: Interpreting Our Results

Throughout this study, research strategies have been used to discuss the "cultural openness" of NFC. This following section provides a few highlights of what we found in AY 2013-2014. A full report of the entire two-year project is still pending.

As would be expected, the vast majority of survey participants were full-time (n= 27) and part-time (n= 26) attendees of NFC; no nonmatriculated students responded. This could indicate a lack of involvement among these students within everyday activities of this center. In addition, most of the students who participated in this survey were from NFC's Cheektowaga location (n= 37); however there was some representation from other unit locations, including Lockport (n=7), Jamestown (n=3), and Center for Distance Learning students based at NFC (n=2). Students in the Olean and Fredonia units did not participate in this survey, which may indicate a lack of effective communication between the main location in Cheektowaga, the survey coordinators and NFC units; unfamiliarity with the PIs; or a lack of involvement among students in their unit's student life. Using this information, we were able to develop avenues for increasing communications across locations by taking the following steps: 1) disseminating student feedback boxes across all NFC locations, 2) developing an online student confidential feedback form called "Comments for CARES,"[1] managed by the NFC student club, 3) engaging in regular conversations with unit coordinators and NFC administration about student survey results.

A closer examination of the sampled survey questions yielded a few expected and unexpected results. As we found in the previous survey, the vast majority of students perceived NFC as a "culturally open" regional center. However, it should be noted that a tentative analysis of all questions suggests that students held differing perceptions about what it means to be culturally open. For example, while 88.53 percent (54:61) of students either agreed or strongly agreed

that cultural understanding is important to the college learning environment, only 54.1 percent (33:61) agreed or strongly agreed that other peoples' languages are important to that environment. Further, a full 24.59 percent (15:61) of students either disagreed or strongly disagreed that other peoples' languages are important to the college learning environment. This data suggests that the connection between language and culture may not be clear to a number of students. And while students were quick to cite the importance of cultural understanding, a notable percentage either disagreed that they themselves were culturally sensitive (3.33 percent [2:60]) or responded that they were unsure (16.67 percent [10:60]) – numbers that may in fact be artificially low, but illustrate a desire to be perceived as culturally sensitive and/or tolerant even if that may not reflect students' actual views.

Additionally, while students generally expressed a willingness to learn about other cultures, survey data indicates that many are not completely comfortable with approaching individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In the survey, 26.66 percent (16:60) of students either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "I am unsure about how to approach others about their cultural backgrounds," and 18.33 percent (11:60) responded that they were unsure about this statement and how they interpreted its meaning. A number of factors may be influencing these results. First, the overwhelming majority (84.21 percent) of respondents have lived in the Western New York region for 25 years (n= 48) or more and, as a result, these students may not have had firsthand interactions with cultures that they perceive as foreign or unfamiliar. Second, to further reinforce this insularity, the Buffalo region has historically been one of the most segregated communities in the nation, so cross-cultural contact even within the region may be limited (Yin, 2009). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there is currently no formal diversity requirement in the general education curriculum, so while students are eager to learn about other cultures, there is no compulsory means of doing so. As a result, the curricular and co-curricular activities associated with the project, described in the following section, are a critical way to fill that gap.

Strategies for Developing Cultural Openness in Adult Learning

As this project illustrates, the collection of student surveys can be used to enhance student engagement and increase cultural competence by enabling students to better interact with their diverse peers.[2] But how might you go about doing this on your own? Here are a few strategies we would suggest:

1. **Create a pilot study to determine constituent interests:** It is important to recognize that your personal research interests may not be the same as the populations you are working with or even what they need, especially when dealing with a topic such as cultural openness. Conducting a pilot survey can allow you to collect data from your survey group and develop student-centered goals for your formal project.

2. **Get "buy in" from your various constituents:** Even before the formal project began, it was important to explain to all involved parties the reasons for completing a project like this one (i.e., developing a student voice, increasing retention and improving student life onsite). Speaking and presenting to as many people as possible about your project will ensure that all parties understand what you are doing and why. The more opportunities for involvement and feedback during all stages of the project, the better. Make sure to disseminate results to students, faculty and staff so that everyone has a reason to "buy in" and promote the success of this project.

3. **Develop a safe environment for constituents to exchange/develop ideas:** When speaking to faculty, staff, students and administration alike, we made sure to explain our personal reasons for joining this project, shared our own vulnerabilities and experiences with culture, and explained what we have learned from this project. We also made sure to mention to all participants the role of the anonymity in these surveys and protection of their comments. Showing our own vulnerabilities, providing multiple options for turning in their surveys and having several people available to speak with

them (staff, student and faculty project investigators) made survey participants feel safe.

4. **Empower constituents to get involved through data contributions and disseminate results:** Once you develop a safe environment and collect data, you need to make sure that you are using the information you are learning to address the points raised by your constituents. One of the hallmarks of an unsuccessful project is when data is collected, yet no substantive results come from it. Remember, projects that involve people also involve their emotions. If you contribute something, wouldn't you like to know that it matters? One of the best ways to empower participants is to make it clear that their thoughts are heard and will be incorporated into the initiative and programming phase of a project. For this project, the initiative and programming creation phase is, in fact, the most meaningful component. Implementing student ideas and giving participants a voice is a form of validation that students otherwise rarely have the opportunity to experience directly.

5. **Allow for creativity and growth:** This suggestion ties back to the first point: though you may have goals and objectives in mind, many projects that involve human subjects have a tendency to change organically over time. Different participants, new perspectives, and different strengths and weaknesses all contribute to this evolution. A perfect example of this comes from the creation of the NFC student club "CARES (College Achievement Requires Engaged Students)." Though it was a goal of the founding PI to ultimately develop student groups, the research assistants were very interested in starting a club immediately. Maria Tripi took the lead on this subproject and, for two years, we recruited students and eventually co-developed bylaws and nominated student officers and an executive board. As time progressed, the club took on a life of its own. Students developed a website and Facebook page, organized events and dinners, created volunteering experiences, wrote a newsletter and traveled to conferences together.[3] Additionally, many

events originally associated with this study – including food events, multicultural plenaries, movie nights, field trips, a student club and community volunteering experiences – now exist as standing NFC activities and initiatives, and many are planned and managed by the students themselves.[4]

As another benefit of this project, many newly created NFC initiatives and committees are taking into account student perspectives, particularly from students who have been associated with this project, in order to develop activities and learning experiences at NFC that support diverse student experiences. Thus, as the project has organically evolved over time – by working from the students up, rather than the administration down – the Buffalo Project has developed structures that will allow its outcomes to be sustainable long after this study is completed.

Culturally Open Projects: What Can They Accomplish? Why Are They Necessary?

Research indicates that engaging students through inclusive programming has the potential to increase their appreciation for diversity in all its forms as well as enhance their overall college experiences. The benefits of a culturally-sensitive, connected student community should be immediately evident to college faculty and administrators. Classroom discussions and other college experiences are naturally more robust when students feel comfortable communicating with their diverse peers. It should be no surprise, then, that recent studies have suggested that engagement with diversity is a boon to academic achievement, as well. In a study conducted at the University of Michigan, Laird (2005) found that "students with more experiences with diversity, particularly enrollment in diversity courses and positive interactions with diverse peers, are more likely to score higher on academic self-confidence, social agency, and critical thinking disposition" (p. 365). Others have found that interactions with diverse peers, in both formal and informal settings, are associated with positive learning and democracy outcomes, largely due to the way that unexpected experiences cause students to question established beliefs (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2011; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin,

2002). These findings suggest that student engagement with diversity not only benefits the bottom line of retention and persistence, but also improves academic outcomes.

One of the key barriers to cultural openness in higher education has long been the discrepancy in equity and access experienced by students who have been historically underrepresented in higher education. Several scholars across the disciplines have examined the negative impact that demographic divides have on student academic performance, retention and persistence (Bridgeman & Wendler, 1991; Brown & Cross, 1997; Daugherty & Lane, 1999; Galicki & McEwen, 1989; Lu, 1994; Porter, 1990; Schram, 1996). For these reasons, scholars have pointed to the necessity of "mapping diversity efforts" (Halulani, Haiker, & Lancaster, 2010) – that is, of the need for institutions of higher education to engage in self-inquiry around the issues of diversity and inclusion. At the same time, current research has acknowledged that diversity efforts are too often evaluated from an institutional point of view, and thus has increasingly attempted to assess the student perspective. Some institutions, for example, have asked undergraduates to complete surveys or interviews in which they define diversity, evaluate their attitudes toward diversity and express how willing and/or motivated they are to learn about diversity issues (Cuba et al., 2011; Littleford, 2013).

Projects like ours make a conscious effort to capture the student voice, and to use that survey feedback to inform our institutional and program planning. In fact, student research assistants helped develop the survey itself, assisting in developing and formulating the questions, which gave us great insight into what issues mattered most to them. Furthermore, having student data makes it easier to reflect on our own practices related to diversity and inclusion, and to understand clearly what is working and not working, rather than relying on the observations and "anecdata" of college employees alone. At Empire State College, for example, there is an annual climate survey that assesses perceptions about diversity and cultural sensitivity as they relate to the work of faculty and administrators, but there is currently no analogous collegewide survey for the student body; this project is one step in that direction.

Another reason that projects like this are so critical is that the vast majority of current educational research with regard to questions of cultural awareness has so far concentrated on the experience of traditional college students, aged 18-24. Adults often come to college with broader life experiences than students fresh out of high school, but their beliefs, values and attitudes toward other cultures also may be more fixed. Learning about other cultures and how to negotiate diversity is just as important for this population, but true openness may be more of a challenge to achieve. More research needs to be done about how to effectively reach out to this specific population of students in order to foster greater intellectual openness to difference.

Final Thoughts and Concluding Remarks

It is our view that this work has much to offer the broader anthropological, ethnographic and student service communities of this region, as well as those researchers who are specifically interested in the application of cultural research to broader educational concepts of cultural sensitivity, student retention, academic performance and multiculturalism. As previously indicated, a successful project should take the following into consideration:

- understand the need and theoretical underpinnings of the project

- review similar projects that exist and find out what does and does not work

- develop assessment tools for measuring the success of the project

- solicit feedback from participants before, during and after the project to measure effectiveness

- create a safe environment for learning and growth

- utilize participant data to develop participant-centered initiatives and programming

- disseminate results.

We believe studies like this one have the potential to improve student retention, as well as to increase awareness of cultural diversity and interests in college settings. In addition, we also believe projects like this one have

the potential to allow instructors, in both local and regional capacities, the ability to better tailor their studies to students' diverse cultural interests, which ultimately will allow for the enhanced learning opportunities and increased retention. Moving forward, our goal is to disseminate the results of this project to the broader academic community in order to encourage the establishment of similar projects across SUNY Empire State College and beyond.

Notes

[1] Link to "Comments for CARES" feedback form: http://sunyesccares. wordpress.com/comments-for-cares/.

[2] For survey instrument and specific data from this project, please review the Buffalo Project Reports for AY 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 on the Buffalo Project website: http://commons. esc.edu/rhiannarogers/the-buffalo-project-an-ethnographic-study-of-western-new-york/.

[3] The SUNY ESC NFC CARES (spring 2012-present) club website is http:// sunyesccares.wordpress.com/; the club Facebook page is https://www.facebook. com/SUNYESCCARES?fref=ts.

[4] Here is a brief sampling of activities and initiatives that grew organically out of the survey results and activities: 1) establishment of a semiannual Cultural Diversity Luncheon/Global Food Fest for NFC faculty, staff and students (fall 2010, spring 2013, fall 2013); 2) establishment of a semiannual Buffalo Project Academic Plenary Series focusing on topics related to diverse cultures and groups (fall 2010-present); 3) community presentations about the Buffalo Project (fall 2013-present); 4) development of a culturally sensitive NFC student club, SUNY ESC NFC CARES (spring 2012-present). More detail is available on the Buffalo Project website.

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Because They Cared

George Scott, Center for Distance Learning

It was 8 p.m. Saturday in Rochester. The phone rang. A Pasco County, Florida deputy sheriff was calling to explain how he and another deputy had discovered my father-in-law in a daze sitting in his screened-in sunporch. My mother-in-law had been rushed to the hospital a few days earlier. That explained the lack of returned phone calls. However, prior to the sheriff's call, my wife and I knew nothing of their actual situational dynamics.

We were on a plane, with wheels up, at 8 a.m. the next morning. Little did we know that the next two weeks would be spent in Zephyrhills and Dade City Florida, with most of the time spent in the Zephyrhills hospital.

Five days prior to the phone call, a new term had started for me as a student in SUNY Empire State College's MBA program, as well as for my wife who was earning her Doctor of Education degree at the University of Rochester's Warner School of Education. By the time of our return to Rochester, the term was three weeks old, and we were each two weeks behind. The multiple stresses created by life events, work demands and course requirements were intense.

We needed some breathing room … from somewhere.

As we each reached out to our respective professors, my wife and I each experienced humbling amounts of empathy. The manner in which my ESC MBA mentors (Alan Belasen, Nazik Roufaiel and Rosalyn Rufer) individually and collectively handled my situation tremendously influenced how, today, as an instructor, I interact with my own students. Also because my professors cared, many of my students with extenuating circumstances have benefited.

To provide some perspective, my educational background includes a B.S. degree from ESC's Business, Management and Economics/

FORUM West program. I earned my MBA degree from ESC in 2010. In 2011, I taught my first ESC BME undergraduate course.

What follows are descriptions of, and rationales for, many elements of my approach to helping adult learners learn. All of the elements appear in my online course announcements and corresponding emails at the beginning of each term.

Pre-Emptive Communication

Distance learning has many advantages for all involved parties. One small downside is the lack of in-person student-instructor exposure. The interaction issue is easier to manage with the use of connectivity media: cell phones, iPads (and similar products), computers, the Internet and, overall, wireless communications.

These communication channels allow for what I have identified as "Pre-Emptive Communication" that provides the opportunity for efficient instructor-student communications and substantial stress reduction for all involved parties, especially the students. Adult learners experience counterproductive stress from many aspects of life. Not clearly understanding an assignment can add to that stress. Providing clarification pre-emptively can help reduce a student's stress in addition to helping the student prevent wasting time.

Instructors can benefit from this approach, as well. Personally, I would rather have a student take a few minutes of my time on one day than spend a disproportionate amount of time on other days reviewing a poorly written or off-target assignment. Simply put, it is the practical application of the adage "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure."

Correspondingly, I provide students with my home telephone number, my cell phone number for calls and texts, my ESC email address and my personal email address. Over the last three years, some students have used a combination of available channels effectively, and respectfully. Undoubtedly, some of my
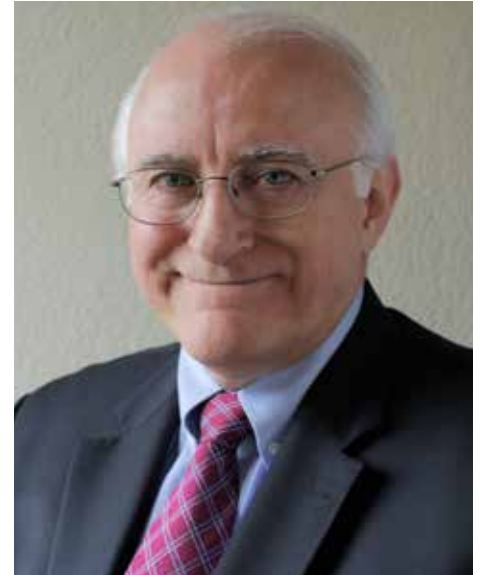
George Scott

colleagues would shudder at the thought of providing that many accessibility channels. However, I assure you that this approach has never become intrusive.

The 30-Minute Rule

Often, a successful student will grind through a difficult assignment, taking far longer than necessary due to the student's determination to succeed without help. Minutes can turn into hours. Hours can turn into days. For example, when the student pauses on Friday to look at the progress he or she has made on an assignment, the realization sets in that less than one page of writing has been added since Monday – and, this was the only assignment worked on throughout the entire week.

This realization can lead to frustration and self-loathing for the lack of substantive progress and increased tension, given the fast-approaching assignment submission deadline. The increased tension can lead to a mental block, which can lead to additional tension, which can … well, you get the idea. In effect, as student frustration increases, so does the downward spiral of student productivity.

Only a break in the cycle can prevent, eliminate or substantially reduce the counterproductive tension. For my students, what I have called the "30-Minute Rule" can provide that break. Essentially, if the student recognizes that he or she has made no progress after 30 minutes of continuous effort, the student is to reach out to me. If I cannot immediately take the call or respond to the email or text message, the student is to set aside that assignment until the student and I have communicated, normally within 24 hours. If, for some reason, I am delayed beyond the 24 hours, and the delay will cause the student to submit a written assignment after the assignment deadline, there is no grade penalty.

Students' reaction to this approach has been, and continues to be, highly favorable. Additionally, I am glad to be able to help students not experience the wasted time and energy caused by a stubborn determination to "do it on my own" – which is what I often did as a student.

Flat Tire Syndrome

Gaining a working knowledge of American Psychological Association (APA) Style standards and their proper integration into scholarly writing is a challenge for undergraduates, on a good day. Often, it appears that some students try to create their own style of scholarly writing. Naturally, and often, unintentional plagiarism is the result. In such a situation, the student receives an assignment grade of "0" as well as the opportunity to revise and resubmit the assignment.

It is at this point that conscientious students have a tendency to panic (understandably). Some envision a plummeting course grade or an end to their academic pursuits. My explanatory email and/or telephone call usually ensues. The initial tension in the student's voice is quite intense. It is at this point that I remind the student of my "Flat Tire Syndrome" perspective.

I ask a student to picture the ideal vehicle of his or her choice, equipped with all desired options running perfectly, and having a full tank of gas … and a flat tire. Next, I ask if the entire vehicle needs to be junked, due to its current inability to move forward. Always, each student has given the obvious response.

Subsequently, I assure the student that I view the situation as a "quick fix" – that is, if the student has the right attitude about the learning opportunity and intends to remedy the situation. Nearly all students who have experienced the "Flat Tire Syndrome" and have had the right attitude, ultimately earned a grade of "A."

Single Ray of Sunshine

Extraordinarily extenuating circumstances can be a distraction for the strongest of students. Past examples include situations like Hurricanes Irene and Sandy as well as one student who experienced three deaths of three close family members within a six-week period. (The palpable anguish in that student's email eliminated all doubts I might have had regarding its truth.) Other extreme challenges have included long-term relationships ending and major surgeries. In these instances, I believe the students not only need some breathing room, they deserve it.

When a mind is fogged with myriad and mixed emotions, concentration on anything is difficult. When a student's existence contains real and metaphorical clouds, critical thinking and concentration are even more difficult. With all the stressors brought about by the extenuating circumstances, I attempt to provide the student with a "Single Ray of Sunshine" regarding the completion of an assignment or of the entire course.

First, I indicate that, in order to make meaningful decisions regarding their situation, I need to have a sufficient understanding of their situation. Next, I assure the student that any specifics shared with me will remain strictly confidential. Then, I listen, not only to what the student says, but also to what the student doesn't say. I believe that this active listening approach is crucial to making the best possible decisions regarding the student's successful completion of the course.

Productive Empathy

Next, I attempt to incorporate what I call "Productive Empathy" by tailoring the "Single Ray of Sunshine" to the student's situation. With "Productive Empathy," I attempt to be understanding of a student's situation, as well as provide keep-moving-forward guidance, which may require adaptability and flexibility, at times.

In one student's case, I removed all deadlines "for the short term." Starting with the next assignment and throughout the remainder of the term, that particular student was the first to submit course work ahead of the assignment submission deadlines.

In another instance, I suggested that the student (who had major surgery) set aside her studies (for this course) for at least a couple weeks or until she felt up to completing the most recent assignment, whichever occurred first. She ended up needing three weeks. Subsequently, she finished all remaining assignments with lightning speed and submitted her term paper in the buffer period between the end of the term and the course outcome/grade submission date. The student earned an "A."

Third Second Chance

While the "Single Ray of Sunshine" focuses on nonacademic factors that affect student progress, a "Third Second Chance" focuses on course-relevant factors such as student

> *When a student's existence contains real and metaphorical clouds, critical thinking and concentration are even more difficult.*

responses to assignment questions and an inability to provide proper academic writing content. When writing challenges arise, and the student is putting forth his or her best effort, the student is given the opportunity to revise and resubmit the written assignment.

Depending on the severity of improper content or format, the student may be required to 1) submit all future written assignments to ESC's Smarthinking service prior to submitting the work to me for grading; and 2) have the Smarthinking report accompany the revision in order to have the revision reviewed and graded.

If the revision is still off target, the student is directed to the Office of Academic Support for additional one-on-one guidance. The personalized student help from the wonderful

OAS staff members have frequently helped students get back on track regarding their academic writing challenges.

In essence, the "Third Second Chance" is my way of still believing in a student even when the student may have stopped believing in him or herself.

Positive Learning Experience

One of my objectives as an instructor for a CDL course is to provide each student the opportunity to have a positive learning experience throughout the entire course. While all of the above strategies are applied throughout the course, the "Third Second Chance" is particularly applied in the first two modules. I feel that being harsh and steadfast with grading during the first and second modules will cause the student to experience a "climbing out of the hole" situation with their grades.

I acknowledge each mentor or tutor's academic freedom and corresponding decisions during each term. I am certain longtime instructors have applied these kinds of strategies as well as others they have devised. I share these particular strategies with you as a direct result of my undergraduate and graduate program professors' actions – because they cared.

Capitalism, Exterminism and Moral Economy: E. P. Thompson Today

Michael Merrill, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies

The following is a version of a talk given by Michael Merrill in October 2014 at the First International E. P. Thompson Symposium at the Federal University of Uberlândia in Brazil.

Bom noite. Good evening. It is an honor and a pleasure for me to be with you this evening and to participate in this historic First International E. P. Thompson Symposium at the Federal University of Uberlândia.

Of all the countries of the world, Brazil is the one that most exemplifies, for me, the Thompsonian spirit, the spirit of the New Left, across a range of institutions and practices.

In an imposing number of arenas, including education, politics, land and civic life, from Paolo Freire and the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT), to the landless (and roofless!) workers and the *Bolsa Familia,* Brazilians and Brazilian movements have been showing the world how to work together to build a better life.

Thank you for all that you have done and are doing. I bring you fraternal greetings from the faculty, staff and students at The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies at SUNY Empire State College in New York City, who are working, as you are, to build "from below" a just and sustainable way of life for all.

I propose to talk briefly about Edward Thompson as a political activist, historian and critic of contemporary society. I have three principal themes.

First, I wish to underscore the extent to which Thompson was never simply an historian who happened to be interested in the culture of class and the history of class formation.

He was first and foremost a political activist. His commitments and desires drove his scholarship, which was nonetheless exemplary. That it was intended to help make the world a better place did not detract from its discipline.

Michael Merrill (center, white shirt) with a group of residents and activists at Gloria, a Landless Worker Movement settlement project on the outskirts of Uberlândia, Brazil. The conference visited the site in solidarity, and Merrill brought the group greetings and support from the faculty, staff and students of the Van Arsdale Center.

PHOTO CREDIT: DENNIS DWORKIN

My second theme, a continuation of the first, is a reminder of the extent to which Thompson, throughout his life, was concerned about countering the intellectual rigidities of every variety of orthodox Marxism.

His spirited polemic against Louis Althusser, "The Poverty of Theory; or, An Orrery of Errors," a sustained piece of philosophizing, may have been "a rarity" among his published works, as his spouse and intellectual partner, the fellow historian Dorothy Thompson, described it (D. Thompson, 1995, p. ix), but a concern for clear and responsible thinking, without humbug, marked all his writing.

Third and lastly, I also wish to insist on the continuing contemporary relevance of both Thompson's notion of an 18th century "moral economy" *and* his latter-day concept of "exterminism," which was developed in the course of his peace and anti-nuclear campaigning.

These, then, are the matters about which I propose to speak:

(1) the effects of Thompson's political activism and Marxism, which defined him;

(2) his approach to theory and to politics, which were of a piece with his approach to history, and which proceeded, as his history did, from below rather than from above; and,

(3) his concept of exterminism, which he feared might be the end of us, as well as his notion of a "moral economy," which may be our best, if not our only, way forward.

Let me begin on a personal note. I first met Edward Thompson nearly 40 years ago, in the spring of 1976. He was in New York City and accepted an invitation to speak at one of the Mid-Atlantic Radical Historians' Organization's biweekly forums, which I then helped to coordinate, and agreed to be interviewed for the new *Radical History Review.*[1]

I have vivid memories of both the forum and the interview.

At the first, he read for nearly 90 minutes to an overflow audience of some 400 historians and others from the pages of what would years later become the title essay in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (Thompson, 1978). I also would watch him dazzle another forum a few years later, where he spoke about his good friend, Tom McGrath, the American poet.

Few speakers could hold a crowd the way E. P. Thompson could. But he could be quite charming in smaller, more domestic settings, as well.

I interviewed him on the Upper East Side of New York at the apartment where Thompson was staying. It was cluttered with books and papers and he apologized immediately for his "busman's holiday." He also settled easily and patiently into two-plus hours of conversation with the earnest graduate student who had come to interview him.

We talked, of course, about *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), as well as about other books and chapters of his life. Thompson particularly stressed how he did not want the book thought to be only the product of conventional academic intentions, important as they might be. Instead, he wanted it understood as a political challenge.

He was keen that his story of an emergent class consciousness among English wage-earners and small producers in the early 19th century encourage his Marxist comrades, and other activists, to think in new ways about their efforts to nurture an emergent social or socialist consciousness in the late 20th century.

He had come to agree that the characteristic intellectuality of the Marxist revolutionary tradition was so set against empirical controls and dissenting views, that it led directly to Stalinism, the dictatorship of the proletariat in the form of a proletarian dictator.

He reported being "transfixed" after 1956 by the "degeneration of … mainstream orthodox Marxism," the "impoverishment of its sensibility" and the consequent "primacy of categories that denied the effective existence (in history or the present) of the moral consciousness." Where one might expect to find such a moral consciousness, there was "a silence," filled with "unarticulated assumptions and unrealized mediations."

Thompson wanted "to give that silence a voice" (MARHO, 1983, p. 21), and *The Making of the English Working Class* was part of his effort to do so.[2]

Throughout his life, therefore, he consistently and sharply criticized historians and activists who imposed their own categories of class and social process on the lived experience of the people with, and for whom, they worked, without attending closely to the categories of those people themselves.

Some preliminary categorization, some framework, was of course necessary. One must begin somewhere. But having begun, it was essential to listen closely to what one's sources had to say. From this dialogue would emerge the shared experiences and stories that are the basis of every common life.

Thompson urged this method not only as an historian, but also as an activist. He encouraged his colleagues and readers to find the best next society in the local values, traditions and practices that already existed among the people themselves.

Here lies the core of Thompson's work, and it is a theme that preoccupied him as much in his political and philosophical writing as in his histories.

Throughout his career, as I have noted, Thompson worked to offer an alternative to the lifeless formalisms of orthodox Marxism, and especially its more anti-empirical strains. *The Poverty of Theory* may well have been "unplanned," as Bryan Palmer (1994, p. 107).

But it was not an aberration. Even the first edition of Thompson's *William Morris,* published in 1955, was centrally concerned with defending a more passionate, more empirically grounded, version of the Marxism than was then to be found among the apparatchiks.

Moreover, the biting, sarcastic tone of the most astringent sections of *Poverty* is matched in a great many of Thompson's polemical essays. Who can forget his denunciation of the "hectoring prophets, heterodox or orthodox, of Diabolical and Hysterical Mysterialism" in the 1960(a) essay in *New Left Review,* "Revolution Again! Or Shut Your Ears and Run" (Winslow, 2014, p. xxx)?

As late as his "Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski," which appeared in 1974, Thompson was willing to proclaim Marxism a diverse, but nonetheless still unitary, tradition. By 1978, however, in the wake of his confrontation with the Althusserians and other scholastic Marxists, Thompson had changed his mind, as Palmer has also noted.

He now acknowledged differences among the Marxisms with which he had grown up, and the unbridgeable split in the tradition exemplified by the events of 1956. In "Poverty," Thompson (1978) therefore drew a sharp distinction between "Marx*ism*" and "the Marxist tradition." "It is possible," he wrote, "to practice as a Marxist but to regard Marx*isms* to be obscurantisms – as, manifestly, in a dozen forms, they have become" (p. 168).

Thompson then went on in "The Poverty of Theory" to tax Marx severely for the very sins that Marx had earlier, in *The Poverty of Philosophy,* taxed Proudhon – namely, for offering "a serial relation of categories" rather than "an integrative historical analysis," a "logical formula" rather than a history (Thompson, 1978, p. 121).

By being excessively theoretical and insufficiently historical, Thompson argued, Marx had not actually provided an alternative to "political economy," understood as a lifeless system of abstract categories. He had simply put a different lifeless system in its place (p. 60).

In contrast, Thompson sought both to learn from Marx and to go beyond him, by rooting his critique of capital and capitalism in the continuing efforts of real historical individuals struggling to understand what was happening to them, *and* to do something about it. *The Making of the English Working Class* was, from this perspective, Thompson's own "critique of political economy" – or, more exactly, his description of the English working class's critique of political economy as it had emerged by the 1830s.[3]

It seems to me that Thompson's *Making* succeeds where Marx's *Capital,* or Althusser's *Reading Capital,* fails. *Making* provides more than just a different political economy – more than just the "positing" of abstract relationships, like "commodity" or "capital," and a set of "laws" that govern their "actions," like "supply-and-demand" or "competition."

It is a *history,* the account of a "real historical process," in which people struggle to improve and maintain their conditions of life, as members of specific communities and cultures, in the midst of changes they can affect but not control.

Unfortunately, by the time Thompson published *The Making of the English Working Class* the New Left movements he had hoped it would inspire had collapsed, at least in England.

In the 1960(b) collection of essays, *Out of Apathy,* which Thompson and his New Left colleagues had produced as a call to action, it was still possible to take heart from the growing number of local "new left clubs," the broad appeal of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) and the stirrings of a new political formation determined to challenge Labor Party dominance on the electoral left.

But by 1963, the bubble had burst. The clubs had evaporated, CND had been deflected and demobilized, and the few New Left candidates who challenged the Labor establishment had been defeated at the polls.

In this context, during a period of comparative political isolation and despair, Thompson decamped from Yorkshire to Worcester and buried himself in the 18th century research that was to be the primary focus of his historical research for the rest of his career.

An American reviewer has described this turn as a loss. Reviewing *Customs in Common* (Mandler, 1993), the finally published collection of Thompson's 18th century essays, he likened their author to an antiquarian Victorian-era folklorist. He also suggested that, compared to the powerful incandescent glow of *Making,* which illuminated whole areas of our present as well as our past, *Customs* cast only the glow of a candle on our present concerns.

"Is there really any connection," he wondered, "between agricultural labourers defending their rights to common land and the Greenham Common women's protest against the siting of Cruise missiles in Berkshire" (p. 259)?

The correct answer, it seems to me, as it obviously seemed to Thompson, would be, "Yes."

If humanity is ever to come to grips with the current death march on which it has embarked, where its insatiable desire for growth presses against the limits of the planet's biosphere, it must find its way back to some version of the pre-modern, more or less steady-state economy, which held sway before the capitalist era.

Of course, the post-modern steady state that we can hope lies ahead must be very different from the pre-modern steady state we left behind. No one wants to live in constant fear of a visit from the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse!

But we do need to build an economy that not only provides everyone with what they need to live a decent, respected life, but also is organized and conducted in a sustainable way.

We cannot live beyond our means, or, more precisely, beyond the planet's means, forever.

It is here that I think another of the categories from Thompson's late work can be of use. I am thinking in particular of "exterminism." Let me explain.

Thompson (1980b) offered "exterminism" in the 1980s as a way of thinking about the "internal dynamic and reciprocal logic" (p. 4) that governed the continuing Cold War confrontation and escalating arms race between NATO (i.e., the USA) and the Warsaw Pact (i.e., the USSR).

Exterminism was not, he insisted, a fully fledged "mode of production," like capitalism or socialism. It was more an expressed tendency or direction within both, like imperialism, that could take either capitalist or socialist forms.

With it he proposed to capture "the characteristics of a society [capitalist or socialist] – [which were] expressed, in differing degrees, within its economy, its polity and its ideology – [and] which thrust it in a direction whose outcome must be the extermination of multitudes" (p. 20).

Of course, the exterminism he had in mind was the acute form of imminent self-destruction associated with the nuclear arms race and the constant confrontation between two military superpowers.

But there also is another form of exterminism we must care about – that which inevitably follows the assumption that unlimited growth is both possible and desirable.

> *Of course, the post-modern steady state that we can hope lies ahead must be very different from the pre-modern steady state we left behind. No one wants to live in constant fear of a visit from the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse!*

In particular, we need to consider the possibility that our current crisis may be rooted in a deeper logic than just capitalist competition, with its incessant capital accumulation.

The social psychology of competitive accumulation, whether capitalist or socialist, is in fact very similar to the social psychology of a competitive arms race.

Even a thoroughly democratic or socialist political economy dominated by those who wish to ensure that everyone interested and able to work has a good job at a living wage, therefore, will express a tendency, to some degree, to overstep the limits to growth.

In the modern world, in the absence of affective moral ties, we have little choice but to fall back on self-protective, competitive accumulation.

There isn't time to explore this theme in depth, but I do wish to trace the connection between it and Thompson's work on the moral economy.

The connection itself is straightforward: In his 1993 introduction to *Customs in Common,* Thompson referred to the "industrial revolution and the accompanying demographic revolution" of the 18th century as the necessary background to what he called the "greatest transformation" in human history (p. 14).

The transformation he had in mind was the emergence of modernity, with its "revolutionizing [of] 'needs'" and the "destroying [of] the authority of customary expectations."

"[T]his transformation, this remodelling of 'need' and this raising of the threshold of material expectations (along with the devaluation of traditional cultural satisfactions), continues … today," Thompson wrote, "accelerated everywhere by universally available means of communication.

" Pressures once felt by only a few million Europeans "are now felt among one billion Chinese, as well as countless millions in Asian and African villages."

As an historian of labor, Thompson said he was well aware that "self-interest and … class-based apologetics" could "always find reasons why the poor should stay poor" (p. 14), though he did not think they should.

He did worry, however, that with "[g]lobal expectations … rising like Noah's flood," the result might well be a disaster. The readiness of the human species "to throw all the globe's resources onto the market," he warned, threatens "the species itself (from South and North) with ecological catastrophe" (Thompson, 1993, p. 15).[4]

Thompson offered his studies of pre-capitalist custom and culture, including the moral economy of the 18th century crowd, as a potential port in this storm. "The engineer of our catastrophe," he suggested, if it finally comes, "will be economic man, whether in classically avaricious capitalist form or in the form of [the] rebellious economic man of the orthodox Marxist tradition."

"As capitalism (or 'the market') made over human nature and human need," he went on, "so political economy and its revolutionary antagonist came to suppose that this economic man was for all time."

At the end of the 20th century, Thompson believed, "this must now be called in doubt." And he expressed the hope that a reminder of the "alternative needs, expectations and codes" of pre-capitalist cultures might "inspire the rediscovery, in new forms, of a new kind of 'customary consciousness.'"

In this new consciousness, this culture, we might once again enjoy a situation in which "successive generations stand in appreciative relation to each other, in which material satisfactions remain stable (if more equally distributed) and only cultural satisfactions enlarge." Expectations can then "level out into a customary steady state" (Thompson, 1993, p. 15).

Thompson's account of the 18th century moral economy thus helps not only to illuminate our options but also to bring them within reach.

I want to close on as optimistic and constructive a note as possible.

The 18th century commons and moral economy are not as foreign to us as they might seem; nor are the gaudy, shallow, desperate economies of capitalism and commerce as pervasive as they sometimes feel.

True, money is in the saddle and it rides humankind. But human beings themselves are, everywhere they gather, associating in ways that challenge their estrangement from each other; and they create, as they do so, a commons that they can and do share in many different ways.

Whatever the market economy touches, wherever there is capitalism and commerce, there also is, in every household, worksite and neighborhood, a more cooperative "moral economy" – what Thompson's intellectual and political hero, William Morris, called "the system of neighborly common sense" – which is distinct from and opposed to the market (Thompson, 1994, p. 67).

As citizens of our associated states, we can, do and should press for our governments and administrative systems, at all levels, local, provincial and national, to empower and sustain these common efforts.

It is vital that we understand what this means. It does not mean giving up the market. Nor does it mean trying to change human nature.

Adam Smith's (1976) "natural propensity to truck, barter and exchange" (p. 17) has long been expressed by the barter common to strangers or the commerce found among the estranged.

It also has always been expressed in gifts between loved ones; in the cooperation of associates; and in the reciprocity of mutually respected moral individuals, however distant their ties.

These forms and ways of Being are every bit as common and valued, now, as the Being of estranged competitive enrichment, which is characteristic of commerce and capitalism. We do not need to abandon what we know. We need only learn from what we do.

For this purpose we can take Thompson, among others, as a guide. He urged us forward to "a time when both capitalist and state communist needs and expectations may decompose, and human nature may be made over" (Thompson, 1993, p. 15).

It is enough, it seems to me, that we bend the arc of our common endeavors away from the tightly calibrated, intense but ultimately fragile imperatives of competitive commercial systems ("capitalism"), and toward the more flexible, more forgiving, but ultimately more robust imperatives of generosity, reciprocity and cooperation.

Such a bending will be transformation enough, and a moral economy, indeed.

Que vocês estejam bem e prosperem! (Be well and prosper!)

Muito obrigado! (Thank you very much!)

Notes

[1] The full interview is in MARHO (1983), 3-25. Thompson (1973) defends "the Marxist tradition" in "An Open Letter to Leszek Kolakowski," 1-101, while raising pointed questions about it, and about Marx's own practice, in the "The Poverty of Theory; or, An Orrery of Errors," which first appeared in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (1978), 1-210.

[2] See his long postscript to the revised edition of *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary,* reissued in 1977, on "Necessity and Desire," which represents another landmark intervention, as does the defense of the law in the conclusion to *Whigs and Hunters* (1975). See also the sharp criticisms in *Writing by Candlelight* (1980a) of the security measures taken in Britain during the 1970s in response

to popular resistance to the austerity measures of the Labor government led by James Callaghan.

3   This argument is developed more fully in Merrill (2013).

4   Actually, Thompson wrote "may threaten" – a softer blow, which I have hardened here to underscore the fact that the danger is now more imminent and his mood, in any case, was rather more imperative than conditional.

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An Exploration Into New Worlds: A Faculty Member's Foray Into *Virtual Reality*

Eileen O'Connor, School for Graduate Studies

Having worked in the fields of science and of technology before entering education, I was eager to bring best-practice teaching to my SUNY Empire State College students, pre-service teachers in the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. Too often I had seen disconnected teaching, disengaged students, and poor results in classrooms and on tests. At the same time, many middle school and high school students were deeply involved in computers and games – how could I integrate the two worlds to improve science learning for youth? In the late 1990s, while serving as a director of a teacher-education outreach effort at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, I was planning to approach the gaming companies to incorporate educational perspectives; the process of negotiation was too complex. However, later after joining ESC as a faculty member, I was delighted to discover that Second Life, a user-created virtual reality platform, was available for my work. Thus began a very interesting journey in my teaching and my research.

Teacher Education and Community Building – Through Immersive, Distance Environments

With the serendipitous opportunity for access to Second Life, I began incorporating virtual platforms in my online, science education courses. These students were soon to become teachers in challenging, high-needs areas and a professional support network would be important for their survival (Peers, Deizmann, & Watters, 2003). I decided to begin that network during their pedagogy courses when these soon-to-be teachers worked together to develop effective curriculums. A virtual platform, although not the end goal of the course (any more than a webinar is the end goal of a meeting or class), became a way to develop community and rich discussion among my students (O'Connor, 2009). Within these environments, I was able to support guest speakers: faculty members (our colleague,

Donna Mahar, for example); veteran K-12 teachers; ESC administrators; and even an expert on assistive technologies from the state of Indiana (Daniel McNulty). I was beginning to see the benefits lauded by the creator of Second Life, Linden Lab (2007), where virtual reality could serve as a true meeting and interaction space and even a place to create learning environments (to see what the space looks like, see Figure 1).

But I wanted to do more. Virtual spaces could offer students time to interact with each other and develop those social bonds that could help them congeal as a community (McArdle, Monahan, & Bertolotto, 2007). I developed an interactive, *looping* approach in the virtual assignments – starting with an opening question related to science teaching and learning, requiring students' interaction with peers in the virtual setting, then reporting back the discussion consensus via a PowerPoint presentation in the online course, and a concluding discussion based on the PowerPoint review. When we had these biweekly meetings, I arranged teams, deliberately creating different teams so that students would meet all of their course mates. The PowerPoint development was given to a "documenter" who kept the team's notes and report; the documenter also took a snapshot of the attendees, which served as another way to document participation. Delightfully, students engaged in productive online discussions both before and after the

virtual meetings, providing plentiful anecdotal evidence in the discussion boards that they enjoyed the personal connections.

My efforts expanded. Over the next few years, I integrated virtual technologies into the courses to create a more interactive virtual environment. During some sessions, students watched and discussed videos of K-12 classroom situations, together in the same virtual setting. We held a virtual poster session about their science projects, inviting other faculty and students who were not in

Eileen O'Connor

Figure 1. A class meeting in a virtual lab; virtual physics activities.

(left) Figure 2. Poster session (with later voting) on student presentations.

(right) Figure 3. Events during the work with middle school students on their own "turf."

this course to come and review the posters (see Figure 2; also see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pvgXca-xf00). The visitors later voted on the presentations through a survey based on the criteria for the assignment.

In a science course designed around collaborative project development, students even created some rudimentary virtual posting of their own. Coupled with co-developed websites that the teams developed, they shared the outcomes of their science projects with other teachers, inviting them to join in their efforts in the *real* world of science (O'Connor, 2012). Having a virtual space while these collaborating students spent four weeks together developing their science projects proved to create more effective projects than seen in earlier years, and hopefully provided for professional relationships that could be maintained after the course ended.

Working With the K-12 Population

But my passion still remained with creating virtual platforms for K-12 students. Nothing would be simple in that venture. Getting the private islands that I needed for Second Life was costly. I applied for a grant from the National Science Foundation in 2009 and 2010, but did not get the funding. However, some startup funding from ESC allowed me to conduct a pilot with a small sample of K-12 students and the results were encouraging. The middle school students developed innovative projects on science aspects of the Rocky Mountains of their choosing. And, I learned about the challenges of working with "digital natives" (a term by natural technology user, Prensky [2001]) in their own, very active environments (see Figure 3). However, using research and literacy skills that were embedded in the assignment, these young students ultimately brought forth a worthy academic

presentation in virtual space, sharing their work with middle school students from around the northeastern United States and with pre-service teachers in my courses. The pre-service teachers listened and judged the presentations. Although we did not reach the stature of the River City project from Harvard (which has been critically reviewed and acclaimed (e.g., see Jacobson & Reimann [2010]; project available today at http://rivercity.activeworlds.com/), all learned and all were pleased. The results of the study were presented at an international conference and published with the conference proceedings (O'Connor, 2011).

Clearly there was merit to developing learning environments in virtual locations and working with teachers there, too, but maintaining a private island became too costly to continue without funding. Luckily, other options opened up.

MALET and Open Source

The serendipity continued. With the advent of the Master of Arts in Learning and Emerging Technologies (MALET) program, I was able to integrate the virtual study itself into the coursework with students. Within a foundational course in MALET, naturally we continued to meet in virtual spaces, using the various models that I had developed for the science education courses. In addition, throughout this course in emerging technologies, students peer-reviewed each other's work anonymously and at the end of the term during their collaborative, virtual final presentations awarded badges for the most engaging aspects of the presentations. Although the badging process itself was an instructional device to immerse students in both the theory and the practice of badging (an emerging area within educational

assessment), it was integrated easily and effectively into the new course environment (O'Connor & McQuigge, 2013-2014).

Most recently, while conducting the Practicum: Virtual Worlds course, I was able to bring forward the concept of virtual learning environments and have students explore these areas either in ways that might suit their own interests or in concert with my research. Happily, my research interest was now encompassing a larger audience with the help of my students. To expand the opportunities even more, over the last several years, the source code for developing virtual platforms was opened to programmers by Linden Lab. Thus more options, albeit with more work for the users, are now available, thereby reducing the cost of virtual islands and making them more available for customization.

Within the practicum course, all students chose their own pathway. They combined purchased virtual artifacts and artifacts of their own development with a virtual learning or performance environment of their own design. The results were rich, multilayered, constructivist and original. As each student reported at the end of the course, they will continue and extend their work, seeking support and funding to pursue these initial efforts.

When looking at the creativity and originality of these students' work, consider these snapshots of their work that came from the "Virtual Show & Tell" at course end (see Figure 4).

Needless to say, by the end of the term when these snapshots were taken, there were many examples of both learning *and fun*. And, real strides were made toward

(left and middle) Figure 4. Learning environments developed by ESC students.

Figure 5. A virtual reproduction of 28 Union Ave.

creating simulated and role-playing virtual environments, a new and expanding area in learning and training environments.

Next Steps

The ability to bring students who are at a distance together for meetings, collaborations and communications has allowed my online students to have the relationships and experiences that formerly were only possible in a physical setting. Now students themselves are beginning to bring virtual environments into their workplaces, some of which are within the SUNY system itself. And, my sabbatical research, which will start in 2015, will provide me with time to explore virtual reality for the K-12 learning more deeply, an area to which I have long waited to return. The possibilities are *virtually* endless.

New communities of learning and caring are emerging. Using virtual environments opens many opportunities that I hope to share with other faculty. Although not addressed here, a wide range of scholarship and research supports the use of community spaces, experiential and constructivist learning, community of practice, visual and multiple intelligence approaches, and scaffolded learning. I invite all to investigate and find what can work best for students or for functions and meetings at ESC.

ESC has owned virtual islands for almost 10 years. Try them yourselves. Download the viewer from www.secondlife.com and then search for the ESC islands. Or, once you have the viewer on your computer, simply click http://maps.secondlife.com/secondlife/Empire%20State%20College/138/57/28. See if you can find 28 Union (Figure 5) – I'll meet you there.

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Initiation and Development of Internships at the Staten Island Unit: The Value of Experiential Learning

Gina C. Torino and Amanda G. Sisselman, Metropolitan Center

Introduction

Since we joined SUNY Empire State College as faculty mentors, we have had the opportunity to work with a wide variety of students primarily in the areas of Community and Human Services, Human Development and Educational Studies. All of the aforementioned areas of study possess heavily "applied" dimensions where students eventually work one-on-one or with groups of children and/or adults in organizations such as schools, mental health facilities and/or community centers.

Over the past several years, ESC has noticed demographic shifts in our student body. Students are steadily coming to us either straight from high school or shortly thereafter. Moreover, economic conditions have made it necessary for many adult learners to either retool their skill sets or change careers altogether. Students also are finding that they need to acquire practical training in their fields in order to be competitive in the workforce. We have seen these trends emerge pronouncedly at the Staten Island Unit. Hence, as the years have progressed, we noticed that an increasing number of students expressed interest in participating in internship programs to aid them in gaining valuable employment experience.

At present, shifts in the United States economy have made it more challenging for new college graduates to find employment. Recent Bureau of Labor Statistics findings suggest that approximately 28 percent of recent college graduates are unable to secure positions commensurate to their level of education (Spreen, 2013). Research contends that one of the most effective pathways to employment is internship programs (Maertz, Stoeberl, & Marks, 2014). Furthermore, internships provide students with experiential learning opportunities to apply theoretical concepts and theories to real world cases. Gaining

experience with professional interactions in an environment different than one is accustomed to, if making a career shift, also is essential. Thus, pre-graduation internships can be particularly important to first-generation college students or adult learners. Given the great benefit to students, we decided to pursue some funding to aid in the development of internship programs in our areas of study since no formal internships have been established specifically in Staten Island.

In this paper, we will discuss more in-depth the value of experiential learning and the utility of internship programs, our experience with the Institute on Mentoring, Teaching and Learning, current stages of the internship program and future plans.

Experiential Learning and Utility of Internships for Our Students

Experiential learning is the process of making meaning from direct experience, i.e., "learning from experience" (Itin, 1999). Experiential learning can exist without a teacher (or can be accompanied by a teacher) and relates solely to the meaning-making process of the individual's direct experience. However, though the gaining of knowledge is a process that occurs naturally, in order for a genuine learning experience to occur, there must exist certain elements (Itin, 1999). According to David A. Kolb, an American educational theorist, knowledge is continuously gained through both personal and environmental experiences (as cited in Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Kolb posits that in order to gain genuine knowledge from an experience, certain abilities are required. For example, the learner must be willing to be actively involved in the experience; he or she must be able to reflect on the experience; he or she must possess and use analytical skills to conceptualize the experience; and the learner must possess decision-making and problem-solving skills

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in order to use the new ideas gained from the experience (as cited in Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Thus, the internship as guided by a mentor through independent study can provide the student with adequate space for reflection and meaning-making.

Re-imagining what has been thought of as experiential learning at ESC is an exciting prospect. Experiential learning at ESC has commonly been assessed through prior learning assessment (PLA). This type of assessment evaluates a student's (often) prior employment experience as it translates to college-level learning. However, as the demographics continue to shift and as students come to us with less prior learning or prior learning related to fields different than their current careers and educational goals, the necessity for the college to change and expand its practices becomes increasingly important. Therefore, the undergraduate internship experience can be a way for students to engage in experiential learning. This experience can be unique, as it combines real-world/hands-on experience with academic learning.

The internship experience can be useful to ESC students in myriad ways. First, undergraduate-level internships have been found to increase the employability of students through prior on-the-job training (Shoenfelt, Stone, & Kottke, 2013). Reasons for increased employability have been attributed to more highly developed interpersonal skills, job-related competencies and willingness to comply with organizational demands (Hogan, Chamorro-Premuzic, & Kaiser, 2013). Given the demographic shifts in our student population, this point becomes particularly important. Second, service learning internship programs that immerse students in real-world settings have been found to develop students' critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, which are not cultivated in academic settings (Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999). Within a group study or an independent study, students may not have the opportunity to develop aforementioned abilities through discussion with the mentor and /or theoretical case studies. Critical thinking and problem-solving abilities may be best cultivated via direct interaction with clients and/or students in organizational settings. Third, undergraduate internships have been found to aid in student career development and decision-making processes (Shoenfelt, Stone, & Kottke, 2013). Since more and more students are coming to us directly from high school, they may not have had many occasions to explore various career options. The internship can be the place for the student to gain an intimate understanding of the nature of the work. Further, students may come to college wishing to change careers and may need practical experience for graduate school admission or to obtain a job. Fourth, undergraduate internships have been found to increase students' levels of career self-efficacy particularly for first-generation college students and/or students of color (Gushue, Clarke, Pantzer, & Scanlan, 2006). Career self-efficacy is one of the most widely studied constructs in the career development literature. This construct is based upon Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000), which posits that a range of individual and distal contextual factors contribute to a person's learning experiences and serve as a foundation for developing self-efficacy and outcome expectations. Thus, opportunities for students to develop the self-efficacy to "succeed" in a professional career setting can be immeasurability important

to ongoing career stability. Finally, evidence suggests that overall self-esteem can be greatly enhanced through participation and completion of undergraduate internship programs (Gushue, Clarke, Pantzer, & Scanlan, 2006). Increasing self-esteem through successful completion of an internship may be what some students need to grow beyond what they thought would be possible.

The Institute on Mentoring, Teaching and Learning

As we continued to reflect upon the ongoing need for internships for students at the Staten Island Unit, we decided to participate in the summer 2013 Institute on Mentoring, Teaching and Learning (IMTL) to aid us in our process. During the IMTL, we had the opportunity to ask questions and explore various avenues to assist us in our development process. We were able to talk to colleagues, share ideas and hear from individuals throughout the college who helped us in formulating our plans.

As time progressed, we decided it may behoove us to try to acquire some funding to kick-start the internship program. In this way, we could cull resources that would give us impetus to do the "groundwork" for implementation. Some of the funding would be used to initiate contacts at local agencies and organizations. In addition, resources also could be used to fund a "kick-off" event for students participating in the internship program. Moreover, we also discussed the possibility of inviting local guest speakers to talk to our students about career trajectories and opportunities. Hence we also utilized our time at IMTL to do online research into various foundations and funding sources and also drafted an initial "Letter of Intent," which would eventually go to potential grant funders.

After the IMTL experience, we continued to create a list of possible donors, as well as refine our "Letter of Intent." It was extremely helpful to have the IMTL "check-in" calls throughout the academic year to help keep us on track and to provide further support to colleagues and their endeavors.

Outcome and Current Stages of Development

During the spring term 2014, we received $5,000 in grant funding from an anonymous donor who was interested in helping us begin our program. With the assistance of the IMTL, all of our efforts "paid off." We felt very fortunate to receive this funding.

Now our initial implementation process has begun. To date, we have successfully established three potential sites, which have much to offer our students. One site is a day program that works with children and adults who experience developmental delays. Another site is a local YMCA that offers opportunities for students to work with children, families and older adults. The third site is a local Jewish Community Center that also would offer students the opportunity to work with children, families and older adults. Potential experiential learning activities can include early childhood learning, tutoring, art classes and assisting older adults.

To make this internship program official, we are currently in the process of setting up meetings with the directors of the aforementioned programs and completing necessary paperwork in order to make the relationships official. We want to get a better sense of what our students will be doing at each site and ensure that their experiences can be tied in to academic learning. Our goal was to get one or two students initially placed at the sites during the fall term 2014. This initial piloting of the internship program will aid us in future development.

Future Development and Implications for Empire State College

We would like to continue to establish connections with approximately five additional sites in the areas of Community and Human Services, Human Development and Educational Studies. As we continue growing, we will reach out to organizations such as nursing homes, early childhood centers, hospitals and mental health facilities. Moreover, we will continue to do research into established pedagogy that works with internship programs. This summer, we are completing an article based on a recent presentation at the American Educational Research Association conference, which is a

case study of the initial experiential learning activities that led to the development of this internship program.

We also are currently in the process of working with the Metropolitan Center's faculty instructional technologist, developing materials and content for websites that will allow us to easily interact with students and potential internship sites. It is our hope that these websites also will allow for seamless connection between us, the internship site and the students, providing all parties with necessary information, from point of initial contact through the end of the internship experience.

In addition, we are planning to do research into the effectiveness of the internship programs with our students. Because there is a lack of literature in the area of adult learners and internships, we feel that our work will add to the literature, while allowing us to develop pedagogy in this important area.

Our eventual goal is to evaluate the internship program by using a mixed methods design to assess student and organization outcomes, using a combination of qualitative interviews and focus groups with validated survey items to best understand the effectiveness of the piloted program from multiple perspectives, as well as to learn about areas that need strengthening. However, we will start with a small case study analysis of the first two to three students to engage in our internship program. This will allow us to identify any additional evaluation factors and to examine both our pedagogy and methodology, and to make any needed adjustments.

Evaluation methods will consist of a quasi-experimental design, with two data collection points, before and after the internship program, to determine whether there is any change in competency-based, interpersonal, problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Practical outcomes such as resume and job portfolio development will be considered. Student outcomes of self-efficacy, self-esteem and career decision-making will be assessed quantitatively using validated measurement tools.

Students in the early stages of the internship program will be interviewed individually to get a fuller picture about the internship experience. Outcomes at the internship site will be measured by asking task supervisors and others who interact with the intern to complete a survey, with Likert-type items regarding the degree of professionalism, skill growth and effectiveness of the intern. Scores on the items will be examined across site personnel in order to obtain inter-rater reliability and to triangulate the data. Information will be collected in individual interviews with site staff and the task supervisor to further triangulate the data.

To be able to engage in a thorough evaluation of the internship program, we plan on seeking more funding. For this part of the program, we anticipate project assistance as well as technical resources to further evaluate the effectiveness. As we learn more about how students are learning through their internship experiences, we will make adjustments.

We believe there also are secondary benefits and implications aside from what we have already mentioned in this piece to establishing internships in Staten Island. By implementing the internships, we are establishing connections with the surrounding community. Individuals may not have heard about ESC, and this is one avenue for outreach. Thus, other workers at the sites may take an interest in pursuing a degree at ESC.

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Remaking the University: A Conversation With James W. Hall, Part I

Ed Warzala, School for Graduate Studies

James Hall is the founding president of SUNY Empire State College. He served in that position for almost three decades, after which he became chancellor of Antioch University. His writings (for example, his 1991 In Opposition to Core Curriculum: Alternative Models for Undergraduate Education) *and pioneering efforts on behalf of adult learners have been acknowledged through honorary degrees from Granite State College: University System of New Hampshire, DePaul University (Chicago), Thomas Edison State College and SUNY Empire State College. This conversation took place in Jim Hall's study in Saratoga Springs, New York, on 28 August 2013. What follows is part I of a two-part interview (part II will appear in our next issue). Thanks to Jim Hall and Ed Warzala for the conversation and for their careful work on this text.*

Ed Warzala: There are many persons still at the college who were appointed while you were president, and many more who have come to know you through Richard Bonnabeau's history of Empire State College, *The Promise Continues* (1996). I think they will be interested to hear your thoughts on the college, higher education and the relationship of Empire State College with the SUNY system. Chancellor Zimpher's "systemness" initiatives led me to ask you to think about your time at SUNY System Administration and the founding of the college, and how the system under Chancellor Ernest Boyer's leadership established the unique college you led for nearly three decades.

Jim Hall: *The Promise Continues* talks about Empire State as one college with a common mission. And Chancellor Boyer and I certainly thought about it in that way. From the very first mention of this college, shortly after Boyer became chancellor, and as he noted in his Foreword to *The Promise Continues,* he had thought long and hard about these educational issues. But aside from several programs he initiated elsewhere early in his career, I don't think he had found the instrument to fully test his ideas.

E.W.: Would you agree that at the heart of these educational ideas is what we came to call "student-centeredness"?

J.H.: If the student is truly at the center of ESC's approach to learning, there are a variety of valid ways to serve that student. By offering only a single path or mode to serve the student, it is possible to impose a kind of tyranny. The only way to avoid that bind is to offer a variety of learning options for students, working closely with an experienced faculty mentor. For Empire State, the only excluded option was the traditional classroom experience. All of the other SUNY campuses offer that single mode. This never meant, however, that ESC couldn't have people in a room together. What was important was that, since students came to ESC largely because they required flexibility of time and place of study, we not force students into a singular schedule and venue. It is the faculty mentor who helps to mediate all of the options, responding to a student's interests and abilities. If these options are not available, the student is limited. From all of the research, we know that students learn in very different ways. From the very beginning, from the very first kernel of the idea, ESC was designed to change the whole equation, enabling the student to set goals, chart a path and engage in ways that were most conducive to her capabilities. I think that is sometimes missed in the tensions that subsequently occurred. ESC became Boyer's instrument to achieve important changes in how students might learn.

E.W.: How was the creation of Empire State College connected to other changes in SUNY at the time?

J.H.: The appointment of Samuel B. Gould, a seminal figure, as chancellor, shortly after SUNY had gained budgetary independence from the State Education Department and the Board of Regents, was fortuitous. (Until the early 1960s, the teacher's colleges and agricultural and technical colleges were headed by CEOs who reported to a supervisor in the
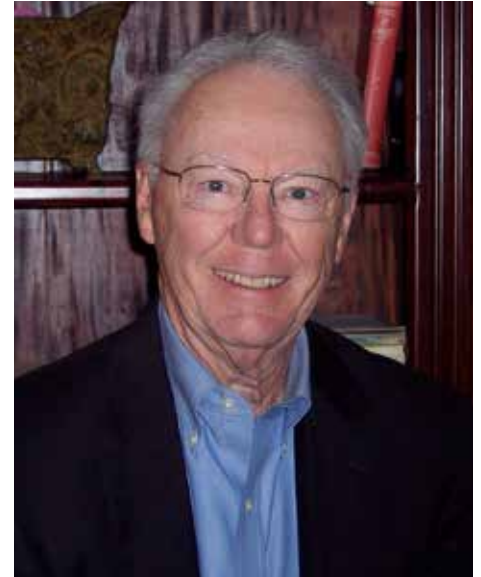
James W. Hall

department). For many years the Regents, traditionally representing the private sector in New York, kept a strong lid on SUNY's development, even though it was created in 1948 under Governor Dewey. I think the budget move was intentional; it was condoned by the governor and his Division of the Budget. Maybe some thought they would have stricter control over SUNY, or perhaps more political influence, but who knows? Governor Rockefeller was forward-thinking. He invested heavily in SUNY, favoring quantum growth to meet rapidly growing demand. (At the time, CUNY was free and SUNY was $400.) Sam Gould took SUNY, which at the time was sometimes thought to be a "ragtag bunch" of 72 institutions (including New York City community colleges), and created a new, unified vision of the university. He had been president of the University of California, Santa Barbara. Interestingly enough, he also had been president of Antioch College, a highly innovative institution, and had headed WNET in NYC, stoking his interest in educational television and technology as an educational tool. State budgets were robust and Governor Nelson Rockefeller was strongly in

favor of strengthening the state university to serve the rapidly growing demand for higher education. SUNY changed the equation with the Education Department in the years before Gould came, and the governor and legislature were ready to support the new chancellor.

E.W.: How many would you say were employed by SUNY at this time? Was the SUNY bureaucracy as large and unwieldy as it is now?

J.H.: SUNY System Administration and campus staffing grew rapidly during these plush budget times, and actually is somewhat smaller today than in those early years. Between 1965 and 1968, SUNY hired 2,000 new professionals each year! Gould's vision was implemented by an administrator who was imaginative and practical enough to make it happen: Ernest L. Boyer. Gould brought Boyer to SUNY for the explicit purpose of helping him to create a new vision of the university. As vice chancellor for universitywide programs, Boyer quickly became the *primus inter pares* among vice chancellors. He devised programs, with Gould's approval, that would bring the university campuses together functionally. Among them were the Universitywide Program in the Arts, the University Scholars Program, the faculty senate, and associations for various special groups throughout the university.

E.W.: What was your official role when Boyer took the helm as chancellor?

J.H.: I was teaching at this time in the history department at SUNY Albany and held a dual appointment at system administration to participate in a universitywide program designed to spur faculty recruitment, to bring outstanding faculty to the state university. We traveled a great deal and set up interviews at professional disciplinary meetings, helping department chairs to identify and interview scholars we wanted to attract to SUNY. Subsequently, Boyer asked me to lead the growing Universitywide Program in the Arts, which brought distinguished performing artists to the campuses as "university professors" at very little cost to the campuses. The artists could move throughout the campuses, holding visiting appointments. These faculty were a distinguished group, and we promoted programs in theater, choral work and arts festivals all around SUNY. Working with the New York State Council on the Arts, SUNY

put funds together to make it work. It was the first such program of the kind anywhere in the country, preceding even what later became the National Council on the Arts (which adopted similar programs nationally). These innovative system-driven innovations were central to Chancellor Gould's vision and for the SUNY environment at the time. We had freedom to create and implement. It was in this context that the first thinking about what would become Empire State College emerged.

E.W.: So, in part, you were given a planning role.

J.H.: I worked within Boyer's executive staff as assistant vice chancellor for policy and planning. My direct report was to Merton Ertell, deputy vice chancellor and a former chair of the university faculty senate. In October 1970, Boyer convened a two-day retreat of his staff to explore options for the further development of the State University of New York. A time when all things seemed possible, it was at this first retreat that we considered the possibility of a totally new, alternative college. At the retreat, we talked through a lot of ideas. Everything was on the table and I went home and wrote a one page concept paper, which is in the ESC archives, outlining a scheme for a new SUNY college. The term "mentor" appeared there for the first time.

E.W.: Was that your term?

J.H.: Yes, but it wasn't unique; it just hadn't been applied in higher education save for the sponsor of a doctoral student.

E.W.: Was the goal to create an entirely new college?

J.H.: I was appointed to a planning committee, and became directly engaged with Boyer. The institution's name did not emerge right from the beginning, but, yes, we wanted to design a new college and we had a number of ideas about how to do it. We consulted with some of the university senators, but did not, as California did, turn the project design over to the university senate. California did give its project to its senate, which designed an elephant with lots of pieces scattered around the campuses, which became their "ESC." It was called the "1,000-Mile Campus." But unfortunately, because it was on every campus, in ensuing years, it ultimately failed. Over the

years, as each campus faced budget problems, the program was not a campus priority and would be eliminated.

E.W.: Did your planning group consider that California form as a model for Empire State College?

J.H.: Yes, and a number of SUNY presidents who bought into the idea wanted to have a piece of it on their campuses, but Boyer and the committee moved in a different direction. A SUNY team visited the British Open University [BOU] in the fall of 1970. They returned with great enthusiasm, but recognized that BOU was not a practical model for SUNY, given BOU's enormous upfront costs. BOU had the services of the BBC [the British Broadcasting Corporation] that were critical at a time when ETV seemed the most available technology; they had the advantage of several years of planning and development; and they created courses that were breakthroughs in validating continuing education for adults and in instructional design. These yearlong courses were brilliant, and without doubt intellectually stimulating. Keep in mind that the British system typically enrolled students to "read" in a discipline for three years and then take a single exam. BOU dramatically changed that model and became incredibly successful. Today it is the largest university in Britain and has a larger budget grant from the University Awards Council than Oxford and Cambridge.

E.W.: I just showed you a chart of the various initiatives currently underway in SUNY, and there are many: Open SUNY, the "Seamless Education Pipeline," the Shared Services initiative and others. Back in 1970, planning Empire State was a big deal. At that time, were there other major initiatives going on at the system level? I'm trying to get a comparative sense of SUNY then and now.

J.H.: Ernest Boyer had a number of projects. He proposed the notion of a three year degree. Unlike such ideas today, he did not want to simply consolidate four years into three. Rather, he wanted to reconceptualize toward a more streamlined model, akin to the European three year baccalaureate. A few SUNY campuses tried out the idea, but it did not gain traction. We also tried to establish a college for prisoners and guards, but the guards defeated it politically; that idea went down in flames, but Empire State College did not. SUNY's trustees were solidly behind the effort,

and Boyer persuaded the governor to support us with a modest initial state appropriation, as well. To the surprise of many, Empire State College attracted wide attention and soon began to thrive.

E.W.: It seems as if SUNY had robust budgets, strong governmental and university leadership and an intellectual environment in which all things were possible.

J.H.: The budgets were strong, there's no questioning that. SUNY's salary scale went up, and one of the things we did to enhance faculty recruitment was to exempt SUNY faculty from the civil service salary and pension system. There was a general professionalization of the system under Gould's leadership.

E.W.: Was there a sense at the time that SUNY was somehow inadequate? Was it aspiring to be like another state university system? What motivated the upgrading and professionalization of the SUNY system?

J.H.: SUNY was a mixture of institutions that did certain things very well; the colleges prepared teachers with strong academic knowledge, and they had moved beyond teacher education to embrace a broad liberal arts and sciences curriculum. For example, Albany State College was distinguished for training excellent secondary teachers; it was subject-oriented. But as SUNY Albany, they experienced increasing institutional conflict, adding scholars and researchers on top of those veterans whose primary commitment was teaching students. In a sense, the California system had to be in Gould's mind, but California had three separate public systems, whereas SUNY combined all three into a single system, now the largest by student enrollment in the nation.

E.W.: You are suggesting an interesting and really ongoing tension between teaching and scholarship in higher education. Some have commented on this tension at Empire State College, pointing to a shift in recent years to hire more faculty on a more traditional academic path and noting that mentoring as a focus has somewhat receded.

J.H.: It is not a surprising development. But I would argue that it has always been the case that a faculty member needs to do both. Empire State College always needed people who could combine both functions. Frankly, there aren't many people who can do that

well. To be a faculty mentor, you need to see the student as a whole person. There is a small minority of teachers who can do that effectively, and Empire has a full share of them. Every college has some of each – scholars and teachers – and as students ourselves, we all knew and appreciated who they were.

E.W.: Was Empire State College a product of the cultural shifts of the 1960s? Was the inherent disruption of the 1960s embedded in the DNA of this institution?

J.H.: An early division occurred in point of view during our faculty interviews. We were seeing three kinds of candidates. Some came out of a counseling background and they were enormously successful with students. Others were creative, but not very disciplined or organized, you might say. And a few came with a purpose other than education. I believed that we needed those unusual individuals who combined many of these competencies. Keep in mind that higher education became highly politicized before and during the period of ESC's inception. Barriers were falling. Old practices were questioned. Education itself – the curriculum, its institutions – was falling apart. It didn't last, but for a while it was like that. Many of those who came to ESC experienced these changes in graduate school. From the very beginning, ESC was a demonstration of those wonderful new things that were going on at many campuses, but as a new model, a new kind of structure, a new kind of organization, that was positive. It was not about tearing down the system, but rather finding new ways to remake the university. It's hard to fault any of that. Important things were happening, but for us, we needed a clear vision and a sense that we could be broad, but focused. Boyer held some very strong views that he subsequently expressed in different ways in different times in his later books. I would say he did not believe strongly in the highly individualized learning approach. He believed, I think, that such an approach could become somewhat narcissistic and isolating.

E.W.: Now that's particularly interesting and timely. I've not heard Boyer's view expressed quite like that before. As you might imagine, this is a current debate among the faculty here. Some, I would say, believe individualization is the core of the core.

J.H.: You notice later that Boyer, after he left SUNY to become U.S. commissioner of education, wrote books about building community. He had no problem with our basic approach of individual planning for a student and increased responsiveness. But I think in so many ways that he was always a moderate, looking for balances that would yield sanity, success, realism, but not idealism to the exclusion of other points of view or practices.

E.W.: I do think mentoring can become faculty-centric and sometimes more meaningful for the mentor than we might like to admit. Boyer's concern with this sheds new light on some interpretations of how we think about and practice mentoring.

J.H.: That's certainly true. I heard him say that once so I don't want to overemphasize it because I think, above all, once we got started, he didn't want to control any of it. He was an unusual leader, you could say, because while I kept him informed, he did not interfere in our complex development, even as we experienced a challenging hiring freeze in August just before ESC was to open its doors to students. I set up the search for the first president of

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ESC while still on Boyer's staff. I officially was named as acting director of this operation, starting in April of 1971, and my first task was to find a president. I had a small committee, and I brought candidates from the airport to meet with Boyer and a couple other people,

taking them to lunch and back to the airport; in those days, searches were rather informal compared to the present. We had a series of highly credible candidates. At one point, Boyer suggested we invite Arthur Chickering, who had impressed us with his comments in an earlier external advisory meeting, to be a candidate.

E.W.: Even at that time, Chickering had already been involved in other higher education experiments.

J.H.: Yes. I had a lot to learn and Chickering knew a lot. He was 10 years deeper into all this and had done a lot of relevant research, and coming out of that interview, I enthusiastically recommended that he be named president. I was in awe of Chickering; he was very down-to-earth and could respond to educational questions with wisdom and ease. He had just come off an important foundation-funded project, leading to a significant book [*Education and Identity,* 1969]. Boyer thought about it and he called me up and said we should ask him if he would be academic vice president. As the responsible staff person, I asked Chickering if he would accept. He did. And I had the sense that he had discussed with Boyer the possibility that he might be further considered for the presidency at some later point.

I worked together with Chickering ["Chick"] from April onward. Our skeletal staff worked successfully through many issues, establishing temporary policies and practices. Chick understood very well the necessity for intellectual rigor, but in some issues our actions were not clear in that direction. For one thing, he had a bias, not wholly unwarranted, against traditional higher education. He was wary of the SUNY system, and he was skeptical of the bureaucracy that he feared could defeat the new institution. And Boyer, who had worked with him on the small colleges project [Project on Student Development in Small Colleges], must have known that. So we had several major decision problems during the summer, including defining our overall student expectations for a degree and publishing an appropriate first college catalog. One of the most critical issues was a pending and necessary decision as to whether ESC would have a tenured faculty. And Chick was, for very good reasons, strongly against that. I did not disagree with his reasons. But having

held my first post with SUNY in the area of faculty recruitment, I think I understood a lot about what the needs of the university faculty would be. I wanted to be sure from the outset that the faculty of ESC were equally treated and respected as part of the faculty of the State University of New York. An immediate decision was necessary. So we just couldn't reach an agreement in this matter and I said, "Chick, we both need to go talk to Ernie Boyer." We sat in front of Ernie's desk and we both laid out our cases, and Boyer said, "I think you'd better have tenure."

E.W.: Still, as I understand this, no president had yet been appointed.

J.H.: Well, we continued to chew on other details of organization and policy and finally, in late August of 1971, I called Ernie one morning and I said, "I think it's time for you to move ahead with the Chickering appointment. It is not fair to this important project for us to be moving in two directions. I'm ready to return full time to my planning position at SUNY." That is what I had expected to do subsequently in any case. But Boyer's response was: "But you can't do that because I'm going to recommend your name as president to the board of trustees." And it was just one of those difficult situations. I had looked to the probability that Chickering would be named president, and had therefore operated on the premise that my job as acting director was to help him learn about and adjust to the needs of SUNY, essentially supporting the ideas that he was attempting to institutionalize. And the toughest task of all was that I had to convey this decision to Chickering. Boyer would not have done that – I had to tell him. That was difficult for both of us.

E.W.: Can you say more about the kind of working environment that Boyer created among his cabinet peers and on the Empire planning group? I'm curious about Boyer's administrative leadership style. You've said once the college was started that he was not always directly hands-on.

J.H.: One of the things that people sometimes criticized him for was that he would have more than one person working on a problem, each often not knowing that someone else was working on the same thing. I thought it workable, but one could understand, thinking organizationally, that it would cause some problems.

E.W.: Do you think that was intended to create something like a team of rivals, as also is attributed to Lincoln's Cabinet?

J.H.: I don't know how consciously he did this. I don't find it a terrible idea and probably did it myself, though not very strategically. Sometimes you can't achieve what you want through a single individual; you need to have a creative tension, and in human nature, there is a tendency to compete. I mean we're all a bit political in a way. In any organization, it's just extraordinary the way that people line up, take sides and create unnecessary divisions. So organizationally, how do you keep your eye on the ball and keep moving it forward? For example, at Empire State College, one issue that you describe – the division between so-called mentored and online learning – seems to me to be an unnecessary polarization of complementary matters. However, I have been away from ESC for nearly 18 years, so maybe it's a much more critical matter now than I experienced. You just have to keep the student and the flexibility of choices in mind. At the same time, flexibility can't mean a lack of intellectual rigor. When you put those together, you have a powerful model that works brilliantly for a lot of people, but if you lose any one of those pieces, I believe that it starts to lose its power. At the time, I came to believe that we needed several individuals with different strengths in leadership positions.

E.W.: I'd like to return to the issue of mentored and online learning. It may be that my sense of the threat is exaggerated, but the new SUNY and the current legislative environment seem to be qualitatively different than in the past. I also think that many at SUNY and elsewhere see Empire State College as "SUNY's online college." I hear this all too often said by people who should know better.

J.H.: I know, I read pieces in *All About Mentoring* that sometimes evince a strong bias in that direction, but that's not wrong at all. I mean, it's marvelous, and if online learning is diminishing flexibility, then that's a problem, too. However, when I've made casual inquiries, I learn that the newest capabilities in interactive learning are being explored, and the student still benefits from someone, a mentor, who oversees the whole package.

E.W.: My concern is less with pressures internal to ESC. Rather, I see the external environment closing in. SUNY and pressures from government and from new for-profit competition are driving change across all of higher education. I may be wrong – I hope I am – but I have this sense of an impending revolution that will drive unforeseen changes.

J.H.: I, too, hope that you are wrong, and yes, SUNY is always a complex factor. Here's an example. You were asking about various chancellors. Clifton R. Wharton succeeded Boyer as chancellor. At my first meeting with him, he asked me a few questions, but planted me on the far side of his desk behind high piles of papers and books. For most of the interview he looked out the window, and I came away totally uncertain whether he would have the slightest interest in anything ESC was doing. But this impression proved to be exactly wrong. He had written a book on continuing adult students while president of Michigan State University – hardly small potatoes – and he turned out to be wonderfully interactive and fun, serious, strategic, and an excellent chancellor and a champion for the college. Those years were thrilling for ESC and for SUNY; as the college became fully developed, our aims fulfilled in many ways. Wharton kept ESC in the forefront of discussions and actions.

E.W.: Once Boyer left the SUNY system, and the college was fairly well established and part of the SUNY system, you were, according to Bill Ferrero [former vice president for administration], on the stateside budget and thus less dependent on outside grants that had allowed the college to be established. How then did the relationship of the college with SUNY change or remain the same by the mid- to late-1970s?

J.H.: Gould and Boyer had initiated and Wharton continued the strong sense of collegiality among the campuses; there was not an unusual sense of competition in the way that may exist today. The campuses had a lot of autonomy, but they had to be highly responsive to budgets, which were centrally controlled. You had the big players, the medical centers, the U. Buffalos and so on. And there was no question that a portion of the four-year campus revenues was being re-appropriated to support the university centers. Interestingly, when I was chancellor of Antioch University,

I experienced the same issues, having to be the arbiter of resource distribution among six unequal campuses.

All the SUNY presidents met together three times a year, usually at the Otesaga Hotel in Cooperstown. At ESC, I attempted to conduct similar retreats with our faculty and staff where we could spend quality time together, working, dining and relaxing informally. We held meetings at Lake Mohonk, the Rensselaer Institute, and later at places like Hidden Valley and Grossingers.

The SUNY presidents could bring their spouses to those meetings and the trustees were often present with their spouses. These occasions created a tremendous sense of collective responsibility for the State University. Chancellor Gould started the practice, Boyer and Wharton continued it. You worked and interacted professionally in working sessions, but the informal social interactions were invaluable. I had to establish and maintain personal credibility with the presidents and trustees. I recognized that a considerable number of people at SUNY did not understand ESC, and secondly, those who did understand always wondered whether it was any good. That was just a fact of life you had to live with, and the credibility eventually came along. I valued those connections throughout my presidency. I was able to negotiate various arrangements with the presidents of the other campuses, and they welcomed it.

E.W.: I looked at the list of chancellors, and in your tenure as president, you certainly saw many. In fact, I think probably more than most other SUNY presidents.

J.H.: During these years, SUNY had a number of chancellors in rapid succession. Bruce Johnstone followed Wharton, and then Joseph Burke served as interim during Johnstone's illness. Tom Bartlett and John Ryan followed and were all helpful to ESC. But my work with Bruce Johnstone was most pertinent to the college. Bruce and I were colleagues when he was president of Buff State [SUNY College at Buffalo]. We conceived for the first time something akin to the Open SUNY idea; we talked about my coming into SUNY System Administration and playing dual roles, but it didn't work out at that time because there was objection from key officers who were probably doubtful about an Open SUNY-like concept at a time of stringent budgets. Two years later,

Johnstone decided to just do it, and I became SUNY vice chancellor for educational technology.

E.W.: That was mid-'90s, wasn't it?

J.H.: Yes, from 1993 to 1995.

E.W.: And that was when the distance learning program was actually established at ESC?

J.H.: Yes. I asked Paul Shiffman and Carol Twigg of the Empire staff to help, using double titles, to show the strong linkage between "system" and Empire developments in this area. Recall that back in 1971, SUNY budgets were slammed just as Empire was leaving the station. To help the new college staff up without significant personnel, Chancellor Boyer had given me the opportunity to select as many of the positions about to be retrenched from the system's Continuing Education and University of the Air offices. These systemwide programs had never managed to achieve the enrollments that had been expected from televised courses. So many years later, Chancellor Johnstone agreed with that similar vision that we would create a support system for SUNY and operate what would be called The SUNY Learning Network. Unfortunately, Bruce became desperately ill and resigned as chancellor. His deputy, Joe Burke, who'd been president of Plattsburgh, stepped in. He was bright, a very capable and experienced man. There was little his senior staff would put on the table that he wouldn't work over. It was not just me; it was all the vice chancellors. It became challenging for me to move our joint venture forward. Then came the big political changeover: Mario Cuomo, who may have expected an easy re-election, had alienated a number of allies and others. He had been a competent governor, but he lost the election.

E.W.: So we faced a Pataki administration.

J.H.: Yes, Pataki was elected unexpectedly, but had no educational strategy in place for SUNY. Cuomo, negligently, had left half the SUNY board of trustees seats open. Pataki appointed eight trustees, including a chair, from recommendations by a very limited part of the winning party. A once cohesive and solidly supportive SUNY board disintegrated. Some members even attempted to resurrect some of the old issues that existed when the Board of Regents was in control. This created

a challenging period for SUNY with major staff changes and revolving chancellors. As I described earlier, there followed a period of rapid succession of interim and acting chancellors. In the midst of this, I decided maybe it was time to start the succession process at Empire State College.

I was approached by a headhunter for the Antioch University chancellorship, and I said, "No way." So much for that. It happened anyway: I went. That initiated rather abruptly the changeover at ESC. The first action by the new trustee board was to reject the recommendations for my successor. Obviously, I was not part of that process. The committee recommended former ESC Dean Victor Montana and a couple of others. But the result was that Jane Altes, former vice president for academic affairs, came out of retirement to become acting president. She actually served two and a half years, and, in my opinion, should have been named president because she did a lot of good things in a very difficult political environment.

E.W.: I have hypothesized that the instability of SUNY leadership over the years and the succession of acting and interim chancellors had weakened SUNY as an organization. As I see it, the shifting leadership created a kind of power vacuum at System Administration that resulted in relatively more autonomy for the campuses, but that, now, under Chancellor Zimpher, a very activist chancellor, the system is much stronger and much more assertive. There are still people around who knew the system as a benign one that could be disregarded; they're finding now that the game with SUNY has changed. What do you think of this perspective?

J.H.: I think your description is generally true, but there is more texture to it. I have already mentioned the rapid changes that occurred with the appointment of a politicized board of trustees. One of its early proposals was that only private institutions in the state should offer graduate degrees. They felt it was not appropriate for the public institutions to do that. ESC had moved into graduate education only a few years earlier. Now this is pretty radical stuff and it was only one of the major policy issues these short-term chancellors had to contend with. None of them were bad

chancellors; they were experienced people, having run major institutions. But they were responsible to a highly politicized board.

E.W.: Just like to clarify – we're talking about the Pataki board?

J.H.: Yes. They had been nominated by a narrow slice of the New York Republican Party to do certain things. I need to interject here that I was enormously proud to be part of the State University of New York. I experienced almost no bad stuff in terms of political interference, corruption or incompetence. As presidents, we occasionally received routine calls of support for a particular candidate once a position was publically posted. All of us received calls when searches were announced. As publically appointed officers, we are open to suggestions from anyone. But during my tenure, no one ever, ever pressured me, or told me who we could hire. The one exception was when a member of the Board of Regents, sad to say, started to call weekly to advance a candidate. It got more insistent as it went on, and I had to say, "We have a process for this; it is a professional process. I've passed the individual's application and qualifications on to the search committee, and they will evaluate and make a recommendation to the appropriate officer." But my sense from colleagues is that in this new era, external pressures became more insistent, and sometimes nasty.

E.W.: Do you think SUNY treated you and ESC evenly and fairly, compared to the other campuses, or was it more of a struggle to get a fair share of the budget?

J.H.: It was a struggle, but I don't think it was a biased struggle. Since the primary movers on the budget side were certainly supportive of ESC, they believed that they were being evenhanded in applying budget formulas, which was a mission-adjustment formula. They recognized that we did not have a residential campus and all that this implies. From an objective point of view, that was fair, but in practice, we were seriously underfunded in both the academic support and the administrative areas. After Joe Moore became president, things were better and he was able to achieve considerable improvement in a better economic climate. SUNY received significant bonding for construction. When ESC started, it was with the understanding that we would be a campus without walls and

would have modest expectations for capital. Joe was able to change this presumption with positive results.

E.W.: From what I understand, on paper, the so-called "negative mission adjustment" has gone away, but I believe it's more of a shell game and that we still draw the short straw when it comes to budget allocations. And weren't there also plenty of "positive mission adjustments" and deals made around the system, as well?

J.H.: Some things are hard to change, and a pecking order is one of them. The university centers have always benefited; they were growing rapidly, they paid higher salaries, and got the lion's share of construction funds. As you pointed out earlier, the SUNY structure had changed to a more *laissez-faire* style. The most aggressive presidents were very skillful in going directly to the political structure of the state. SUNY had more or less buffered this temptation in the past, wisely and with great skill. That nuanced role was lost during the Pataki administration and under the new SUNY board.

E.W.: Were there any chancellors who were particularly suspicious of Empire State College or were especially punitive toward ESC in budget allocations or program approval?

J.H.: Not really. Even the university center presidents were hospitable to ESC's presence on their campuses. And to my knowledge, none attempted to discourage their faculty members from accepting tutoring assignments for ESC students, an important expectation in the original planning for ESC. But shortly after I completed my assignment to develop the SUNY Learning Network [SLN], Peter Salins became university provost. He had little sense of the way Empire State had tried to build a capacity that would serve the SUNY system, and saw the SLN program as an essential aspect of his office.

E.W.: You're referring to the time when Jane Altes' served her lengthy interim presidency?

J.H.: Jane Altes was president for two and a half years. Fortunately, Jane was well known in SUNY and in the political structure. Her husband, Wally, was head of the Albany Chamber of Commerce. He knew everybody and was seen widely as bipartisan, and that helped a lot, I think. She was perhaps more controversial inside the college than outside.

E.W.: For a time, you held two posts: one as president of ESC and one as vice chancellor of SUNY.

J.H.: I insisted on a vice chancellor-level appointment, not wishing to be dependent upon the SUNY provost. I believed that if SUNY wanted to make a strong statement about online education, I had to be in a position to make the big push for it. Had Bruce Johnstone been able to continue his term, we would have been able to do some important things.

E.W.: Can you imagine a campus president being asked to play a split role today?

J.H.: Well, it was a 14-hour-a-day commitment, but I knew the system well and that made it intriguing and possible. Joseph Burke stepped into the chancellor role and was able to accomplish a number of things, among them, improvements in teacher education and nursing. But he did not sustain the effort to initiate online learning as a top priority. Without strong support from SUNY, nothing can move through the required state hoops essential for approval. Moreover, any campus seeking to offer a new academic program was required by the Regents to send a letter of intent to all the institutions in the state to ask if objections existed. Paul Shiffman, my former ESC associate, who handled this process at Excelsior College, claims that today there is no such request that fails to elicit many objections.

E.W.: In another interview for *All About Mentoring* [#43 and #44], Joe Moore describes his strategy as more specifically political. He seemed to have had much less concern about SUNY, perhaps as a function of the weak nature of SUNY leadership during his tenure, though he did say that he always communicated his legislative efforts to system offices.

J.H.: He may have had a little more room to run, though I never felt anyone was looking over my shoulder.

E.W.: Joe thought he was fortunate to have robust enrollments and healthy budgets during his time as president. He recognized that this gave him opportunities to advance his initiatives.

J.H.: Yes, President Moore took the college forward in a number of important areas. He had seven years, and that is probably about

right these days to get done the things you set in motion. And President Davis proposed some very important things, as well, but his early departure limited the ability to follow through on his important and far-reaching Open SUNY proposal.

E.W.: The program Alan Davis initiated has now been adopted by the system, but we can't be sure where the plan will end up, or what role, if any, Empire State will have as it emerges from the SUNY system. As others have pointed out, the development of online learning at ESC could not have occurred when it did without the influence and force of the larger SUNY system. Were you the one who merged the efforts of the system with the college?

J.H.: Well, the answer is yes, but it's complicated. From the first days of the college, Empire State tried to find ways to deliver content, to have first rate content for the students to use as a part of their studies. But as noted before, we did not have available the essential technology to deliver resources until many years later. Our faculty mentors basically had to carry the entire load, which might have been sustainable with a tiny student/faculty ratio, but over-the-top demanding with the public workload we needed to carry. Thus, we attempted in many ways to develop a strong resource base that the student and mentor could employ. That goal was always high on my agenda, but the necessary technology trailed behind. Frustrated with ESC's fiscal limitations, even as the necessary technology became available, I looked to SUNY as a partner, which eventually led to my double appointment. As I mentioned earlier, we did manage to initiate the SUNY Learning Network. Its operations were expected to be moved to ESC where we would run it as a service for the system, recognizing that Empire State College would be a key player. But with my departure, Peter Salins decided that the operations should remain in the office of the SUNY provost. That was not an irrational choice, but it reversed the financially-strategic idea that ESC could serve the entire system. Perhaps it was a status matter.

Unfortunately, Dr. Salins lacked a contemporary vision of what that program might be able to do. In discussions, he described something akin to the1960s New York University "Sunrise Semester" that

broadcast taped courses via television. Salins described this to the SUNY board, using the taping of a Stony Brook professor's lecture, for example, for use at other the campuses. Interestingly, he saw the possibility of online delivery of the course, anticipating what we now call MOOCs [massive open online courses]. This, he suggested, would save instructional duplication at the other campuses. Now that had nothing to do with what Empire was trying to do. ESC and SUNY specifically rejected this model at the founding of Empire, (then called the SUNY University of the Air), turning its resources over to ESC. As a mono-modal approach with significant limitations and enormous costs to create the courses, it just wasn't sensible. But years later, the necessary telecommunications technologies caught up with transformational possibilities. The personal computer made it all possible at scale, as costs came down. So the time was right for us to enhance the interactive aspects, which could keep it individualized, interactive and content-rich.

E.W.: So certainly the language and value system of the college maintained the lexicon of mentoring and the model of individualized learning, but the establishment of the online program departed from the traditional model of one-to-one guided independent study.

J.H.: It is *not* the traditional model of Empire State!

E.W.: It is not?

J.H.: It was a matter of happenstance that gave rise to that description. I would say the heart and soul of that notion was in the Rochester Center, with which you are most familiar. We hired four faculty, I think, and appointed Dean John Jacobson, a highly trained and an intellectually rigorous classicist who could enliven or break the tension at any meeting by quoting Cicero or other philosophers. After he hired the first few faculty mentors and admitted a number of students, the college faced a hiring freeze. What you call the traditional model did appear as a necessity, with the small faculty being able to work with two or three students each. This arrangement continued for almost a year. It worked beautifully; it was wonderful. One of the first research studies on the first group of graduates written by Ernie Palola, Tim Lehman and Paul Bradley recounted the student experiences and seemed to institutionalize the idea. They were

indeed great students working with a skilled and committed faculty. We shared this study widely to document what ESC was doing and how the model could work. But this model reflected only one aspect of the college plan.

E.W.: That's incredibly interesting – an accident of a particular historical circumstance. It seems that for many, perhaps the majority of the faculty in the regional centers and units, one-to-one guided study is assumed to embody the great tradition of ESC. So, how would you define, then, what is the traditional model of ESC? Or is there indeed a traditional model?

J.H.: All of ESC's early planning documents describe a learning structure that is responsive to each student. But I did not see that as a single model, except for the importance of placing each student at the center of our educational program. The aim was to provide a broad and flexible set of opportunities. The faculty mentors are the key players in making that work. They were to be the prime movers in helping students discover what their goals would be and to help them know how to make those goals a reality, in terms of specific studies. They were to identify the resources that would be used and to oversee the tutors and ensure that they got first-level support and evaluations. That is why some have referred to our "model" as a mentoring model.

But that process was to be enhanced by anything we could attach to it, including classes that could be taken at other campuses, where that would be appropriate, but at the same time recognizing that many of our students would not be able to take residential courses. That was one resource, and we experimented with others. But until the personal computer became available generally, the full panoply of resources did not become truly available. Today, resource access provides a phenomenal capability. Now it has become: How do our faculty mentors help the students find and use the appropriate resources to accomplish their goals? For ESC faculty, this is not a counseling job; I want to underscore that. It is a powerful combination of responsibilities. I always thought of the role as that of an intellectual coach.

E.W.: Do you think the quality of mentoring can be maintained at a distance, and with up to 20 or more students in an online course?

J.H.: My thought would be that the mentoring should continue to be universal in all of the college's operations, but not in the single form that I think you are referring to as the traditional one, where the mentor is providing all or most of the instruction. It's just not practical and ultimately in many cases, it's just not intellectually honest.

E.W.: Wow, that's a new understanding for me.

> *All of ESC's early planning documents describe a learning structure that is responsive to each student. But I did not see that as a single model, except for the importance of placing each student at the center of our educational program.*

J.H.: You just can't be all things and be long-term credible. But you can be the guide, the inspiration, the critical moderator if you're well trained and experienced in responding to the student. And, of course, the mentor can guide in independent studies in those areas where one has special knowledge or expertise. This is the reason, of course, that SED [State Education Department] required us to define areas of study and to demonstrate that we had a full-time mentor in each area at each college center.

E.W.: I have an idea about the college that I call "Empire Exceptionalism." It's part of the ethos, the ideology of the college that has come from a socialization process, some of which was communicated by the Mentoring Institute, which is now called the Center for Mentoring and Learning. That sense of exceptionalism has come to inform the culture of ESC. It's found in the language and meaning we use and it is found in CDL [Center for Distance Learning] as much as in regional centers. It amounts to a deeply held system of values and beliefs about mentoring and the centrality of the mentor, but at the heart, at least in regional centers and units, this has come to mean and depend upon one-to-one guided independent study as the traditional model.

J.H.: Yes, Arthur Chickering and Tom Clark [the former dean of what was then the Albany Learning Center, who became director of ESC's Center for Individualized Education] supported the development of this strong and essential collegewide ethos. But I am talking about a different matter. Given our widely diverse student body in educational needs and methods, mentoring should be a broad and inclusive model, able to work flexibly with students with widely diverse needs, interests, learning styles and abilities. A more limited approach, focusing for example only on totally individualized independent study, is challenging to carry off. I think you cannot have a singular model like that on any large scale. And that was part of our early debate. Was this going to be a hothouse institution for independent study – a brilliant and appealing strategy, serving selected students who could manage that approach – or would it, as an alternative public institution, encourage a wider flexibility to respond to a much wider clientele? I did not believe that the more limited approach, despite its brilliance and appeal, could have succeeded in the longer run.

To be continued in issue #47.

Preventing Student Plagiarism

Elizabeth Bradley, School for Graduate Studies

Many of our courses and learning contracts at SUNY Empire State College include information about the college's academic honesty policy (http://www.esc.edu/policies/?search=cid%3D37970) and details about correctly citing sources. Yet, how can we be sure that students actually read this information, understand it and follow correct procedures? I gave little thought to this topic until the end of the spring 2014 term, when I discovered that a number of my graduate students were plagiarizing to varying degrees.

It all began when one student's final project submission didn't match the assignment guidelines, and I Googled a portion of his assignment to see if I would find the content online. Indeed, I discovered that the entire assignment had been copied and pasted from portions of a journal article online. I issued a no credit outcome for the course and referred the student to the dean, who referred him to the School for Graduate Studies Academic Review Committee (ARC) for further action. This began my practice of checking students' work in Google.

Once I began scanning all student work for plagiarized content, I discovered that three more students had plagiarized all or part of their final project for the course. For one student, the infraction was minor, as she had merely failed to cite a paragraph of information, but had submitted her own work and followed correct citation procedures for the rest of the assignment. Another student used material that was directly copied from the Internet for the majority of her final project, with some of her own writing interspersed. She did include a reference for the source of the information, although she did not indicate that she had quoted it directly. I looked back at the student's work over the term, and on two other assignments she had directly taken content from various online sources, sometimes including a citation, and other times not including a citation or reference. However, the most egregious case of plagiarism was a student who, like the original plagiarism case I had encountered, copied and pasted his entire final project from an online source. When I looked back at his work over the term, I discovered that every single course assignment and nearly every discussion post was directly copied and pasted from an online source, as well. This student had utilized websites, journal articles, blogs, research briefs, news articles and more. After discussing this case with his other course instructor during the spring term, she realized the student had done the same in her class, though the quality of "his writing" in that course was not as strong because he had been submitting mainly undergraduate students' work that he found online.

The process of documenting plagiarism for each of these ARC cases was laborious. For the most egregious case, I downloaded all of the student's discussion posts into a Word document, highlighting the plagiarized content and indicating the source in my comments. I spent a few days finding the original sources/authors of the work and wrote up a detailed account for the ARC. It was an exhausting process, and I began to feel more like a CSI agent than a mentor! As the documenting came to a close, I turned my focus to prevention. How could I ensure that this did not happen with my students again, both for their sake and my own? I looked to the literature and research on the topic for more information.

When and Why Students Plagiarize

More than half of undergraduate college students admit to plagiarizing (Bolkan, 2006) and roughly 40 percent of college students report plagiarizing course papers by cutting and pasting content found online (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002). In addition to taking content from wikis, blogs, online journals, newspaper articles, etc., roughly 100 online essay sites (such as schoolsucks.com) exist where students can purchase papers, and many of them provide papers for free or custom papers written on demand (Taleb, 2004). The top reasons that students report for engaging in plagiarism include wanting to earn high grades, procrastination and being too busy to complete an assignment (Jones, 2011). Some students may not know the appropriate citation procedures, as some research has discovered that they cannot always distinguish between the proper and improper citing of texts (Chao, Wilhelm, & Neureuther, 2009).

Many students ignore the distinction between their own writing and information they cut and pasted from the Internet because it is so easy to do the latter (Howard & Davies, 2009). Some students have become more tech-savvy with their cheating, and rather than simply cutting and pasting information, they utilize multiple sources and piece them together in a manner that is not easily detected. Informational videos on how to get away with plagiarism abound on the Internet (Jones, 2011). Indeed, in my most egregious plagiarism case this past spring, the student pieced together text that was copied and pasted from multiple online sources – I even found paragraph-long discussion posts that were copied verbatim. The actual cheating must

have been time consuming, and seemingly it would have been much easier for the student to just write the brief paragraph himself.

During ARC proceedings, the student reported that he had no idea that his behavior would be considered plagiarism. At the time, I thought this was a tall tale; however, I have learned that students who are part of the millennial generation (those born in the 1980s and 1990s) may have a unique perspective when it comes to what constitutes plagiarism. Since content on the Internet is largely free, they may view information that they find there as publicly owned or as public commons (Evering & Moorman, 2012). Indeed, many high school students report the belief that information found on the Internet *is* public knowledge and thus does not need to be cited, even if it is quoted verbatim (McCabe, Trevino, & Butterfield, 2002). Digital technology, and social media in particular, has changed the ways in which knowledge is acquired and disseminated, and students' digital literacy experiences are generally not academic in nature; thus, they must be explicitly taught how to ethically access and utilize information they find online (Evering & Moorman, 2012).

Detecting Plagiarism

Through access to electronic files including other students' work, blog posts, news articles, research briefs, journal articles, etc., it is surprisingly easy for students to submit plagiarized work and go undetected. However, a number of tools exist for scanning student work for plagiarism. Some are free and can involve simply Googling sections of student work, whereas others require institutional memberships and can be costly, such as Turnitin.com. The college holds a subscription to Turnitin and faculty can gain access at http://www.esc.edu/integrated-technologies/services-support/turnitin/. However, I have found that the software can pose some difficulties. For faculty who ask students to submit all of their course assignments to Turnitin, it seems more straightforward. However, for those looking for an occasional report on suspicious papers, it is more difficult to understand how the tool works. In addition, Turnitin compares student work to all work in the system. So, if a student submits a revision to an assignment, the Turnitin report will show a high percentage of matching text found elsewhere and, if course instructors do not look

closely, they may misunderstand and think that the student has plagiarized a large percentage of his or her revision from others' work.

Turnitin uses both search engine technology and a database registry, and this two-pronged approach is noted as effective even by critics; however, some claim that Turnitin violates copyright laws by incorporating past student submissions into its database, and thus uses student work for commercial purposes without student consent. The company does not distribute student work and some universities have students sign consent forms acknowledging that they understand that their assignments will be submitted to Turnitin to protect them from possible copyright infringement (Bolkan, 2006). Some professors allow students to scan their work in Turnitin before submitting their assignments, and iParadigms, the company that publishes Turnitin, offers the program WriteCheck, which is geared toward students as a plagiarism checker. However, some worry that students will abuse the software, finding the problematic spots in the papers that rate high for plagiarism and simply scrambling the words so that their papers will not be flagged by the time their course instructors review them (Parry, 2011).

For detection of plagiarism, experts recommend the two-pronged approach. Googling student work is probably the easiest and most effective way to find content taken from online sources. However, it doesn't catch work that students purchase online, as those papers' content does not show up until you have logged into the site and paid. This is why having an institutional license to commercial plagiarism detection software such as Turnitin is useful, as these programs are more likely to have purchased papers in their databases (Bolkan, 2006). Despite the potential issues with Turnitin, Buckley and Cowap (2013) concluded that Turnitin is a useful tool for plagiarism detection, and should be utilized along with formative student learning tools. Turnitin can save time, rather than faculty having to search for Internet matches to student work submissions by hand (Sutherland-Smith & Carr, 2005). However, if Turnitin is implemented, faculty should be trained in the specifics of how the program works (Buckley & Cowap, 2013).

An additional consideration in plagiarism detection is the significant amount of time that it can take faculty to investigate plagiarism cases and the effect that this can have on the course culture. Evering and Moorman (2012) argued that "asking students who strive to abide by honor and academic integrity codes to submit a paper to an online detection service is a presumption of guilt" (p. 38) and Parry (2011) likened scanning every paper for plagiarism as "poisoning the classroom atmosphere" (para. 4) and turning professors into police officers. One professor teaching an undergraduate course reported that after a semester of using Turnitin, more than 20 percent of his students had admitted to plagiarism, students were anxious and often argumentative during course discussions, and the professor spent countless hours investigating student plagiarism. After the semester had come to a close, he received his course evaluations, and they were much lower than usual. He concluded that he would not use Turnitin again (Parry, 2011). Although I don't believe that these are reasons to stop scanning student work for plagiarism, the emphasis should be placed on prevention of academic dishonesty rather than on plagiarism detection (Evering & Moorman, 2012). Including students in the discussion of the issue of plagiarism, and approaching it as a shared problem that we can solve together, will help them learn more and take some ownership of the issue.

Best Practices in Plagiarism Prevention

Faculty can help prevent plagiarism by explicitly teaching about what constitutes plagiarism and how to avoid it, including how to conduct Internet searches and cite sources correctly (Evering & Moorman, 2012). In addition, having students submit rough drafts or components of assignments, including copies of sources, can help prevent plagiarism and also help with early identification (Evering & Moorman, 2012; Harris, 2001). Requiring at least one recent source may make plagiarism more difficult for students, as papers found on the Internet often include old references and citations.

Another prevention strategy is the creation of course assignments that are applied, personalized/unique to each student, and that address broad audiences (Davis, 2011).

Evering and Moorman (2012) noted that student writing often takes place in isolation, as the only reader of their work will be their professor. This lack of authenticity in the purpose of their written task can lead students to feel that their writing is not purposeful or "real," leading to an increased likelihood that they will take someone else's work and try to pass it off as their own. Therefore, encouraging students to write about their own interests may help prevent student plagiarism. Designing assignments so students can share their work with a wider audience through digital media, such as videos, wikis and blogs, also is a way to make writing more applied and to decrease the isolation many students experience in their studies (Evering & Moorman, 2012).

Many instructors have students complete an assignment on plagiarism at the start of the term. Karon (2012) gives students a written assignment where they are asked to find a free paper available online, analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the paper, and then discuss how they could improve upon the work. He does this to show students that he is aware of free paper sites and student plagiarism, but also to help students realize that they can produce better work than what they can find or buy online. Davis (2011) recommended having students write a short paper about plagiarism, and then have them scan their work in Turnitin or some other plagiarism detection program, and require that they revise and correct their work if they have more than 15 percent of plagiarized content before submission.

Jones (2011) recommended including an interactive game or simulation to teach students in an active and engaging way about plagiarism prevention. A number of open source games and simulations are available from colleges and universities, and these activities can be embedded in program orientations or course assignments. Goblin Threat, created by Lycoming College, is a game that requires students to find hidden goblins on their campus and answer quiz questions on the topic of academic honesty. Once all of the goblins have been eliminated, students receive a congratulatory certificate of accomplishment, which they can print and hand in or email to their professors for proof of completion (Broussard & Oberlin, 2011). The University of Florida created Gaming Against Plagiarism (GAP), in which students race with their peers to become the first to publish their work. Players encounter opportunities for plagiarism and data fabrication, and must answer quiz questions about plagiarism and evaluate complex ethical scenarios along the way (Leonard et al., 2010).

For those who would rather have an interactive quiz over a game or simulation, the University Libraries at the University of Southern Mississippi created a Plagiarism Tutorial where students can test their knowledge of plagiarism (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014). Students take a pre-test, and then receive a tutorial on what constitutes plagiarism, proper citation procedures, and paraphrasing and summarizing. Students take two quizzes, through which they are asked to label pieces of writing as containing the acceptable use of citations or containing plagiarism. Students also take a post-test and they have the option of having their quiz answers emailed to their course instructor (University of Southern Mississippi, 2014).

Next Steps

It can be a challenge to effectively implement plagiarism prevention and detection strategies in courses without sacrificing too much time and attention on the topic of academic dishonesty. However, in addition to being tied to specific courses, plagiarism quizzes or simulations can be required by the institution as part of student orientations. Having students attend a webinar that demands active participation on the topic of correct citation procedures is another option, and it's something that can be expected of all students before course registration. A focus on plagiarism prevention is important, as prevention is much more effective and less time consuming than developmental remediation and/or charging students with violations of academic integrity.

Note

To learn more about the college's policy on academic integrity, and to access ESC's quiz and additional plagiarism prevention resources for students and faculty, please visit: http://www.esc.edu/academic-integrity/plagiarism/.

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What *Is* Student-Centered Learning?

Kathleen Stone, Center for Distance Learning

A Review of:
A Learner Centered Approach to Online Education
By Lisa Harrell

A*Learner Centered Approach to Online Education* by Lisa Harrell (2013), is a short, seven-chapter book that covers the basics of online education. The purpose of the book is to act as a guide for designing and teaching online in a way that is learner-focused. It is marketed for those new to online education, wanting to learn more about online education, and/or undergraduate and graduate students. I approached my review by asking two main questions: Does the book provide the essentials for the beginning online educator? Does the book provide a "learner-centered approach" to online education?

Harrell begins with an introduction to online education and then walks the reader through the needed resources and support for faculty and students, defines who the online learner is, discusses domains of learning, explains how to write outcomes and objectives, discusses techniques for creating online course interaction and explores methods for assessing online learning. I would recommend this book for the new online educator, if it were not for one major problem: the lack of information about online accessibility. For example, in

Chapter 2 - "Resources and Support for the Online Student and Educator" and Chapter 6 - "Online Course Interaction," Harrell provides lists of websites and information on specific resources/tools – some of which should not be used in the online environment because they are not accessible. Given that 11 percent of students in undergraduate courses self-identify as having a disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2013), it is not acceptable for a beginner's guide to online education to ignore this topic. One small paragraph mentions that students with disabilities may need extra support, but the issue goes beyond that. Courses need to designed and taught with accessibility in mind from the start, and books and training materials for educators need to be infused with appropriate approaches for all students.

Another significant problem in the book is the absence of a discussion of the instructional designer role in online education. More often than not, institutions of higher education recognize the importance of instructional design and have professional staff available to serve in this role. Instructional designers are not technologists. They are experts in the field of education and designing instruction for the online environment. They typically have masters' and/or doctoral degrees in curriculum and instructional design. They can help content experts design courses that have effective learning outcomes and assessments that align with learning activities and overall program and institutional goals. Harrell misses this important resource for online educators. She also leaves out another valuable resource we have here at SUNY Empire State College: instructional and educational technologists. The role of these positions is to help educators – whether they are teaching online, in hybrid courses or in a traditional classroom – utilize technology for teaching and learning. The ideal combination for creating learner-centered courses in the online environment is to have an instructor, who has the subject matter

content expertise, an instructional designer, who has online instructional design expertise and an instructional technologist, who has the technical expertise. All three in collaboration can develop a learner-centered course that utilizes content, design and technology, based on research and best practices in each of those areas, to meet the needs of the students.

I will discuss further two foundational topics for instructional design of online education covered by Harrell in Chapter 4 - "Domains of Learning" and Chapter 5 - "Learning Outcomes/Instructional Objectives." Often, the domains of learning in an online course can be overshadowed by the draw of new technologies. Having solid foundational knowledge of learning domains is critical for designing learning activities that target what you want your students to understand. What kind of knowledge do you want them to gain? Is it factual, procedural, conceptual, metacognitive? At what level should they learn it? Do we want them to remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, create? These are all questions that relate to the cognitive domain of learning. Harrell briefly mentions the psychomotor domain of learning, which involves the physical act of doing something as part of the learning process, and the affective domain, which focuses on students' attitudes, feelings, values and beliefs. The affective domain can be challenging to assess, but is critical for designing effective instruction. Satisfaction, retention, engagement and motivation are tied to the affective domain and all are critical for student success (Stenzel, 2006). Harrell does not spend enough time on this topic.

Chapter 5 addresses outcomes and objectives. Goals, outcomes and objectives are terms often used interchangeably in literature on designing instruction. Harrell uses the terms "outcomes" and "objectives." However, there is no agreement in the field over what each term means. Depending on what you read, you
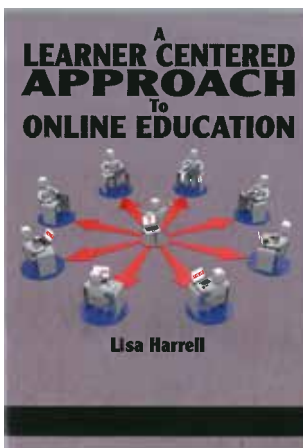
will find varied definitions. Goals are broad statements at the college, program or course level that describe the ultimate purpose of the instruction. Learning goals are not typically written to be measurable, but provide the framework for designing learning experiences. However, institutional goals can be measurable. For example, the Empire State College (2010) *Vision 2015 – Strategic Plan* document lists measurable goals for the college.

As described by Harrell (2013), "Instructional objectives should reflect specifically and objectively what the learner should be able to do as a result of the instruction" (p. 58). Suskie (2009) explained further that "Objectives can describe detailed aspects of goals" (p. 117). Objectives are what we want our students to be able to accomplish; they describe the instructional process and are therefore more teacher-centered.

The difference between objectives and outcomes is the frame of reference. Outcomes are what students actually accomplished. However, the term is often misunderstood: Sometimes it represents broad statements and at other times it refers to measurable, detailed, specific statements. According to Harrell (2013), "Learning outcomes are broadly stated and focus on the program or course as a whole" (p. 58). In this case, she is describing what is often thought of as a goal. Suskie (2009) used the term a little differently, but still in a broad sense: "Learning outcomes are the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and habits of mind that students take with them from a learning experience" (p. 117). Suskie uses "learning outcomes" interchangeably with the term "learning goals." However, outcomes should be measurable and specific. They are in essence a learning objective that is student-centered. At Empire State College, we use the term "outcomes" in our learning contracts. Learning contracts include a "statement of learning goals and learning outcomes that specify the knowledge, skills and/or competencies that the student can expect to attain as a result of engaging in the learning activities of the contract" (Empire State College, 2012). This statement implies that at the course level, goals are broad and outcomes are more specific. Indeed, outcomes are the result of learning from the student perspective (Wittmann-Price & Fasolka, 2010). Imagine you are the student. Would you look back and say, "My learning *objective* was x, y, z?" Or would you say,

"My learning *outcome* was x, y, z?" Would the student use the language of learning objectives or learning outcomes? Which would more fully capture the student's understanding of what he or she achieved? This student-centered focus provides a direct connection to assessment.

The importance of all this is in making sure that we define how we use the terms for ourselves and all of our stakeholders, with the students being the most important. Clarity, consistency and well-communicated goals and outcomes benefit everyone. As a curriculum and instructional designer, I see the "what" more than the label as key to ensuring that we are providing our students with the tools to be successful, in whatever way they define success. Broad statements are needed to provide a general map of what the student can expect from us. Detailed measurable statements provide specific information that tells the student exactly what they can gain from a course and help map the instructional methods and assessments. To do this, a learner-centered approach to online education – as the book is titled – should always focus on what the student will achieve from the learning experience.

I return to our own learning contracts with goals and outcomes. Goals at Empire State College are therefore broad statements, and outcomes are specific measurable statements that describe for students what they will gain from any particular study. Outcomes are the direct result of the instruction. By using outcomes, we are demonstrating our commitment to being student-centered. Outcomes are then translated into assessments; that is, evidence of the learning and learning activities can be created to meet those outcomes. Harrell fails to adequately address the importance of alignment in instructional design. In fact, throughout the book, there is an absence of any instructional design models being applied to design the instruction. Assessment is left for the end, when it should be discussed much earlier.

While Harrell covers some of the basics of taking a learner-centered approach to online education, there are some major omissions that do not align with today's online education landscape. Accessibility must be at the forefront of online education, if we are truly learner-centered. Good instructional design and instructional technology are known to

be important for the retention and success of adult students (Lehman & Conceicao, 2014). Having clear, aligned, student-centered learning goals and outcomes are beneficial for students and for the instructional design process. They also are important as responses to external mandates and pressures that online higher education is required to address.

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Sustaining Adult Learners Through Relationship

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A Review of:
Developing and Sustaining Adult Learners
Edited by Carrie J. Boden-McGill and Kathleen P. King

Introduction

As a social worker, mentoring students has become partially second nature to me, in that, over the years, I have learned to use my interpersonal skills to connect and develop a relationship with any "client." Other aspects of our work, such as teaching the student and advising the student within the mentoring relationship, are not skills with which I have had as much practice. For this reason, I have started my own journey into the scholarship of teaching and learning. As part of this journey, I took on the project of reviewing the works in the edited volume, Developing and Sustaining Adult Learners *(Boden-McGill & King, 2013).*

As I read and reviewed this book, which is based on presentations at the 2012 conference on adult learning in higher education sponsored annually by the Adult Higher Education Alliance (AHEA, The Alliance), and co-sponsored that year by the American Association of Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE), I thought a lot about the intersections between learning and relationship. The topic threading together all of the essays was that sustainment – sustaining adult learners, which is of particular interest given my work with students and my quest to understand how to

best provide what they need within the mentor–student relationship. I thus have chosen to review the pieces in this book as a reflection and in connection with my own work as a mentor and instructor, examining how the writings can apply to that work and help make sense of it.

Relationship: A Foundation to Sustaining Adult Learners in Different Contexts

The first three sections of the book examine best practices and programming, as well as issues in transformative learning. A salient theme in all of these readings is the importance of relationship. My formal educational background and training is in social work, not education. As I began my career at Empire State College, I quickly came to realize that although scholarship in my own field would be important, becoming a scholar in matters relating to adult education and learning would be equally essential. Over the past three years, I've dabbled in reading seminal pieces, and with colleagues started writing about my work as an educator, recognizing that my work is indeed in education, as much as it is in social work. When I first took on this review project, I selfishly thought that it would be a good opportunity for me to sink my teeth into some new literature in adult education, improving my knowledge-base. I wondered what I might bring to the table, and whether I had enough experience in this area to do an effective review. Suddenly, I realized that what I was feeling and experiencing might, in fact, be similar to what my students experience as they return to the academic environment and wonder what they can bring to the table.

The first two pieces in the book – the first, written by Risley and Petroff, and the second, written by Scott – examine best practices with adult students by looking at trust and engagement, respectively. The development of trust and the use of engagement skills with students seem of first and foremost

importance in sustaining adult learners, making these essays good ones to place up front in this volume. As educators and academics, relationships and development of rapport are often afterthoughts, with assignments and course content at the forefront. The truth, though, as discussed by each of these authors, is that content is more likely to be absorbed and applied by learners if they feel comfortable and safe in the learning environment. Learning takes place through relationship, and Scott believes this happens in stages, first allowing the learner to develop individually, and then sustaining the learner by supporting the work through the learning community. Risley and Petroff contend that without a trusting and safe environment in which to raise issues and concerns, the student may not stretch to hear different perspectives or put as much effort into the work. The relationship has the potential to deepen the learning.

"Building Collaborative Partnerships Through Personal Relationships" by Martinez Witte and McCormack examines the importance of different types of partnerships, in this case, between educational institutions and the surrounding community. This chapter, numbered 15, is situated later in the book, but I chose to review it here, rather than with the other chapters in that section, as it seemed most relevant to the importance of relationship. I found this piece to be particularly relevant to my own work, as I partner with organizations in the community to assist with the evaluation of their programs, as well as to supervise and provide field learning opportunities for students. It is a perfect example of another way in which relationship is important to learning. The college-community partnership and personal relationships within these organizations allow students to support projects important to the organization, while learning and receiving real life experience and training. My own relationships with individuals in various organizations have provided valuable experiences for students
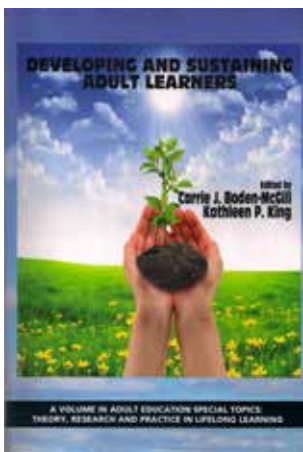
and the organizations alike. The authors discuss college collaborations with government organizations, policy research and analysis groups, as well as with those focused on community development. As the authors argue, it is very important for faculty to engage in the community in these ways, leveraging relationships and resources for all involved. Their use of a fiction to begin the piece and show the ways that partnerships can form was a bit abstract and difficult to follow in certain places; it might have been more useful to use a real case example to illustrate the application of the concepts.

"Tuesdays With Trisha," by Pinder highlights the importance of relationship using a case example of a student-tutor relationship in a literacy-tutoring program, learning that occurred outside of the traditional higher education context. Because the author was open to "Trisha" and learning about her as an individual, not just in the context of the program, student and tutor were able to accomplish more. This required flexibility on the part of the tutor/author. The author did a nice job of processing the difficulties and successes associated with this type of flexibility, providing examples of the issues encountered. It might have been helpful, however, to have a summary of recommendations and strategies gleaned from the experience for others to use in their work.

Lane's piece, "A Mutual Understanding: Music Learning and Adult Education," resonated with me as it reminded me of an experience I had as an adult learner. True, I played the viola as a younger student in high school and in college, but did not play for about 10 years when I decided to pick it up again. I sought out lessons and my instructor was younger than I was, but definitely had more experience in music and was a very experienced string instrument player. As an experienced adult in so many other areas, I found it difficult to recognize my need for further development as a musician with this younger instructor. Still, his ability to engage with me and develop rapport made it possible for me to relax and learn more easily, less self-consciously.

Lane makes several additional good points, including a discussion about access to musical life for adults with already full lives. I would have loved to become part of a quartet or other group that regularly played, but my

busy life and work schedule did not fit with most groups that I looked into. It was a pleasure to read and interact with an author who, like Pinder, was interested in examining issues related to sustaining adult learning outside of the traditional academic or higher education context.

Findsen also discusses adult learning outside of the traditional academic environment in his piece titled, "Learning in Later Life: Issues and Educational Responses." This piece addresses continuing education for a group of nontraditional students often overlooked – older adults – and although a bit dense in some parts, makes the case that elderly learners are often marginalized by society with fewer available options, particularly for elderly individuals in lower socioeconomic classes. Findsen grounds his perspective in Freire's theory, which addresses oppression and power struggles. As a social worker, this piece resonated, as I find my work as a faculty mentor at SUNY Empire State College particularly meaningful. I am not only an academic and scholar, but also a mentor. I am keenly aware that the college provides access to higher education for many individuals who might otherwise miss the opportunity, whether it is due to socioeconomic circumstances, family responsibilities or other life hardships. Providing access to education for elderly adults is particularly important, as Findsen mentions, in the context of the current economy when many adults are unable to retire at an early age, and must remain competitive in the workforce. The author also discusses a study that he conducted which found that while remaining relevant in the economy was a motivating force for seeking higher education later in life, there were other older adults who were mainly interested in furthering their knowledgebase for self-development purposes.

Elderly individuals are not the only new "nontraditional" group to expect in classrooms of institutions serving adults. Green, Coke and Ballard write about the so-called "millennial generation" of students, younger than those we would expect in classrooms serving "adults" or "nontraditional" students. Having had recent experiences working with this group, as the demographics at the Staten Island Unit shift, I found this chapter to be of particular interest. The authors review recent literature on this topic and highlight important factors relevant to advising and engaging with this

generation of learners. Millennials are very tech-savvy, with high expectations of faculty and administration. Their expectations and high standards, in combination with the responsibilities that most adult learners face outside the classroom, create an even greater sense of urgency in some cases. Millennials also are looking for community and ways to connect with other students and faculty. Recent practices at the Metropolitan Center, including "welcome dinners" at the beginning of each term and invitations to create and join student clubs, are initiatives that may effectively engage these millennial learners.

Green, Coke and Ballard make note of the importance of real-life examples and application of material in engaging millennial learners. Zarestky's work, "Reflective Writing in Unexpected Places," also picks up on this same perspective, making mention of the use of reflective writing as a way to process experiences and solve problems. It is important for millennials and others seeking higher education to be able to master correct writing skills, but this kind of work also should be made relevant to real world contexts. Reflective writing is very common in human services and social work education. Students are asked to reflect on experiences they have in the field or in an internship and to process these experiences while applying theory and skills-based material.

Faculty as Adult Learners: Another Context

The fourth section of the book focuses on faculty as learners, examining professional development in a number of different ways. Still, the importance of relationship and connection among individuals is embedded in these writings. McWhorter, Roberts and Mancuso discuss the use of online conferences for professional development. This is a cost-effective and timesaving way for more professionals to be able to engage in development activities, as well as to build collaborations and partnerships with those whom they may not have the opportunity to otherwise interact. Such online conferences provide an opportunity for adults to stay current in their field without the hassle of leaving their busy lives and jobs to travel to meetings and other professional development activities. The authors connect the use of online conferences to constructivist

theory, demonstrating that adults can build their knowledge and "restructure their understanding through their experiences" via the online conference (p. 275). Through social learning, the authors show that it is important for learners to connect with one another, reflecting on each other's perspectives, thereby building knowledge through these reflections and connections.

Staying within the theme of relationship and collaboration, Lockhart writes about the importance of collaboration and partnership in faculty development programs. I thought this piece was an excellent addition to this edited volume, as it is easy to lose sight of our own need to continue learning and developing as faculty, when our primary function is to see to it that our students are learning effectively. The truth, is, however, that our students will not learn as much from us as faculty if we do not remain current in our fields. Institutions of higher education, according to the author, must include the input of administration in addition to that of faculty when developing programs for faculty development. Working in partnership with one another and finding collaborations is an important piece in developing skills and building knowledge as faculty. We do not work within a vacuum, and mustn't operate as if we do. As faculty, we must be open to working with and learning from each other, whether in relationship to our pedagogical theories or our teaching methods. In our scholarship, too, we must develop our own areas of expertise, while recognizing the value of multiple minds at work.

Leslie and Fishback continue the discussion about faculty development, acknowledging the issue of self-efficacy in their piece, "Faculty Self-Efficacy Beliefs." Their central focus is on whether or not faculty find themselves to be effective in the implementation of interactive teaching strategies. The authors look at literature demonstrating that interactive teaching methods are most effective for adult learners, noting the importance of developing critical thinking skills. They remind us that self-efficacy and one's belief in one's own capabilities impact all areas of performance and motivation in life, including teaching and pedagogy. Perhaps, in keeping the Lockhart piece in mind here, it is essential to consider this as a topic for faculty professional development. Assisting faculty in finding the confidence to manage classrooms

comprised of diverse groups of learners with different levels of interest and ability should be a central component of all faculty development programs.

In their chapter, Peno and Silva Mangiante conducted a study to look at issues involved in learning to teach. This is not always a skill that comes easily. The authors rightly discuss the many factors involved in successful teaching, including the ability to be flexible to changing contexts and student populations. The authors did a case study focusing on retired teachers in order to learn more about their career trajectories and how they learned to teach over time and in different circumstances. They found that trust in their skills and judgments from administrators and colleagues was a factor in supporting positive growth, while climates that were more isolating with a lack of professional development opportunities stymied abilities to grow. Working in collegial and collaborative environments that fostered trust was a very important factor. To corroborate Leslie and Fishback's conclusions, Peno and Silva

We do not work within a vacuum, and mustn't operate as if we do. As faculty, we must be open to working with and learning from each other, whether in relationship to our pedagogical theories or our teaching methods.

Mangiante found that self-efficacy was an important factor for individual teachers, as they sought strength to navigate various challenges throughout their careers. This contributed to their ability to seek support and effectively manage difficult environments.

Effective Program Assessment

The fifth and final section of the book focuses on the assessment of various adult learning programs. This section, although last in the book, is important, as it speaks to making

evidenced-based decisions in programming and curriculum development for adult learners. Both the chapters by Saal and Beckers, and Johnson, Collins and Millburn, present case studies of program assessment procedures and stress the importance of using the information obtained from the assessment to formulate next steps in programming and curriculum design. Saal and Beckers did a comprehensive review of the many different types of assessment, then described the types of assessment that they used throughout different phases of the adult literacy program evaluation. They took many things into consideration as they decided how to proceed with the evaluation, including their student population. The section at the end of their piece on the challenges of using assessment was particularly good, as it urges readers to carefully consider finding the right individuals to carry out the assessment procedures and suggests different campus departments, including psychology departments and disabilities offices that might have expertise in assessment.

Johnson, Collins and Millburn discuss their process in great detail, providing examples of changes that were made as a result of the evaluation/assessment process. This is a great reminder of one of the main reasons assessment is so important – decision-making.

Finally, Bryant and Nanton focus on the larger field of pharmacy professionals, rather than on a specific program, but still make recommendations for the field based on their needs assessment. Their hope is that programs and larger institutional bodies will make decisions for future educational practices and curricula based on evidenced-based needs assessment.

Discussion and Conclusion

I am grateful for the opportunity to review *Developing and Sustaining Adult Learners.* The review provided me with an opportunity to reflect not only upon my practices as an academic and a teacher in the context of higher education, but also as an adult learner in academia. I often find myself separating these two roles as academic educator of adults and as adult learner. However, after reviewing these pieces and doing quite a bit of reflection, I am hesitant to view these roles as separate from one another. In order to be an effective educator, I must stay active in learning how

to refresh my skills in teaching, as well as in engagement with students and fellow faculty around current issues in academia and working with diverse student populations.

As a faculty member at Empire State College, I value the emphasis placed on continued development around teaching practices for faculty, rather than only development in our own disciplines. While I find both to be important and instrumental to being an effective academic, I think development of teaching strategies and professional development practices in the areas of teaching and mentoring can often get lost. So, I urge all of us, as academics and teachers, to remember our own roles as adult learners as we continue to educate and exist in a changing academic environment.

Reference

Boden-McGill, C. J., & King, K. P. (Eds.). (2013). *Developing and sustaining adult learners (A volume in Adult education special topics: Theory, research and practice in lifelong learning)*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

"To more freely and fully participate in discourse, participants must have the following:
- *More accurate and complete information*
- *Freedom from coercion and distorting self-deception*
- *Openness to alternative points of view: empathy and concern about how others think and feel*
- *The ability to weigh evidence and assess arguments objectively*
- *Greater awareness of the context of ideas and, more critically, reflectiveness of assumptions, including their own*
- *An equal opportunity to participate in the various roles of discourse*
- *Willingness to seek understanding and agreement and to accept a resulting best judgment as a test of validity until new perspectives, evidence, or arguments are encountered and validated through discourse as yielding a better judgment."*

– Jack Mezirow (1923-2014)
In Jack Mezirow and Associates, Learning as Transformation:
Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000, pp. 13-14

Remembering Lorraine Peeler

Colleagues from SUNY Empire State College

Lorraine Peeler was a graduate of SUNY Empire State College (1988), the Niagara Frontier Center's assistant dean for assessment and, since 1998, a mentor in Community and Human Services. A colleague of great passion and commitment, Lorraine gave so much to her students and, as a pastor and community activist, to those in the Buffalo region. It was only fitting that she received the Altes Prize for Exemplary Community Serve from the college. Lorraine's life of work, both in and outside of the college, touched many, who miss her presence and her loyalty.

Tom Rocco, former dean, Niagara Frontier Center

Searching for an assistant dean for assessment at SUNY Empire State College is usually no easy matter. Lorraine Peeler made it a rather easy choice when I was dean at the Niagara Frontier Center and Anne Bertholf was associate dean. We knew we needed someone who not only had the academic credentials and experience for the job, but who had an intuitive understanding of the demands put on adult learners, real sensitivity to the changes they were about to experience and a very positive outlook on life – a can-do person who was still realistic about the difficulties and obstacles in the way, especially of our new students. The assistant dean also needs to have a mentor's perspective and must be able to work with faculty members from every area of study. And she has to be an efficient administrator. Lorraine was all of that and more. She brought a new spirit to the center, a passionate devotion to student-centered higher education, and she helped greatly to fulfill one of our major recruitment efforts: She was firmly centered in the community of Buffalo and was a model learner for many of our students.

Lorraine Peeler was a very good colleague and a very nice person, whom I appreciated as a professional and admired as a person.

Beverly Smirni, mentor emerita, Metropolitan Center

Although I have many fond memories of many breakfasts and lunches at All College Conferences with Lorraine throughout the years, my most vivid memory goes back to the fall of 1991. As the coordinator of the college's first ever cultural diversity conference for students, faculty and professional staff held in Albany, New York, I invited Lorraine to moderate a panel exploring cultural, racial, ethnic and other barriers that students face in earning a degree at Empire State College. Lorraine's panel was scheduled for Saturday, late morning before lunch. As 12:30 passed, the door to Lorraine's workshop was still closed. Mindful that the hotel staff was waiting to serve lunch, I opened the door and announced to the group that lunch was being served. Lorraine was surrounded by students from almost every center at the college wanting to discuss the issues that had emerged from the workshop. Lorraine and the students continued their conversation over lunch. This memory reflected Lorraine Peeler as a warm, loving, giving and sharing member of this college community. I shall miss her spirit and light.

Anne R. Bertholf, former associate dean and dean, Niagara Frontier Center

Statuesque and dignified, confident in both speech and bearing, Lorraine Peeler created a vivid first impression. I am sure that some of her students, probably some of her colleagues as well, initially viewed her as a formidable presence. While that early impression was entirely accurate – she *was* a formidable presence – she could also present a much different persona. Colleagues and students came to understand that she possessed a terrific sense of humor and an ability to shift gears quickly to soften her posture as a serious orator, instantly able to become a mischievous merrymaker or to revert to authoritative mode as the situation required.

Lorraine Peeler

Students benefitted from the rich mix of diverse elements that was Lorraine. I had the pleasure of teaming with her to offer a study group designed to support critical thinking and writing skills. She was encouraging and supportive with our students; direct and explicit in her critical review. Our group meetings were lively, thoughtful and funny. She was generous with her time and energy, enjoying deep rapport and friendship with those study group students, and with most of the students lucky enough to work with her.

Colleagues knew her as a woman of energy, perseverance and commitment to the goals of the college, and there were many other constituencies benefiting from Lorraine's boundless energy, as well. She was deeply devoted to her family and to her religious and secular communities, cherishing memories of a home, a church and a neighborhood that nurtured her as she grew up. "Dr. Lo" loved Buffalo, though hers was often "tough love"! She cherished memories of tight-knit neighborhoods and nurturing schools and envisioned contemporary versions of that model for all of Greater Buffalo. With her

customary clarity and confidence, she spoke out when she thought such goals were being thwarted, and she cheered when she saw that progress was being made.

Since moving away from Buffalo seven years ago, I've had only two brief visits with Lorraine. Once, events related to her church and her family brought her to Austin, Texas, where I now live, and she joined us for Sunday dinner. As always, we shared lots and lots of opinions, we laughed a lot and we spent a long time at the dinner table. Two years ago, I saw her when I was in Buffalo. By then I knew of her illness, but when we met for lunch, she looked well and seemed strong and confident of recovery. The recent news that her health was again failing startled me, and I was completely unprepared to learn of her death. It is difficult to comprehend that her rich and generous life has ended.

There are many personal memories that provide comfort. Two are especially important for me. Deeply admired by my children, she graciously consented to officiate at our daughter's wedding. She infused that event with her ever-present sense of community and family, for which our gathering of close friends and family was grateful. Prior to that day, I had heard her preach just once before, when she invited me to attend the church where she was pastor. I slipped in quietly just as the service was beginning, and immediately became the object of scrutiny – a stranger and the only white person in that tight-knit congregation. Aware of the curiosity of her audience, Lorraine announced simply at the end of the service: "Our guest today is my friend, Anne Bertholf."

I am privileged to have known Lorraine. She was a woman of many talents, a wonderful friend and a unique personality who embraced her strength and her power whole-heartedly.

Dan Nyaronga, mentor, Niagara Frontier Center

Lorraine Peeler was a kind, generous, respected, reliable, trustworthy and brave mentor. She also was a wonderful colleague and a great friend. She was kind and generous to the core. She shared freely her knowledge, experiences and all her teaching materials and research relating to Human Development, and Community and Human Services. Being brave, honest and authentic is underestimating

what Lorraine was. She spoke frankly about everything, had her eyes wide open and called everything by their real names. I never understood if this was an aspect of her personality or part of her calling or work as a pastor.

Lorraine was highly respected among colleagues inside and outside Empire State College. We typically go in a circle at our center meetings at the Niagara Frontier Center, debating the same issues over and over; but every time Lorraine spoke, she always would have the last word. At our Community and Human Services area of study meetings, we would always consult with each other, but if Lorraine Peeler wasn't at the meeting and before any decision was made, you would often hear members asking: "Have you talked to Lorraine?"

Lorraine Peeler was a very reliable colleague who, whenever needed, stepped in to cover colleagues in their absence at program assessment committee meetings or at other academic-related activities. She was always above workload target, but whenever asked to teach a new study, she stepped in without questions. Even throughout her sickness in a hospital bed, she held onto her students. If that's not being brave, I don't know what is.

She was a trustworthy colleague and a team player with whom I collaborated on a number of grant writing proposals focusing on issues relevant to the minority communities around Buffalo, including youth violence, community reintegration, women's health issues, HIV screening, homeless veterans and refugee families. Lorraine was always on the move – compassionate about her work, and always on the forefront of creating new ideas.

Words will never adequately express the loss of Dr. Peeler. The love for her job, students and colleagues will always be remembered. Her sense of humor and her laughter will always be cherished and will stay in our memories.

Nan M. DiBello, dean, Niagara Frontier Center

Receiving the sad news of Lorraine's untimely death was a deep blow to me and all of her colleagues at the Niagara Frontier Center. I knew that she was not doing very well, but I continued to share the hope for recovery that her family always expressed in the updates they

shared. As we adjusted to her absence from our lives at NFC, the task of sorting Lorraine's papers and other teaching materials became my job.

Lorraine may hold the record for the longest list of learning contracts in the NFC library, including numerous studies in psychology, counseling, human services, multiculturalism, diversity and pastoral counseling. What I could not have appreciated fully about Lorraine as a mentor until I began to sort her materials was the attention she gave to preparing all those studies. Learning contracts give an overview of what a mentor has in store for students. But, in Lorraine's office, I found files and files of handouts of material she developed for her students, conveyed in her words and sharing sometimes the words and ideas of those who inspired her. Lorraine's study materials reveal a deep understanding of what students need to do be successful, not only for her studies, but for learning and for living.

Lorraine often required students to keep a journal for her studies, and she gave them handouts about journal writing. Her learning journal handout instructed students to reflect on what they were learning – to share their thoughts about new and sometimes challenging ideas. That Lorraine's students would be expected to reflect on their learning is consistent with her work as a teacher and scholar. In the many conversations I had with Lorraine, we covered wide-ranging topics, and it was always clear that she was a reflective practitioner in teaching, scholarship and in how she led her life. For her students, most especially, studying with Lorraine was an opportunity to experience her reflective approach to living a life.

Lorraine easily moved from family, to community, to students, colleagues and church in what appeared to me as a seamless, integrated whole. In her work with students – all the learning contracts and supporting course materials and handouts – Lorraine brought together her commitments and ideas about community, social justice and her spiritual life. As I think about Lorraine –teacher/scholar/activist/spiritual leader – it is her reflective approach that comes most to mind, and students were fortunate to have such a model. I feel equally fortunate to have known her as a colleague and a friend.

**Sandra Johnson, mentor/coordinator,
Niagara Frontier Center**

Lorraine was a shining star of peace, love, comfort and caring. She built a human service agency called Bright Options in which she took care of children and desperate families. She was a pastor who nurtured the souls of her flock. She came to me during a valley in my life and lifted me up to a mountain top where I could prosper. We had endless conversations about spirituality and service to our communities. We talked about engaging learners and about writing community and human service grants. Just being around her made you feel more confident, fearless and inspired to care for others. In other words, she did not just talk about ideals, she lived them.

**Catherine Collins, mentor,
Niagara Frontier Center**

My friend, my colleague, my confidant and my spiritual conversationalist: I miss you. I can still remember our last meeting and you walking down the college's hallway struggling with a bag of books you were taking home – to, yes, work on a student's assignment. This was Lorraine, who even while ill, had wanted to contribute a chapter on adolescent girls and spirituality to my latest edited book. She was one of our communities' spiritual leaders and loved the Lord with whom she resides.

**Carole Southwood, mentor,
Niagara Frontier Center**

In 1998, Lorraine Peeler published her book, *Your Empowerment Zones,* in which, in the Preface, she spoke of her work in the Republic of South Africa. She said that the Black South African Christians kept asking her to talk about "empowerment." She said that when she went to the Sebokeng College of Education to address future teachers, they asked her to talk about "empowerment."

Lorraine said she began to think very deeply about these people, wondering why this request was being made by "a group of people who were four years out of the terribly oppressive systems of apartheid, a people who knew firsthand what it meant to be disenfranchised, discriminated against and made to feel insignificant and unimportant." She asked herself, "Why did they want me or even think that I could speak to them about empowerment?"

In re-reading Lorraine's words shortly after she passed, I, in turn, began to think very deeply about Lorraine, and it seemed clear to me why she was asked by these people to speak about empowerment. Lorraine was, is, a personification of empowerment: for nothing stood in her way. Her size wasn't in her way. Her color wasn't in her way. Her gender wasn't in her way. Cancer wasn't in her way. Death wasn't in her way.

Let me clarify the last two items. Cancer wasn't in her way: I remember sitting in her office at the college chatting just after one of her extended treatments. She looked good, and I told her so. "You look absolutely fantastic," I told her. Her eyes became open wide and round as could be. "I feel absolutely fantastic," she declared, "and, she emphatically added, "I'm tired of the doctors at the hospital tellin' me I'm supposed to be home in bed actin' like I'm sick!!!" Her eyes stayed wide and round and fixed on mine for seconds, which really seemed like a minute, after she spoke. Cancer was not in her way.

And neither was death. Not long before her passing she said to me in a telephone conversation, "I'm so excited to find out what God has planned for me. But for now," she added, "some good food would be good." Death was not in her way. She would enjoy herself now and she would enjoy herself later.

After revisiting Lorraine's written work and reflecting an all she said and did, I had a better understanding of her love, as a student and as a mentor, for our college. At our ESC core, we pride ourselves on our ability to enable students to be empowered as individuals, no matter how many obstacles they may face. And we can be doubly proud that Lorraine Peeler was, and remains in every way, our own.

Remembering Nancy Bunch

Colleagues from SUNY Empire State College

Nancy Bunch came to SUNY Empire State College in 1974 as a mentor in Community and Human Services at what was then the Lower Hudson Unit (now the Hudson Valley Center). Arriving at the Metropolitan Center in 1977, Nancy served as associate dean and then as dean until her retirement in 2002. In whatever she did (and the breadth of her accomplishments at this college was immense), Nancy was a passionate and devoted teacher to all. Many will remember her inimitable style, intelligence and spirit.

Alan Mandell, college professor of adult learning and mentoring, Metropolitan Center

(A version of these words was presented by Alan Mandell on the occasion of Nancy Bunch receiving the 2012 Heritage Award of SUNY Empire State College on 03 February 2012.)

It is rather stunning to me that it has been about a decade since Nancy Bunch retired. It is a surprise because in my head and in my heart, Nancy Bunch is always the dean, always a presence, always an inspiration – always a woman who for so many of us reflects the core values, the ideals, the deepest spirit of this institution. How incredibly lucky all of us have been to have worked with her. How lucky all of us – friends, fellow workers, family members – have been to know Nancy for all of these years.

In all of her work, in every job she had, was Nancy's commitment, her devotion to people, especially to those who had been denied a fair shot, who needed support, who looked to institutions to do what public institutions were created to do. She offered everything she had to these institutions and especially to those who worked in them and those who depended on whatever services they could provide. And she always knew it was not enough.

But it is not only Nancy Bunch's work and her crafting of an amazing professional life of commitment to those she could help that stands out. It is the *way* she worked, the person that she is.

Most people in Nancy's position would have, in myriad ways, drawn attention to themselves. Most would have wanted us to recognize their hours (oh my god did she put in the hours), their years, their accomplishments. Nancy never drew attention to herself. In her incredibly smart, quiet, doggedly persistent way, with just the right touch of humor, Nancy has just done her thing in her own way steeped in the humane values that she just takes for granted. No big fanfare. Nothing flashy. I don't think she cares much about what people say; she's not one to shift her ideas because that would be the practical thing to do in the moment. She has done what she thinks is ethical, what is right. And so many of us have benefitted.

It would be impossible to offer this little glimpse of what Nancy Bunch has given to all of us without mentioning another of her splendid qualities. I believe that Nancy Bunch is just about the *fairest* human being I have ever met in my life. As the dean of a crazy bunch of faculty and staff – urban hotshots, heavy duty kvetches, who thought that those ESC upstate people had no clue about much of anything, and they, only they, knew what was right and what was best for the center and for the college – even in the most difficult of situations, Nancy always stayed cool: no underhanded administrative slick tricks; no hurtful side comments; no efforts to play favorites. That has never been Nancy's way. Wild thoughts could have been ripping through her head (perhaps the desire to strangle one of us or to run shrieking from the room). What exactly was she thinking? No one ever, really, truly knew. Nancy listened and listened and nodded and listened again, and perhaps said "absolutely," and then continued to nod and listen. And, in this rather inscrutable mode (perhaps this was its special magic), she always found a way, her inimitable way, to hold it and, amazingly, to hold us all together.

Nancy Bunch

This is a very hard time in our country; too many people are hurting badly and the inequalities are stunning. And this is a complex time in our college with changes at every turn and people trying so hard to just make it work in the best way we can. We miss Nancy Bunch right now. She has always been a really smart person-centered critical educator/mentor, a quietly adept community builder, a caring healer, a dear and trusted colleague – a great friend, mom and grandma. It is terrific that on this occasion we can do our little bit to show her how much we care for and love her. Tonight, we offer Nancy Bunch great thanks for everything that she has done and, I am sure, will continue to do.

Meg Benke, mentor, School for Graduate Studies

I had the pleasure to serve as a colleague dean with Nancy Bunch. She was a respected, long-term dean when I was a new dean. I appreciated her quiet leadership and guidance, and particularly her capability to represent – always – the student-centered perspective. She also led the deans and the college in many initiatives, but most notably the development of the first clear perspectives on affirmative action and promoting cultural diversity. With the deans, we also appreciated the class and demeanor she brought to our meetings; she led by example with a professional and always

courteous style. But, I must say, I was most touched when attending her memorial to learn more about Nancy as a person from the perspectives of her family, many friends and many close colleagues from the Metropolitan Center. Words cannot describe the impact Nancy had on so many communities while so capably leading such a large center and, at the same time, contributing collegewide.

Tom Grunfeld, mentor, Metropolitan Center

Nancy had arrived at the Metropolitan Center in October 1977, weeks before my own arrival in January 1978. She was then an associate dean, having served since June 1974 as a faculty member in the Hudson Valley Center. Nancy would be my "boss," both associate dean and dean, for the next 24 years.

To the faculty, Nancy was enormously supportive, always available and always trying to find a way to accommodate faculty needs. I don't recall anyone expressing any serious negative sentiments (as opposed to disagreements) about her in all those years. Nor do I recall any occasions when the faculty felt they had to hide something from her. We trusted her and she trusted us.

In fact, there were times when the faculty could demonstrate their unwavering support for her.

In about 1979, the dean of the Metropolitan Center was asked to leave and the Metro faculty demanded a say in who would be his replacement. Well, the senior faculty did; the junior faculty kept their heads down. After much deliberation, we voted unanimously for Nancy's promotion.

The administration in Saratoga Springs, however, had other ideas, and for some reason had come to believe that a handful of senior faculty had coerced the junior faculty into voting for Nancy at a center meeting. So a vice president was dispatched to Manhattan to meet with each faculty member in private to discern our "real" feelings about Nancy hoping, unbeknownst to us at the time, for some negative votes, as the administration had no intention of appointing Nancy as dean. Much to his surprise, and perhaps consternation, all of the faculty members expressed the same feelings toward her in private as they had publicly.

Regardless of our solidarity and commitment to Nancy, we were assigned another person as our dean, and for many reasons, that situation did not work out so well; that dean and the faculty never really bonded. So when his term was up, the faculty once again pressed the administration to make Nancy the dean, and this time, they did. The difference in the atmosphere at the center was palpable and working at the Metropolitan Center once again became a pleasant experience.

There were as many other instances of faculty support for her as there were instances of her support for the faculty. We lamented her retirement and those of us who worked with her think back fondly of those years together.

Evelyn Wells, European regional coordinator and academic program director, academic coordinator, Center for International Programs; mentor emerita, Long Island Center

Nancy was instrumental in helping to open up dialogue on affirmative action and cultural diversity at Empire State College. She came to the college in the early 1970s when we had no policies or procedures for considering the inclusiveness of staff and faculty from all walks of life. Working with her and a few other dedicated faculty, the college's first Affirmative Action Committee was formed.

Collaborating with her during those early days was a joy, as she could see the promise the college held and helped us to move toward the reality we see today: a college reflective of a strong representation of women, people of color, sexual orientations, physical disabilities, religious preferences and other differences; a college that mirrors its student body and is seen as a supportive, engaging place for all, encouraging inclusiveness and openness.

Nancy's contribution can be seen at so many levels: her work with the many committees on which she served, her excellence in teaching, her administrative and other leadership roles and her overall commitment to scholarship. We all know her as a woman of strength and dedication, a scholar and compassionate mentor who cared about her students. I will always remember my trips to the Metropolitan Center and her office where papers and books overflowed her desk and the shelves surrounding her. She kept us focused on the richness of teaching and learning at Empire State College. One of Nancy's ongoing contributions to the college was establishing a student scholarship and long-term support of the ESC Foundation. In this way and others, Dean Nancy Bunch remains a meaningful presence at our college.

Shirley Ariker, mentor emerita, Metropolitan Center

Nancy was a most benevolent and accepting dean. She saw what was best in our teaching and in us and focused on those qualities. Inevitably, things were not always simple nor did all of us always agree, but the Metropolitan Center was a more humane and happier place for having Nancy as our associate dean and then dean for so many years. She negotiated all the ups and downs with grace and her unfailing kindness. We were colleagues for many years, and we were sometimes dinner companions, but my most cherished memories of Nancy are of the last years I knew her.

For the past six years after we had both retired, Nancy and I met regularly for lunch. We took turns eating in her neighborhood on the "lower" Upper West Side, and mine on the "upper" Upper West Side. Part of the fun was the food and neighborhood adventure, but what was best was having a real friendship with no work expectations: no undercurrent of work tensions, merit increases or anything else other than the pleasure of seeing each other. We talked about family, politics, current events, past and present experiences, joys and frustrations. Our visits had the special quality of two aging people looking back at our personal and work lives, contemplating the changes age has wrought, and considering the pleasures and pains of the present and future.

I knew she was ailing. She called to invite me to what would be her last birthday party, primarily a family event, which took place shortly before she died. That was the last time I saw Nancy.

Nancy was a self-contained person. At the end of the party, when I said goodbye, I told her I loved her. "And I love you," she replied. Those were our last words to each other. She was very dear to me, and I so miss her.

**Tom Rocco, former dean,
Niagara Frontier Center**

Nancy Bunch was one of the first people I met when I came to Empire State College and she was my colleague as dean throughout my 15-year tenure. I admired Nancy for her steady guidance of what was often thought to be a very difficult center to manage, for her determination to keep the college's focus on its mission to provide a real alternative in higher education, for her passion for mentoring and her fondness for her mentors, for her equanimity in the face of challenges, for her complete lack of pretension and her open and friendly demeanor, for being such a good person. She was an excellent dean.

There were times when we had to work even more closely than usual: for a while, when the president was on another assignment for SUNY, the college was effectively managed by "the executive council," and we deans spent more than a little time together in Saratoga Springs with the vice presidents. It was an interesting time and we got to know each other a bit better. Nancy proved to be a spokesperson for calm passions in the center of "forthright" discussion, deliberation and decision-making. No one doubted her objectivity and fairness, great virtues in the course of negotiation and rule making. Later, during a period of "re-engineering," some of us were dubbed "senior deans" and I spent more time in New York City than I had before, overseeing a couple of programs and projects. I would, of course, see Nancy while I was there, and I always appreciated her thoughtful input into my considerations of being a "dean at a distance."

I did not know much about Nancy's private life until I attended the memorial service for her in Manhattan earlier this year. While there, I felt keenly the sadness of her family and friends for their loss but also their pride in her accomplishments and even more their deep affection for their mother, grandmother, their friend. Nancy Bunch was a delightful, memorable woman, who also was an effective, successful academic dean. I remember her well and fondly.

**Lear Matthews, mentor,
Metropolitan Center**

Nancy Bunch: dean, humanitarian, a model of excellence and consummate mentor. She was in charge of the Metropolitan Center when I began my mentoring journey at Empire State College in 1998. The thing I remember most vividly during my initial interview was her calm yet imposing demeanor emanating from a less than imposing stature.

Not only was she committed to facilitating the formal education to students of diverse backgrounds, but she had a strong sense of civic responsibility. Her contributions and achievements were impactful in many ways, particularly as a result of her humanistic style of management.

I owe my career at Empire State College to Nancy.

**Beverly Smirni, mentor emerita,
Metropolitan Center**

(A version of these words was presented by Beverly Smirni at the memorial for Nancy Bunch on 26 April 2014.)

I first met Nancy Bunch 37 years ago. She was already an associate dean at the Metropolitan Center and I had just been hired as a mentor at another center of the college. We found that we shared a common background: We were passionate about civil rights, righting the wrongs of social inequality, and we both had been involved in directing anti-poverty programs, she in Albany and I in Manhattan. We bonded over our membership on the college's Affirmative Action Committee and we were part of the area of study group in Community and Human Services.

Later, when Nancy was dean of the Metropolitan Center, and I was a mentor there, we shared many an after work drink of wine and dinner and a hasty cab ride to Grand Central so that she could catch her train to her home in Montrose. However, I really feel that it was only when Nancy retired that I got to know her.

Nancy did not delight in bringing others down; rather, she lifted you up by really listening to you – not by half-listening, but by *really* listening. She made you feel that she understood you and had faith in you. When I call her my friend, I know that she

had many close friends, both women and men, but that was Nancy: she made you feel that you were special.

I will now touch on three brief stories to show you several sides of Nancy that I came to know:

Nancy shared many stories with me and her other friends about growing up in Montrose, and one sticks out for what it says about her. When she was 5 years old and ready for kindergarten, her mother put her on the school bus that was supposed to take her to the kindergarten entrance of the school. On the bus, Nancy tried to tell the school bus driver where she needed to be let off. She was ignored and was dropped off at the entrance to the first grade class. For whatever reason, the teacher welcomed her into the class and Nancy began first grade instead of kindergarten. As the only African-American child in that first grade class or any class for that matter, she was subjected to racial taunts and threats of harm. So the teacher advised her to stay in the classroom and have her lunch there instead of eating lunch and then going outside to play until the afternoon bell rang. I would have cringed and maybe even confronted the children. Nancy decided that she was going to get through first grade – this was the important goal – and, at the same time, avoid harm, which she did. When I later thought about this story, it gave me an inkling that Nancy, even at the tender age of 5, was quietly resolute about reaching her destination. She was determined. She knew exactly what she wanted and figured out ways of getting there; she transcended and worked around barriers. I believe that this determination stayed with her throughout her life.

The second story about Nancy that I found exceedingly difficult to capture was her analytical and organic grasp of social situations. In our many dinners and talks, we would become engrossed in dissecting race and gender issues that emerged from televised trials. In discussing the Trayvon Martin trial last year, I remember us discussing for hours Martin's friend (the young woman who was the last person to speak with him on the phone before he was killed). During the trial, both the prosecuting and the defense attorneys treated her attempts to answer their questions with contempt. I found myself sputtering with anger about the demeaning way in which she was

treated and the lack of support she received. Nancy was as equally outraged. However, her assessment of the young woman's behavior and testimony showed me that she had assembled a much more multilayered view of this person and of the case. Just listening to Nancy present her analysis of two separate worlds that the attorneys and the young woman inhabited opened up so many windows of understanding for me. Nancy sized up the courtroom situation, delved deeply into the whys and wherefores of the situation, and made a reasoned yet passionate presentation of the case. Listening to her speak enlarged my views of the case. Her calm manner in discussing this important case gave me some breathing space for my anger.

The third story goes back to Nancy as a child traveling to South Carolina every summer with her parents to visit her grandfather and her other relatives. In relating to me her memories of walks that she took with her grandfather, I could tell that it was important to her that they were walking on *his* acres of land. I got a strong sense of Nancy's connection to and pride in her ancestors and to the land that they owned. Her stories about her family's history, her great-aunts and especially her beloved grandfather, showed me that Nancy had an enduring pride about her parents' struggles, her grandparents' struggles and the struggles of their parents.

So I close with the image of Nancy holding onto her grandfather's hand walking the land together and of her legacy to all of us – her countless gifts of kindness and understanding, her quiet and fierce pride in her family and her ancestral history, and her wicked sense of humor.

Anne R. Bertholf, former associate dean and dean, Niagara Frontier Center

In the early days of my tenure as associate dean of the Niagara Frontier Center, I found the President's Council an intimidating forum. Having begun my relationship with the college as a part-time mentor, I understood center operations and felt comfortable with my responsibilities there, but President's Council was a different matter.

At President's Council meetings, we engaged in lengthy discussion of each item of business, and it was not unusual for us to discuss matters and then table them for future conversation

and action. More comfortable with the immediate "let's fix this" attitude of the center, I stumbled a bit as I tried to find my voice within the council. Early on, I viewed Nancy Bunch as a role model. Nancy was comfortable being silent if she had nothing significant to contribute, and she was a confident voice when she spoke, providing a "real center, real student" framework. As a beginner, I found her comments helpful and admired her immediately.

Somewhere in the middle '80s, the college began sponsoring women's studies residencies, and the Metropolitan Center hosted one of the earliest of those events. Buffalo faculty members were interested in a Western New York residency, so I went to the weekend in New York City to learn from observation. The residency was a huge success: Women from all locations of the college engaged in intense conversations and exciting presentations on a wide range of topics, learning from each other and from knowledgeable faculty. When the final session was over, we walked the students to the street where there were busses to take them to the airport, waved them goodbye, then hurried back into the center to begin tidying up. I had some time before my flight back to Buffalo, so I joined the clean-up efforts, tossing dirty coffee cups, tidying the meeting rooms and disposing of trash. When it was time to leave, I sought Nancy to say goodbye and to thank her for Metro's hospitality. I finally found her in the janitor's closet, dumping a bucket of dirty mop water and refilling it to continue her cleaning chores! I said, "Oh, *you* must be the dean." Her response – immediate and with robust laughter – was wonderful. "You must be the dean" became a stock "hello" for Nancy and me.

Another vivid memory returns frequently. As chair of the Affirmative Action Committee, Nancy asked me if I would join the committee in the upcoming academic year. Committee members, she said, had requested that she recruit me. Flattered and surprised, I was nonetheless hesitant: a Louisiana native, I was keenly aware that my southern accent was still with me, that my "twang" remained a clear indicator of my roots. I told her that I feared my "southern-ness" would be off-putting, and she replied immediately: "The committee wants you *because* you're a Southerner!" We might have spent lots of time dancing around

that issue, but that was not Nancy's style. Of course, I said "yes," and I enjoyed and benefitted immensely from that experience.

No doubt Nancy's center colleagues have hundreds of stories that demonstrate her devotion to the college and its students, and her ability to cut through reams of rhetoric to get to the relevant kernels. Like many who worked with her, I admired her deeply and considered myself lucky to have known her.

Judy Gerardi, mentor emerita, Metropolitan Center; mentor, Center for International Programs

Dean Nancy Bunch perfected a leadership style that valued the strengths of each individual. In practice, her faculty mentors were free to develop a range of interests and to determine the best way to work with each student. She embodied Carl Rogers' "unconditional positive regard" in her attitude toward faculty, students, family and friends. Consistently warm and sensitive, she also was a problem-solver, working with faculty, staff or students in committees or as individuals, depending upon whatever the situation warranted. Nancy was both in charge and egalitarian in all that she did.

We all benefitted from Nancy's good spirit, focus and flexibility. She generated trust, and it was a pleasure to work with and for her at the Metropolitan Center. Among Nancy's loveliest personal characteristics were grace and approachability. Her physical presence and smile set a welcoming tone to all interactions.

Dealing with a virulent illness, Nancy continued to show grace and seemed to ignore the seriousness or discomforts associated with her condition. I marveled at this. We can be thankful for having known her and been cared for by her.

Silvia Chelala, mentor, Center for International Programs

My first memory of Nancy Bunch is her talking to me during my first trip to Saratoga. In her kind and warm voice, she told me that she had heard I was doing very well in my new job as associate dean at the Long Island Center. I was pleased and grateful. Later, when we shared rooms at various college gatherings, we were always together, as we were smokers. She was always positive and helped me learn

about the college. When I was asked to chair a group devising the first official statement on cultural diversity for ESC, Nancy was there to guide me, and others, on the scope of that first attempt. We had a long road ahead of us. Thanks to her and other members of the committee, we were able to craft a statement that voiced our best thinking about race and ethnicity at the time.

Nancy was a kind and helpful colleague. She will always be a role model of a committed educator – articulate and kind.

Core Values of Empire State College (2005)

The core values of SUNY Empire State College reflect the commitments of a dynamic, participatory and experimenting institution accessible and dedicated to the needs of a richly diverse adult student body. These values are woven into the decisions we make about what we choose to do, how we carry out our work in all parts of the institution, and how we judge the outcome of our individual and collective efforts. More than a claim about what we have already attained, the core values support our continuing inquiry about what learning means and how it occurs.

We value learning-mentoring goals that:

- respond to the academic, professional and personal needs of each student;

- identify and build upon students' existing knowledge and skills;

- sustain lifelong curiosity and critical inquiry;

- provide students with skills, insights and competencies that support successful college study.

We value learning-mentoring processes that:

- emphasize dialogue and collaborative approaches to study;

- support critical exploration of knowledge and experience;

- provide opportunities for active, reflective and creative academic engagement.

We value learning-mentoring modes that:

- respond to a wide array of student styles, levels, interests and circumstances;

- foster self-direction, independence and reflective inquiry;

- provide opportunities for ongoing questioning and revising;

- reflect innovation and research.

We value a learning-mentoring community that:

- defines each member as a learner, encouraging and appreciating his/her distinctive contributions;

- recognizes that learning occurs in multiple communities, environments and relationships as well as in formal academic settings;

- attracts, respects and is enriched by a wide range of people, ideas, perspectives and experiences.

We value a learning-mentoring organization and culture that:

- invites collaboration in the multiple contexts of our work;

- fosters innovation and experimentation;

- develops structures and policies that encourage active participation of all constituents in decision-making processes;

- advocates for the interests of adult learners in a variety of academic and civic forums.

Submissions to *All About Mentoring*

I f you have a scholarly paper-in-progress or a talk that you have presented, *All About Mentoring* would welcome it. If you developed materials for your students that may be of good use to others, or have a comment on any part of this issue, or on topics/concerns relevant to our mentoring community, please send them along.

If you have a short story, poem, drawings or photographs, or have reports on your reassignments and sabbaticals, *All About Mentoring* would like to include them in an upcoming issue.

Email submissions to Alan.Mandell@esc.edu.

Submissions to *All About Mentoring* can be of varied length and take many forms. (Typically, materials are no longer than 7,500 words.) It is easiest if materials are sent via email to Mandell as Microsoft Word attachments. In terms of references and style, *All About Mentoring* uses APA rules (please see the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association,* 6th ed. [Washington, DC: APA, 2010] or http://image.mail.bfwpub.com/lib/feed1c737d6c03/m/1/BSM_APA_update_2010.pdf).

All About Mentoring is published twice a year. Our next issue, #47, will be available in the summer of 2015. Please submit all materials by April 15, 2015.

The quotes in this issue of All About Mentoring *are taken from the work of the influential and generous adult educator, Jack Mezirow (1923–2014), whose many years of explorations of "transformative learning" offered all of a rich lens from which to view our own work and the lives and the learning of our students.*

ALL ABOUT MENTORING

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