ALL ABOUT

MENTORING

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"*Reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; it involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful. … To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systematic and protracted inquiry – these are the essentials of thinking.*"

– John Dewey (1859–1952)
How We Think
Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath & Co., 1910, p. 13

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Photo credit: Janay Jackson

EDITORIAL

A History, and Then What?

*"Most works finally have one quality.
The thing as a whole, its quality as a whole,
is what is interesting."*

– Donald Judd, "Specific Objects" (1964)

I was so happy that, thanks to our bookstore manager, Dan Rabideau, we were able to give each of our colleagues who attended the fall New Mentor Orientation residency, a copy of Richard Bonnabeau's indispensable history of SUNY Empire State College's first 25 years, *The Promise Continues* (1996). All of us on the planning committee (with Shantih Clemans, the new director of the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation taking the lead, and Desalyn De-Souza, who contributed so much to this work over the last few years, making such a big difference in the transition) wanted new members of our community to have some kind of historical perspective – to really feel the foundations of the institution and its spirit and core values. What better way to do this than to have Richard's volume at hand and to get acquainted with some of the college's animating ideas and the personalities who launched this place? Though I seem to run into him each time I'm walking up and down the staircase at 1 Union Avenue, Richard Bonnabeau, college historian, has, indeed, retired. How incredibly lucky we've been to have him as our institutional chronicler. What an archive and legacy of care for Empire State College he has left to all of us.

But the bigger picture lingers: What about all of this history? What do we do with it? Yes, there are practical issues about attending to and accessing the college's trove of archival treasures. (With Richard's departure, we have to figure that out and conversations have begun!) But there's also the question that probably every institution has to face – especially every institution that is proud of its distinctiveness and its resistance to the status quo, and that wants people to learn from decades and decades of its experimenting: How can the heart of a history ("its quality as a whole") and what we can learn from it ("what is interesting") remain alive, even amidst such a flurry of change that we, right now, feel each day? Who needs to remember what? Does such historical memory have any value, any weight? What if these names (and, of course, there are hundreds of others) – Arthur Chickering and Tom Clark and Jim Hall and Jane Altes and Bob Milton and Tim Lehmann and Joe Moore and Joyce Elliott – just don't even ring a bell?
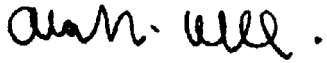
Without any doubt, an obsession with the past can pull us into big trouble. We can get stuck; we can imagine some institutional golden age (when exactly did it begin and when did it end?), some flush times, some designated period in which what one or a group of us cherishes held sway (or so we believe). That is, without even noticing, our chosen historical lens can be off: we can cover over the fights, the confusions, the uneven practices, the blind spots, the poor decisions and the critiques of day-to-day institutional life that

hovered around almost from the very start. By imagining there was a much purer time, we can lose touch with the call and the need for change.

But of course, too, if we have a wobbly foundation – only the vaguest memory of origins, few agreed upon core values to gauge the quality of our work, and only the tiniest awareness of the educational attempts that were made by so many and the research that was done to track it – we're also sunk. We can too quickly assume that savvy navigation of the demands of the day can keep us on track, that major revampings of institutional structures will do the trick, and that what is considered to be an abiding pragmatism can provide us with a deeply felt common mission. By imagining that attention to and pride in the past is a dangerous deflection from what has to be done this very minute, we can lose a grip on what got us started in the first place.

So here's my sense: It's not about a romance with some past, and it's not about smashing it all up and rebooting. Rather, it's in our best interest to grapple critically with the history of Empire State College. That history is stunningly rich, varied, complex, full of questions and, for sure, no linear affair. The college was created as an experimenting institution responding to a specific set of socioeconomic and cultural circumstances. The dream of access, individualization, a new faculty role and an unrelenting attention to "learning" wherever it is taking place, seemed impossibly out of step and wildly out of reach. But, in some pretty amazing ways, it's

happened and it's happening, and we shouldn't let it disappear. It is not 1971, the world is a hugely changed place, but maybe that "one quality" – part of our history – can guide and help define us.

Alan Mandell

Since 2013, Louis Soares has been the vice president for strategy, research and advancement at the American Council on Education (ACE). Soares also served on the national board of the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) from 2011 to 2014. In January 2013, he wrote an essay, "Post-traditional Learners and the Transformation of Postsecondary Education: A Manifesto for College Leaders." In this issue of All About Mentoring, *we have included a number of quotes from this "manifesto," recognizing that in writing to* all *"college leaders," Soares has captured some ideas and a spirit that should remind us of both the present context, the current discussion, and the core of the work we do (or need to do) at SUNY Empire State College and throughout the world of adult and all of higher education. Thanks to Dr. Janet Kaplan Bucciarelli for recommending this text.*

I Thought of Them Every Day

Shantih E. Clemans, Brooklyn

"Try closing your eyes."

"Excuse me?" I ask Harrold Grantham, the solicitous ranch owner guiding me and my family on a 90-minute horseback riding exertion through Cerrillos, New Mexico, a historic mining town about 25 miles south of Santa Fe.

"Feel the experience. Listen to the sounds of nature, the wind," he continues.

"Are you serious?" My voice is thin and shaking. It is my first time on a horse and I am terrified. There are eight in our group, walking single file. Already adept riders at ages 9 and 7, my daughters claim second and third positions in the line after our leader. I am last.

"Don't hold onto the saddle," he adds. "Trust the power of your legs to keep you balanced."

Cautiously, I close my eyes. I feel the sun on my back. I feel a quick gust of wind. I breathe in horse smells: salty sweat, musty grassiness of horsehair. I taste the dust that settles on my lips. I listen to birds cawing up above and to the huff-huff sound of my mare's hard breathing as she lumbers along the rocky trail. I open my eyes. My heart beats fast. I am grateful for my horse's slow gait and gentleness, as the excursion maneuvers us up sharp cliffs, along narrow paths strewn with rocks (sure to trip a horse!) and, finally, steeply downward. I say a little Hail Mary to myself.

During my recent sabbatical (spring 2017), my family and I spent a week exploring the greater Santa Fe area of New Mexico. We hiked, met new people, visited the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum, soaked in a Japanese hot tub, tasted traditional Southwestern food, and, most memorable, went horseback riding. For seven days, the sun was bold, and the sky, punctuated by dramatic mountain landscapes, was the bluest color my eyes have ever seen. Though the beauty of New Mexico briefly stilled my mind and rekindled in me a lust for a quietness only nature can offer, this essay is not intended as a travelogue about discovering new places, although there

has been discovery. Instead, I write here about internal discoveries: my relationship to time; my sharpened awareness of everyday, ordinary moments; and through it all, a renewed purpose and gratitude for my life's work.

Although my sabbatical took me away from teaching and mentoring, I have no desire to disconnect completely from the beating heart of my work: my students. I thought about them every day. I wondered how they were doing, if they finished their last terms successfully, or if they didn't, what happened? I thought about their families: the aging mother who has trouble on the brownstone stairs; the beloved uncle "back home," seriously ill with cancer. I imagined their children: Were they, like my own, feeling restless in the last weeks of fourth grade, sixth grade, high school, dreaming of the freedom of summer vacation? I thought about their church ministries and Sunday potlucks, and their Tuesday evening Bible study in the church basement. I wondered how their first semesters in graduate school were, and if they still were planning a move down South.

My internal checklist then muted, I expected to be relieved, to feel unburdened by everyday teaching obligations. I envisioned some sort of freedom, a furlough of sorts. Remarkably, when I anticipated wanting to be free from my students, their lives somehow interspersed with my own, like the way my daughter's deft fingers marry a yellow strand of yarn with a blue, then a purple, so when the braid is complete, the eye cannot easily see how the stands were once separate. As I now see, it is my sustained connection to my students, to their lives and learning, that truly freed me.

Without question, my life has been deepened, strengthened and challenged through my work with my students, and this enriched state continued during my sabbatical. One of the many rewards of working closely with adults is the reciprocity of the relationship. Students learn and students teach. Over time, I have consciously relaxed and worried less about

Shantih E. Clemans

boundaries and more about my connections and commitment to my students as whole people. Connecting to myself as a whole person was a first step.

When my much-anticipated sabbatical arrived, the first thing I did was to buy a pack of six small notebooks with Marimekko designs on the covers: one for each month of my leave. I filled them with daily to-do lists, a handwritten promise to write every day. I have found comfort and purpose in these little pages. With a tone of confusion mixed with awe, outsiders asked how I planned to spend my "free" time. Protective in some way of the serious gift I had been given, I deflected: "First, I am going to reorganize my sock drawer and take it from there." Socks aside, I was determined to use my brain differently. I wanted to be wide awake to allow myself to think deeply about different things, and, more to the point, to have time to think longer about ideas close my heart. I yearned to stay present – especially in the lives of my children – and intellectually engaged.

Elizabeth Minnich (2014), professor and philosopher of education, wrote of the essential value of thinking:

What I mean [by the word thinking] is our reflexive ability to reflect *around* and *about* things, including ourselves, to step off the tracks and wander, considering things, including ourselves, from all sorts of angles. I consider such thinking to be a wellspring of human freedom as well as of conscience. … (p. 51)

I have been contemplating what words most closely describe how I had felt during those months. Clearly, there is a purpose I feel in my work and in my life. In my field of social work, especially in group work, purpose is understood as the "why" of something, the reason, the means to an end. Students often confuse purpose with the more tangible concept of "content," which is the "what" I am more interested in the why.

Then there is something like mindfulness, although, admittedly, I have not found an easy connection to this word, which feels overused and misused. Heffernan (2015), who referred to mindfulness as a "synonym for 'attention'" or "'memory of the present'" (paras. 2-3), argued that the confusion with the term in some way dilutes its meaning. Still, the social work literature is ripe with examples of mindfulness in practice (see, for example, Lynn and Mensinga's [2015] essay on social workers' personal narratives of mindfulness; and Fox-Hodess' [2015] article on mindfulness in social justice work, among other examples). Then maybe it is happiness I am feeling, although the words "happy" and "happiness" tend to get caught on my tongue, revealing my unease. As a subject, happiness has received recent scholarly attention, for example in Jill Filipovic's (2017) book, *The H-Spot: The Feminist Pursuit of Happiness,* a social analysis of the experience of happiness for women, she specifically asks why women in particular have not been allowed to be happy. Filipovic left a legal career to write full time, affording her some type of happiness in finding work "that doesn't feel like work" (p. 44). More reading and thinking brings me to gratitude. David Steindl-Rast (2013), a Benedictine monk, spoke of the connection between happiness and gratitude.

… [Y]ou need stop signs in your life. And when you stop, then the next thing is to look. You look. You open your eyes. You open your ears. You open your nose. You open all your senses for this wonderful richness that is given to us. There is no end to it, and that is what life is all about, to enjoy, to enjoy what is given to us. (9:40-10:06)

My time away from the daily work of teaching and mentoring gave me many moments of conscious enjoyment. However, my enjoyment must extend beyond myself into larger contexts. To this end, I worry that I won't adequately contribute my thinking to current conversations in higher education.

Not surprisingly as a social worker, I have always been drawn in by ordinary people's complicated, often beautiful lives. I have long wanted to try and understand how people think about the wholeness of their lives, in all its complexity; for example, how they navigate the different parts of their lives – family, work, and their emotional and intellectual lives – as if these spheres are easily or neatly separated. Following years of counseling survivors of sexual assault, I wanted to understand the inner lives of people like me, other women rape crisis workers. I set out to listen carefully and learn about personal and work balance, and something deeper: how workers thought about themselves in relation to their work. Through in-depth interviews (in 1992, for my dissertation research), I wanted to understand their lives: What did they think about? How did they feel in their everyday work lives? What was most meaningful about their work with clients? How did they disconnect at the end of the day? Over time, as a concrete response to the overwhelming challenge of trauma work, I developed an interest in "self-care," which, as flimsy as it may sound, promotes moments of the mind for social workers to consciously take care of themselves (separate from work with clients), including time to just "be."

I went on to study mentors at SUNY Empire State College as part of my reassignment to the Center for Mentoring and Learning. I wanted to understand the particular ways they approached their work with students, their cherished strategies and areas of struggle. I wanted to learn what gave their work meaning and importance. What felt crucial? I learned, through listening, that mentors are learners, too, and that, regardless of their area in the college, or their specific discipline or specialty, faculty care about their students, not only in their sometimes complicated role as student, but also as whole people with lives that include learning and parenting and work and hopes and fears and much more. I also learned that mentors create strong connections to students and that they work in careful, strategic ways to nurture these connections.

Put aside the tumultuous, anti-intellectual climate of the Trump administration and the uncertainty and vulnerability of this moment in history for many, including students and faculty, higher education is rapidly and dramatically changing. Colleges are competing more for fewer students. The actual college experience is becoming less personal. More students require college degrees to compete in a rapidly-changing workforce (see, for example, Miller, 2017; Minnich, 2014). Nontraditional students, by some estimates, are the "new majority" (National Adult Learner Coalition, 2017). Traditional-age students who are fresh from high school constitute only approximately 26 percent of undergraduate students and an estimated 43 percent of college students are 25 or older (Scobey, 2016). Adult students are forced to balance their educational pursuits

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with the complex wholeness of their lives. More invisible perhaps, adult students have to navigate overlapping challenges of being an adult student, a process " … fraught with emotional complexity," mostly expressed by students feeling "less-than" in one way or another (Scobey, 2016, p. 111).

I remember as a high school student in the 1980s in suburban New Jersey, I had classmates who finished high school and, without much difficulty, found stable jobs, maybe working in the nursing home in town as an aide or at the local landscaping business as a member of the grounds crew. Times have changed and a college degree is more important now than ever. Even a bachelor's degree will not provide entry into the most desirable positions (see, for example, Leonhardt's 2014 article, "Is College Worth It?"). Online degree programs are rapidly developing, offering students access to learning opportunities that are flexible to a working person's schedule. However, there is still robust debate about the strengths of online learning (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Mark Tomforde, a math professor at the University of Houston, observed that the current informality of higher education recasts the pursuit of a college degree as a "business transaction" (as cited in Worthen, 2017, para. 25). Worthen (2017) wrote, "The erosion of etiquette encourages students to view faculty members as a bunch of overeducated customer service agents" (para. 25). Quite honestly, I worry about a cheapening of the faculty role, where careful attention to the wholeness of members of the college community – students, faculty and administrators together as thoughtful citizens – is in jeopardy. To my mind, this erosion of attention and thoughtfulness is dangerous beyond words. Thoughtfulness and compassion are needed as more students are pursuing human services-related careers. In her recent essay, "How to prepare for an automated future" Uta Russmann, a professor of communications at the FHWien University of Applied Sciences in Vienna, stressed that "[at universities,] people learn how to approach new things, ask questions and find answers, deal with new situations" (as cited in Miller, 2017, How Do We Educate section, para. 3). Although "automation" is a trend for colleges and universities to anticipate and prepare for, it is urgent that college students

develop: "creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, adaptability and collaboration" (Miller, 2017, How Do We Educate section, para. 3). Moreover, Miller (2017) concluded, it is the process of learning how to learn that may be most pressing for our current students and future students.

Last year, a colleague asked me to weigh in on what's more important, "soft skills or hard skills." I was stuck, literally. I had no answer. After a long pause, I said that I don't make those distinctions and, even though this delineation of skills in the workforce may potentially fall into these categories, I see that when there are "soft" or "hard" skills in the conversation, there is a devaluing, a tendency to take less seriously the practice of soft skills, such as listening, feeling, creating and, more inclusively, emotional intelligence. These personality qualities and skills are needed more than ever. Among the fastest growing occupations are in service fields, human services, health care, for example, where caring, connections, empathy and paying attention are one's bread and butter (Appelbaum, 2017).

In the Community and Human Services studies I teach, for example, Counseling Skills and Group Work Practice, I always ask my students to carefully think about what they need to put in place early on in work with clients to help create and foster a genuine connection based on trust and respect. It is both a big question and a little question, meaning we take up this question in our thinking about our class and I encourage them

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to keep this question close in mind always in work in larger communities, in whatever shape, composition or form that may take. To help students think about this, I use a framework of time. What happens in the beginning, when the work is just starting? How does a client feel? What is she hoping for? How can you help her get there? To follow, what needs to happen to help a client put into words the changes he wants for his life? The clock is constantly ticking; the calendar always in motion. Time intensifies the relationship. Toward the end of the term, we discuss endings. I ask: "What is the difference between a planned ending and an unplanned ending?" and "How does a counselor thoughtfully and skillfully end a helping relationship?" I write these words on the board: *Saying goodbye: Goodbye forever. Staying in touch?*

Inevitably, students ask: Can we keep in touch with clients? Can we be friends? Ending a relationship with adult students does not, arguably, present the same ethical conflicts as ending a relationship with clients. But students are not friends. Or can they be? In human services, there is often a continuity of professional practice – as students (some of them, at least) enter graduate programs and land professional positions in social work or education. Thus, we become colleagues of sorts.

On the cusp of 10, she stands tall and elegant on the back row risers. It is the annual Spring Sing, a joyous, chaotic and altogether jubilant end-of-the-year event at my daughter's school. I watch carefully, I listen closely. Fully awake, thinking clearly, open heart, I take in the experience. With singing and musical accompaniment, the fourth-grade class performs "Merrily We Roll Along." She's on the triangle.

Merrily we roll along
Roll along
Merrily we roll along
O'er the deep blue sea

For the whole day, I was swept away in the wave of optimism, the determination and pluck of this song. How many of you get to spend a full morning at your child's school, not just doing cursory activities, distributing snacks, for example, but really participating in everyday learning activities? Embarrassingly, I've had my share of making light of the lives and even the minds of stay-at-home parents, sitting back

and benefitting from their careful planning of Family Sing, their purchasing of classroom supplies, and reliably chaperoning field trips. I have wondered to myself, what do they "do" with all of their time? Now, I know better. My vision is clearer.

The classroom door opened at 8:40 a.m. The day's plan, written simply on the whiteboard, asked the fourth grade students to write a story about their weekends, using five or six words from the "wall of words," their vocabulary words since September gleaming in the morning sun on the magnetic board like Chiclet squares: *represent, state, symbol, manufacture, resident, quote, industrial, foreshadowing.*

"Education is a seamless web." With these words, Ernest Boyer (1996, p. 17) reminds us of the value of connection; that to teach, to learn, to participate in the process of education, is the same incredible, brave undertaking regardless of age or grade, passion or life circumstance. bell hooks wrote in *Teaching to Transgress,* "School was the place of ecstasy – pleasure and danger" (hooks, 1994, p. 3). I have often felt that excellent engaged teaching, is excellent engaged teaching – whether unfolding in an elementary school or a college classroom; whether the students are kindergarteners, teenagers, or adults well into middle age.

As I left my daughter's class and headed out into the bright city morning, I let my thoughts wander, to my students, the painful state of the world, to my work and the excitement of my new position as the director of the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation (CMLAI) and my belief in the power of connection, community, and to thinking.

"Where are y'all from?" Harrold Grantham asks me as we are in the last loop of the ride.

"Brooklyn," I say, still breathless from the ride.

"I lived in Brooklyn once. Montague Street. In 1979," he says, surprising me.

"Really? We don't live too far from there." I am still breathing hard.

"You know, Brooklyn is the only city in the U.S. that has a working horse stable," he adds.

"Yes," I say searching my memory. "I think I knew that. Maybe I'll check it out sometime."

When unscheduled and unrestrained, time moves differently – not exactly slower but often more deliberate and observed. My vision is clearer. My thinking is in full swing. I try to experience this time, the everyday moments, as a citizen, a parent, a teacher and, always, a learner.

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Directing *Steel Magnolias:* Motherhood as "A Little Piece of Immortality"

Cindy Bates, Schenectady

"I look at having this baby as the opportunity of a lifetime. Sure, there may be some risk involved. That's true for anybody. But you get through it and life goes on. And when it's all said and done there'll be a little piece of immortality with Jackson's looks and my sense of style – I hope. Mama, please. I need your support. I would rather have thirty minutes of wonderful than a lifetime of nothing special."

– Shelby, Steel Magnolias *(1987)*

The dramatic world of Robert Harling's 1987 play, *Steel Magnolias,* entered my life about a year ago when I was asked to direct the show for Curtain Call Theatre, my artistic home for the past 10 years. As I started to work on the script, I had vague memories of the original 1989 film version of *Steel Magnolias,* but I had no experience with the stage play. The original film version, directed by Herbert Ross, is often credited with being the "star vehicle" that propelled Julia Roberts from well-known actress to "A-list" stardom. Sally Field, Dolly Parton, Shirley MacLaine, Daryl Hannah, Olympia Dukakis, Tom Skerritt, Sam Shepard, and Dylan McDermott rounded out the original cast. The film was a great success in its day and continues to be popular today. There was also a 2012 television movie adaptation directed by Kenny Leon, starring an all-African-American cast led by Queen Latifah.

Directing the stage version of such a well-known story always presents certain challenges, especially when most audiences are more familiar with the film rather than the play. Audiences often want to see on-stage echoes of the famous actresses they remember from the film. Directors, on the other hand, usually want to separate their work from such expectations and instead, find and share their own authentic connection to the script. From this connection comes a discovery and rediscovery of the script and story with the

actors, designers and production team – an enriching journey that makes all the hard work of mounting a production worthwhile. I have to admit, however, that I found great difficulty connecting to this script until we began rehearsals. Initially, I couldn't identify with these Southern women nor with their beauty parlor community. But as the cast and I began to delve into the words, emotions and action of this script, I found that my heart resonated with one central component of this story: the character Shelby's overwhelming need to become a mother.

When the play opens, it is the wedding day of 23-year-old Shelby and her fiance, Jackson. While we never see the wedding itself, we meet Shelby, her mother (M'Lynn), and a community of women who support Shelby and influence her life. On this day, the women of the town, including Shelby and M'Lynn, are all getting coiffed for Shelby's wedding at the beauty salon. The opening scene introduces us to Shelby's caring personality and strong backbone. We learn that she is determined to be her own person and to make decisions that are right for her, despite her mother's loving attempts to sway her daughter's opinions.

For example, in the play, Shelby wants to wear her hair "up" for the wedding; her mother wants it "down." Shelby wants lots of baby's breath flowers in her hair so that it frames her face; her mother wants her to have a simpler look. We also learn in this first scene that Shelby is a pediatric nurse who works with newborn babies. She tells the story of a little baby who died shortly after birth, and shares with the women her compassion and love for that child in his few short hours on earth. The subtext here is clear: Shelby loves the gift of life, from the imagery of the baby's breath in her hair to the dying baby she held in her arms; at her core is a need to create a child. As much as Shelby loses herself in romantic ideals, M'Lynn is proudly practical: She fears that Shelby's nursing job is too much for

Photo credit: Cindy Bates

Images from Curtain Call Theatre's production of Steel Magnolias

Shelby's body, which has suffered greatly from complications due to diabetes. She insists that Shelby stop working after she is married, but Shelby has no such intentions. She loves her job – and the babies she serves. Throughout the first scene, we witness the love between Shelby and M'Lynn, whether through the light disagreements over Shelby's hairstyle, or serious concerns about Shelby's health. This scene also sets up the major conflict in the play: Shelby's deepest desire in this world is to become a mother, but her struggles with diabetes have weakened her kidneys so much that having a child herself would be very dangerous.

Given this dramatic conflict, you might just guess what comes next, even if you don't know the play: Shelby becomes pregnant. Her mother is beside herself, unable to congratulate her daughter, instead exclaiming, "I'm in a state of shock!" She then lashes out at Jackson, who she never really liked in the first place, as she pleads with her daughter: "But does he ever listen? I mean, when doctors and specialists give you advice, I know you never listen, but does he? I guess since he doesn't have to carry the baby, it doesn't really concern him." Shelby delivers her son, Jackson Jr., four months early. He lives, but she struggles with failing kidneys. After months of dialysis and, finally, a kidney transplant (the kidney is notably donated by her mother), Shelby loses her battle and dies. In the epigraph to this essay, Shelby expresses her willingness to embrace the risk of pregnancy even if it means only "thirty minutes of wonderful." In the end, she indeed gets more than a half-hour with her baby boy, but not much more than that.

The story of *Steel Magnolias* is based on the tragic experience of the playwright's sister, Susan, who also yearned to have a child and died due to complications from diabetes after giving birth. While there are many differences between Susan's story and mine, I can connect to her deep desire to bring a child into this world and spend a lifetime raising that child into adulthood and beyond. But unlike Shelby, who became pregnant almost by accident, I waited years and years to become a "mom." Indeed, I am extremely proud of our two children, both of whom we adopted. In the play, Shelby considers adoption as well, but because of her health issues, she doesn't believe she would qualify. Throughout my work on this play, I struggled with how adoption is handled and, even more so, with conversations about this portrayal of adoption among my cast.

Adoption is first raised in the play as an option for Shelby and Jackson by Shelby's mother, M'Lynn. As mentioned earlier, M'Lynn knows how much her daughter wants a child, but M'Lynn meets that passion with an equal desire to keep Shelby from getting pregnant because of Shelby's struggle with diabetes. When the subject of children is raised in one of the beauty salon conversations, M'Lynn explains that Jackson is fully supportive of

adoption but that Shelby (who is participating in the conversation) is still struggling with it. M'Lynn explains, "She feels that Jackson might be throwing away his chance for children. He seems to be taking it all right because he's crazy about her, but Shelby's the one that's pushing the issue." Shelby joins in, sharing what Jackson said to her about adoption: "He said, 'Shut up. Don't be stupid. There's plenty of kids out there that need good homes. We'll adopt ten of 'em. We'll buy 'em if we have to.'"

My interpretation of this exchange is that it's intended to enhance our understanding that everyone around Shelby is supporting her if she chooses to pursue adoption. Jackson's good-natured thought about adopting "ten of 'em" and "buying 'em" if they have to is designed to show us his love for Shelby and his support of her desire to become a parent. For me, it also demonstrates his naiveté about the world of adoption. I struggled with the notion of adoption as "buying" a child in this exchange, but in the context of the characters and the story of the play, I finally came to accept that line. The subject returns a bit later with M'Lynn once again pushing Shelby to consider adoption:

> M'LYNN: What Jackson said about children … about adoption … was wonderful. And very wise. Not being able to have children is no disgrace. *(silence)* Shelby, did you hear what I said?
>
> SHELBY: Mama, I know all about adoption. And I also know the limitations of this body of mine. I would never do anything stupid.
>
> M'LYNN: Finally. You're listening to reason.

> *"As for me, I couldn't get my mouth to speak. I reverted back to what I knew: focus on the work. I shut down and went into my version of a director's 'autopilot.'"*

Driving the plot line (and mirroring the situation of the playwright's sister), Shelby disregards the "limitations" of her body and becomes pregnant. She tries to convince her mother that this pregnancy (and not adoption) is the answer to her dreams:

> SHELBY: Mama. I want a child.
>
> M'LYNN: But what about the adoption proceedings? You have filed so many applications.
>
> SHELBY: Mama, it didn't take us long to see the handwriting on the wall. No judge is going to give a baby to someone with my medical track record. Jackson even put out some feelers about buying one.
>
> M'LYNN: People do it all the time.
>
> SHELBY: Listen to me. I want a child of my own. I think it would help things a lot.

It was this dialogue that caused me grief throughout my work on this play and led to a conversation among my cast that left me speechless. First and foremost is the underlying idea that adoption is essentially equivalent to "buying" a child or, alternatively, that one could purchase a child outside the legal adoption system. I brought this concern up in a rehearsal and I asked the actress playing M'Lynn if she could change the subtext of her line, "People do it all the time" to refer to adopting a child rather than buying one. This led to a conversation in which one cast member said something to the effect of, "Adoption is so expensive that it essentially IS buying a child." I stopped in my tracks; so many emotions and responses flooded through me.

This actress knew that my children were adopted although she and I had only just met for this production. Rapid-fire questions went through my head: Had she experienced a difficult adoption situation? Did she really understand how hurtful it was to say this to me? Other cast members chimed in about other dialogue in this scene, but no one voiced any opposition to her assessment of adoption as "buying" a child. As for me, I couldn't get my mouth to speak. I reverted back to what I knew: focus on the work. I shut down and went into my version of a director's "autopilot."

This actress' glib assessment of the creation of a family like mine in terms of money infuriated me. Yes, adoption is very expensive in the U.S., and I know how very lucky we were to have family support us so we could afford to adopt our children. We paid agency fees, advertisement fees, publication fees, legal fees and more – all of which are allowed by American laws. I also know so many others who cannot afford these adoption costs and my heart breaks for them. One member of my family (who adopted her children in the 1960s) was appalled by the costs of adopting today. She used similar language as this actress had, saying that the agencies were requiring us to "buy a baby" now, whereas when she adopted through a religious organization in the 1960s, the only fees were legal ones.

Another problem I had with this dialogue in the script is Shelby's line, "I want a child of my own." I still cringe every time I read or hear these words. It reifies such an awful stereotype that an adopted child is somehow "not your own child." My children are being raised in open adoption situations. This means that they have some contact with their birth families. They are fully aware that they are adopted and, simultaneously, that they are 100 percent our children in every way, shape and form. The fact that they have birth families and a genetic history that is different from their parents does not in any way lessen the truth that we are a family. From birth, I have taught my children (who are still young) that they were born in my heart and from their birth mommy's tummies. While this may sound simplistic, it is the truth as my children understand it. Waiting to adopt is not like being pregnant. Waiting to adopt requires different kinds of love, nurturing and faith in what you *cannot* see or touch than does pregnancy. I found ways to transform the heartache of "waiting" into love for the children who landed in my arms. By the time I held each of my children for the first time, I had loved that individual, unique child for years.

As they say in show business, "the show must go on." And so, despite the struggles I had with this script, the production moved along its rehearsal path and the show was quite a success. I never returned to the conversation about adoption and money with the cast. I never questioned Shelby's line about wanting a "baby of her own" with the actress playing the role. In essence, I had to let it all go.

My journey to become a mom is my story. My children's adoption stories are theirs. And this playwright's story, based lovingly on his sister's life, belongs to him and his family. I felt that the best thing I could do was to keep my reality out of his fiction. As with every play I direct, I learned about myself as a director and as a person. But this experience was different: it unexpectedly taught me about the range of public perceptions regarding adoption – in the past and today – and propelled me into working back through my own experiences with adoption. The negative perceptions of adoption continue to astound me. The activist in me wants to combat those perceptions so my children and countless others grow up without damaging stereotypes, while another part of me just wants to enjoy my children and help them grow. Maybe the artist and scholar in me will find a path somewhere in between.

Found Things

An Excerpt From "Faculty Development at Empire State College: Faculty Development Committee Report to the College" (February 1992)

Over a period of more than a year, a collegewide faculty development committee met to discuss a series of recommendations that were made at a March 1990 faculty development retreat held at Roaring Brook Conference Center in Lake George, New York. Each of the college's "learning centers" was represented on the committee. At the 1991 All College Conference, the committee's draft report was discussed. Members of the committee were Peter Birckmayer, Richard Bonnabeau, Carolyn Broadaway, David DuBois, Keith Elkins, Clark Everling, Judith Gerardi, Robert Hassenger, Roger Keeran, Marjorie Lavin, Frances Mercer, Rhoda Miller and Rhoada Wald. Nancy Gadbow and Alan Mandell served as associate dean liaisons. The final report was submitted to Vice President Jane Altes in the fall of 1990.

The full February 1992 report includes Vice President Altes' response to the committee report and 10 summaries of center discussions. It also includes the "Report of Faculty Development Committee, October, 1991," the excerpt offered below. Crucial to the recommendations was "the creation of an entity that we have been calling a 'Mentoring Institute' that would coordinate and support a variety of individual and group activities related to faculty development, with special but not exclusive attention to the role of mentor" (p. 3 of the full report). It was this Mentoring Institute that became the foundation for the Center for Mentoring and Learning and, most recently, the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation.

Special thanks to Richard Bonnabeau, college historian, for his ongoing support of our work and for suggesting this report as one of our "Found Things."

Report of Faculty Development Committee

October, 1991

The Faculty Development Committee grew out of a recommendation from the workshop on faculty development held in March, 1990. Initially appointed and charged in October, 1990, the committee has a representative from each regional Center and special purpose program. The recommendations in this report were initially developed during a two-day retreat of the committee in March, 1991, and a draft report was circulated in advance of the 1991 All College Conference. The report was revised in light of discussions at All College and subsequently in Centers.

Premises

The committee agreed to the following premises as a basis for discussion:

1. Faculty development at Empire State College should accommodate the diverse interests of faculty, including both mentoring and scholarly interests, and the diverse needs of the institution.

2. Faculty development should take place at many levels: informally between pairs or small groups of colleagues, within Centers, within regions of the state, and in College-wide activities.

3. There is more support for faculty development activity than people generally realize; this support and the accomplishments of faculty should be more widely and consistently communicated.

4. Faculty development activities should reflect the life cycle of the mentor and support the needs and interests of new mentors, mid-career mentors, and senior mentors.

5. Faculty development should be part of the ongoing professional activities of mentors and not limited to formal occasions such as college-wide mentoring workshops. For example, new and emerging programs within the College, such as the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies, constitute an opportunity for faculty development.

Priorities

The committee identified the following priorities for faculty development at the College:

1. Creating more systematic and varied means for professional development of new mentors.

   Projections of faculty retirements over the next decade suggest that the College will soon see an influx of new mentors in need of a full orientation to their role. The committee recommends that a small task group of mentors and associate deans develop an integrated program of Center-based and College-wide activities in support of new mentor development. Examples of such activities include workshops, "buddy system" or team of experienced mentor-advisors from within and outside the new mentor's Center, new mentor visits to other Centers or units, new mentor network or support group (face-to-face or electronic).

2. Establishing activities and structures to foster a professional culture focused on the role of the mentor.

At the 1990 workshop on faculty development, there was considerable interest in the creation of an institute that would recapture the energy generated in the 1970's by the College's Center for Individualized Education. The committee recommends a two-step approach to developing such a structure: (1) a year-long coordinated set of activities organized around a mentoring theme and carried out in Center, regional and college-wide forums and (2) in the longer range, establishment of a mentoring institute that would serve as an umbrella organization covering a variety of development activities, focusing both on mentoring and scholarship.

3. Increasing the visibility of faculty development as an institutional priority.

The committee recommends that information about College support for faculty development and the outcomes of faculty development activities be more regularly and widely disseminated.

4. Making resources on mentoring more available within the College.

Observing that resources on mentoring are not readily available either to new mentors or to experienced mentors seeking current research in the area, the committee recommends that a database of mentoring resources be developed and made available. The committee noted that the National Center for [sic] Adult Learning[1] can make valuable contributions to this effort.

Actions

The committee outlined activities to achieve these priorities. These have been loosely grouped into phases, with considerably more specificity about steps in the first phase, in the expectation that more specific later steps will emerge as the initial activities are carried out. Some of these activities are being undertaken by the Committee and others are recommended as actions for the Office of Academic Affairs or other groups yet to be formed.

Phase I (1991-92)

Office of Academic Affairs to provide committee members with a summary of activities supported in recent years. (Done Spring 1991)

Each committee member to provide a report on faculty development activities at her or his Center. (In progress)

Add one or two associate deans as liaisons to the faculty development committee and invite associate dean participation in the year-long thematic program described below. (Nancy Gadbow and Alan Mandell accepted the invitation at all College to serve as liaisons between the committee and associate deans.)

Committee members to share information about Center and college-wide faculty development activities with Center colleagues as a basis for discussion of needs and interests. (May through October, 1991)

Office of Academic Affairs to develop means to make faculty development activities more visible in a more routine way (e.g., through column in Exchange, faculty development newsletter/bulletin, VAX bulletin board, section of Faculty Directory).

Provide examples of good practice in contract learning (e.g., through update of "Contract Learning Casebook" publication of Center of Individualized Education). (Note: APLPC asked the Faculty Development Committee to give special attention to ways of enhancing learning contracts and contract evaluations through faculty development programs and the committee accepted this charge.)

Make available through the Office of Academic Affairs a reassignment for the development of a database on mentoring resources.

Plan a year of integrated faculty development activities organized around a theme (e.g., "Mentoring and Innovation"). The steps outlined below

assume coordination through the Office of Academic Affairs and the Faculty Development Committee.

Beginning May, 1991, Center-level teams – associate dean, Faculty Development Committee representative and other interested faculty – meet regularly and frequently to discuss issues in mentoring. Issues arising in these discussions will become basis of regional discussions.

February-March 1992 – regional meetings will be held in three locations (New York City area, Albany, and Syracuse or Rochester) organized around themes emerging from Center discussions. Charge of regional meetings is to identify three themes for discussion at Centers and at 1992 All College Conference.

March-June 1992 – follow-up discussions/activities at Centers will be organized around themes from regional meetings (either themes common to all regional meetings or unique themes selected by each regional group).

1992 All College Conference – reserve a block of time (perhaps the first afternoon) for faculty development discussions/workshops based on the themes identified in regional meetings. Also set up display of resources for mentoring at All College.

Phase II (1992 and following)

Create small task group of mentors and associate deans to develop enhanced methods for the development of new mentors

Create small task group to explore funding possibilities for an institute on mentoring

Add a chapter on adult learning resources to the Mentoring Handbook[2]

Provide reassignment or load reduction for start-up of Mentoring Institute. Possible areas of focus: pilot activities to illustrate potential of institute; plan for "exporting" mentoring expertise

(and possibly raising funds for faculty development by presenting programs to external audiences).

Phase III

Establish Mentoring Institute as umbrella organization to coordinate a variety of individual and group activities related to faculty development, with special attention to the role of the mentor. In formulating this recommendation, the committee considered the conclusion of the "Focus Report on Mentoring," which called for College support of a professional culture centered on mentoring. Committee members saw the College's special expertise in mentoring as a strength that could serve a wider educational community and attract external funding. In its emphasis on mentoring, however, the committee did not intend to exclude support for scholarly activity and instead saw this as an important goal of a mentoring institute.

In addition to developing recommendations, the Committee has taken concrete steps, as outlined in Phase I activities above, to focus attention on issues of faculty development. Several Centers that did not previously have a faculty development committee or similar structure have created an ongoing group to address issues in this area. Beginning in May, 1991, each Center representative worked with associate deans and faculty colleagues to organize Center-based discussions and other activities designed to identify issues in faculty development at Empire State College. Each representative will hold at least one discussion of faculty development issues at a Center faculty meeting by the end of October and report conclusions back to the Committee in November. Themes emerging from these discussions will serve as the basis for planning regional and College-wide activities in 1992.

Members of Committee

Richard Bonnabeau, CDL (1991-92)
Peter Brickmayer, Capital District
Dave DuBois, Genesee Valley
Keith Elkins, Niagara Frontier
Clark Everling, HVASLS
Judy Gerardi, Metro
Bob Hassenger, CDL (1990-91)
Roger Keeran, Graduate Studies
Majorie Lavin, Academic Affairs
Frances Mercer, North Central
Rhoda Miller, Hudson Valley
Rhoada Wald, Long Island

Notes added by *All About Mentoring*

[1] The National Center on Adult Learning (NCAL) was created in 1988 as "a national clearinghouse for adult learner research, funding practitioner research, and shaping public policy regarding adult learning …" according to Richard Bonnabeau, 1996, *The Promise Continues,* p. 144. NCAL was directed by Dr. Timothy Lehmann. The center no longer exists.

[2] The *Mentoring Handbook* became the first online "handbook," Mentorsite, which was incorporated into what is now the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation website.

Coping With Institutional Change by Engaging With the Spiral of Transition: They Asked for a Stress-Relief Workshop

JoAnn Kingsley, Corning

Selectively playing the keys of the piano, I listen for melody patterns.

Allowing for dissonance, creative exploration leads to discovering harmonic resolution.

Watching the sunrise, with birds chirping, I am reminded that a spring morning brings its own effortless resolution and a new beginning.

I seek the feeling of comfort that follows resolution.

Metaphors as Tools for Communication

For the past two years (2015-2017), I served as the Rochester regional representative to the Integrated Technology Committee (ITC) on governance for SUNY Empire State College. I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to witness the community dedication of the new Rochester building and memorial garden. Exposure to the innovative educational technologies and instructional design capabilities of ESC was a bonus. Working at a small location without immediate access to the new technologies inspired me to think about institutional change and the process we all go through to adapt to what may or may not be happening. Living into the unknown as it changes is an adaptive skill.

About half of my work-life is taken up by my role as mentor/instructor for Empire State College. In addition, I am a community organizer, entrepreneur, therapist, mom and partner – in my own imagination, an orchestra conductor and event planner. I love considering how each person brings his or her own frequencies – tone, texture and volume – to what we do together, to the "music" we make together. I grew up with farm family businesses, manifesting multiple income streams in different seasons while physically exploring life's lessons through applied

learning. Over time, I learned that I like to help people. "Imagine Feeling Better" is my personal spin on the foundations of Integrative Wellness, one of the guided independent studies I offer.

In March 2017, I was in Saratoga Springs for the All College Conference when I learned that we are shifting away from the current overlapping five terms and moving toward a three-term structure for our academic calendar. Explanation and hubbub tripped over themselves for a few days, which was a perfect set-up for the 30-minute stress relief workshop I was asked to lead for the "Support Staff Professional Development and Training" session held on the second day of the conference.

Genuine Stress Relief is a Natural Consequence When Combining Movement With Conscious Breathing

Movement helps re-engage our energy flow after stagnation sets in. Leading the support staff to experience breathing into different types of movement was great fun. Our 100-year-old colleague showed us how to participate with a big smile. Experiencing postural movements, small muscular adjustments along our spine, adds to our sense of relief. Sensors in our feet and legs, inner ears and center of gravity engage our vestibular system to seek balance and homeostasis.

The Spiral of Transition as a Graphic Organizer

Institutional change requires a response. The diagram on the following page was created to hand out to the ESC support staff. I wanted to see if I could create a map of overlapping concepts to help people begin to imagine feeling better. This graphic organizer is a

JoAnn Kingsley

combination of a flow chart and a mind map. It is designed to act as a tool to guide you through your personal responses to the process of change management. Understanding this diagram requires finding your starting point. Take a look.

There are four main starting points, reading from the top moving clockwise: Technology, Breath, Social, Movement. Consider which one of these catches your attention. Align yourself with the row of seven stacking chakras – the circles reading from root up to the crown of your head are the central energy channel, the sushumna, or central nadi. Many may be familiar with these notions from studying traditional yogic philosophies.

Look again at the Spiral of Transition. It has two titles depending on your perspective. You might be one who reacts to change from the top-down Technology side of things, the Information Processing Spiral of Transition. Perhaps the digital learning environment concept comes to you like magic from beyond, filtering down through the crown of your head into your mental processing system with ease

INFORMATION PROCESSING SPIRAL OF TRANSITION

PERSONAL SPIRAL OF PROCESSING CHANGE
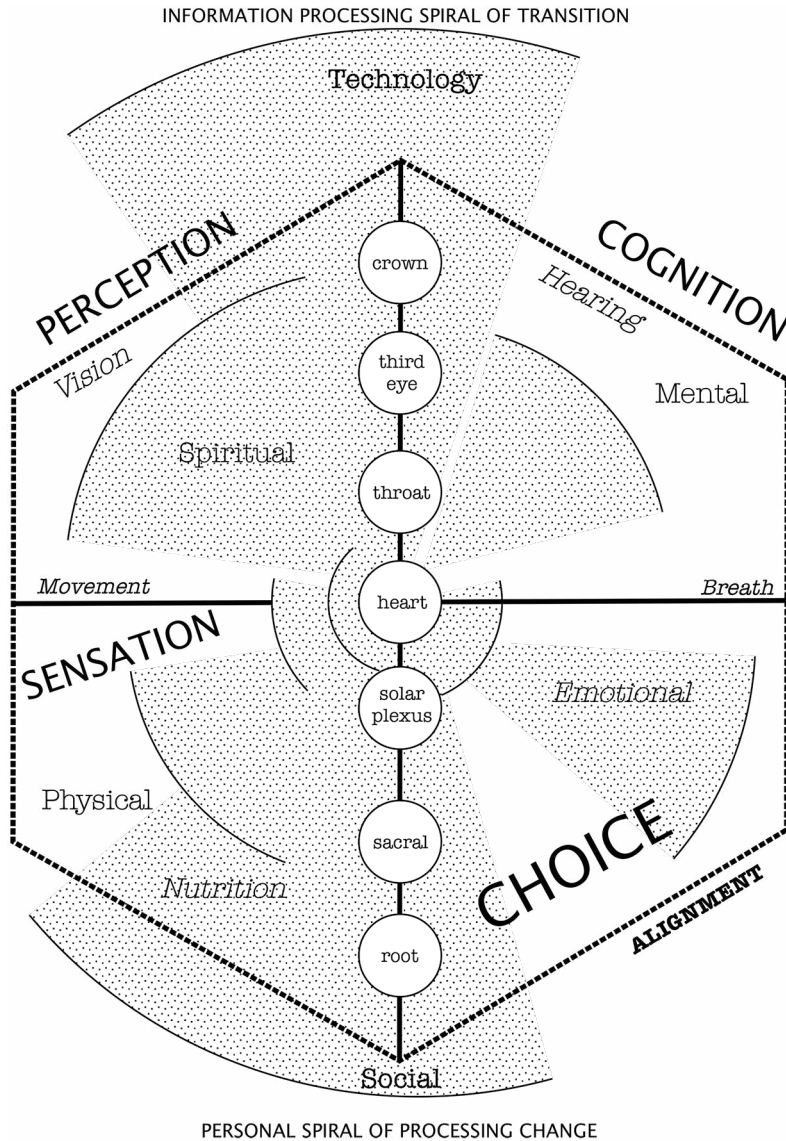
and grace. You know what to do. You breathe through your emotions as joy emanates from your heart … what a lovely image. You make sound academic decisions and move through your day with alignment.

In contrast, you might find yourself in the lower Personal Spiral of Processing Change, the aspect better understood through our Social interactions with our students, colleagues, families and friends. This opening to the ESC 2.0 vortex is idiosyncratic. Many people engage with the process of change at the root level of security with wonder about survival. Emotions are often expressed through the choices we make. Focus on your choices. What do you eat? Are you nourished? How do you move? Are you aware of external and

internal sensory input? Once we have a sense of what we are doing, we can begin to see how movement and breath are incorporated into our spiritual aspect, where we develop our belief systems.

Coping With Change

The idea to write an article for *All About Mentoring* came to me much like the sun rises, slowly over time, bleeding sun rays on the edge of the horizon. Alan Mandell encouraged me to write what was important to me, to tell my story. Early in the spring, the air was crisp and fresh, the ground soggy with mud, the waterfalls gushing with run-off from the spring

thaw in the Finger Lakes region of New York, while I reflected on my interest in how we choose to experience our lives.

Heading off to graduate school for creative arts therapy with a concentration in special education at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn in the late 1980s was exciting for this farm girl turned town kid who was wide-eyed about everything NYC. Luckily, a friend knew I had an interest in teasing apart the relationship between developmental, emotional, mental and learning problems and introduced me to Motke Pomerantz, an Israeli psychologist, who changed the course of my life. Motke was traveling from Israel to New York City a few times a year to train a small group of interested therapists how to think developmentally about every aspect of life. He taught us the pathways from sensation through perception and on toward thinking, combining psychotherapeutic, creative problem-solving with knowledge of sensory processing issues before others were talking much about them. He taught us about choosing to learn and develop. He improved our abilities to cope with change.

Motke had developed an approach to working with children and adults called Perceptual Development Therapy, which was proving successful in Israel. Through my own perceptual experiences with him, my powers of interactive observation began to develop. Initially, I watched him in awe, with his perceptual development exercises, games and puzzles designed specifically for diagnostic, treatment and enrichment purposes. He demonstrated a kind of clinical divination. The student-clients performed a task and Motke told them about their life. We were all amazed. Slowly, over time, I began to see it. Patterns emerged, the sense of timing, the conflict and resolution, rhythmic surprise – it was all there: orchestration of a clinical nature. He layered textures of functional capacities carefully as he exposed, exercised, reintroduced and integrated them at higher developmental stages. Brilliant. He was my mentor.

Fast Forward

Excited to wield a microphone, my enthusiasm for the subject of "stress relief" allowed me to use my expressive nature to engage with the ESC support staff at their training session. I began by discussing some of the stressors I was

aware of: resistance, fear, change, confusing change, stupidity, and too much sitting at computers. I attempted to map the stressors to the commonly known grief stages to help bring the emotions triggered by change and transition into awareness. Many were familiar with the concept that change often includes a feeling of loss of the old while welcoming the new. They agreed that resistance to change is much like the denial stage. They understood that fear and anger often go hand in hand. Then the bargaining stage – oh my, we all laughed together. How we have seen the bargaining, the changing of ideas, the repositioning of ourselves in our seats as we have aimed for a sense of ease, harmony and alignment with the principles of ESC 2.0.

After all the bargaining and cycling back through resistance, anger and fear, some of us have felt the exhaustion and depressive awareness that we are not going back to what was once familiar. Wallowing there for a while has been helpful for some. Naming the sense of helplessness has its silver lining when hope begins to come around again. Transition includes movement from one state to another; musically, one key to another. Perhaps awakening with our newly emerged identity will bring a feeling of acceptance and resolution. Acceptance is the final stage of the grief process.

Making Sense

Listening deeply from within, we can hear where we are and feel ourselves moving around this Spiral of Transition. If learning to adapt to technology doesn't make sense to us, we might need to do some rethinking. Beginning with the sensations that come from our ears, eyes and bodies, we seek to "make sense" of what is presented to us. Meaning-making is a topic that can withstand hours of contemplation.

For the support staff session, I encouraged everyone to slow the process down and consider the subtleties of how we process information. Our collective goal was to relieve the buildup of stress. When the words or ideas don't "make sense," we have the luxury, some of us, to revisit the input. What did they say? Let me look at that again. Let's proofread. Bring the raw data back over your sensory receptors to start the process of understanding again. Once you have turned on your intention to attend and engage, allow for the patterns, intervals and rhythmic structures to emerge. Skillfully crafted orchestration reveals itself over time.

These skills of observation and decision-making will help us. There will be many changes to learn and unlearn as we begin to incorporate new patterns of work. Shifting technologies will require letting go and opening to new possibilities. Currently working out of the Corning location are two SUNY Polytechnic Institute workers who specialize in supporting users of Banner. Banner is one of the student information system that most of SUNY uses, and ESC will soon be incorporating into its enterprise system. Physical, mental and emotional stretch breaks will support us as we develop and learn new jargon and procedures. ITC has its work cut out. Please be proactive in speaking to your ITC representative about the positive contributions you would like to make to ease the spiral of transition at Empire State College.

Sometimes academics are keen to jump to securing our conceptualizations. Knowing can be blissful, when we are sure of something. Not knowing can bring anger and disgust to the surface. Disengaging from our need to know can be helpful if we are seeking genuine interaction with the mechanisms of change in transformative education. "Take care of yourselves first," I told the ESC support staff at the session. Many of us are natural givers of help and support and need to be spiraling into conscious choice-making.

ESC 2.0 will transition into ESC 3.0 in good time. Borrowing a metaphor from the human development field, I'm excited to move beyond our "terrible twos." I appreciate how the stages of life integrate with our work at Empire State College. I intend to continue exploring the potential for structured templates as personalized learning tools in a changing work environment. With ESC's five-year strategic planning underway, exploration of our regional talents and capabilities is necessary. The patterns that emerge as we move forward will inform us. Bouts of improvisation will lead us toward resolution. Learning to inhale arms up and exhale forward bend serves us well. I invite you to join me.

Out Country

Robert Congemi, Latham

The trip upstate, out into the country, had been a fiasco right from the beginning, in Elizabeth's opinion. Not that she wanted to be harsh toward Jonathan. She didn't feel that way. It was simply the truth. Manhattan had been insufferably hot all week, so when Jonathan said he could stand it no more and had to be somewhere else on the weekend, Elizabeth agreed to travel with him.

He came out of his office and stood by her desk. "My friend has a cottage upstate that he never uses," he told her. "We'll drive up on Friday night. I have to do *something.*"

It had taken them nearly two hours to get out of the city. Jonathan tried to control his temper as best he could, but when they were stuck on the George Washington Bridge between two trucks, he suddenly brought his fist down on the steering wheel and said, "Damn, damn, damn. Does anything go right anymore?"

Once off the bridge, the traffic thinned, spreading out to use all the arterials, and the trip started to improve. Jonathan even pointed to a truly wonderful view of hills and trees on Elizabeth's side of the car as he sped up the Palisades Parkway.

"Look at that. Look at that." He was like a boy. "You don't get to see anything like that in the city, do you? Just offices and meeting rooms."

But, about half an hour later, Jonathan decided he knew an alternate route upstate to his friend's camp, at a place called West Sand Lake. The highways were too ordinary, boring, with their endless miles of macadam and rest stops.

"This alternate route winds around, Elizabeth. It goes through these little towns and things, and has a lot of character. You'll see what I mean."

"But are you sure of the way, Jonathan?" Elizabeth asked carefully. It was getting dark now, and Elizabeth, who had rarely been upstate, had absolutely no idea of where they were going.

"Of course I'm sure of the way," Jonathan said, turning off the highway onto a smaller road. "I wouldn't go if I didn't. I've already done it. The time I first went up to the camp."

But it wasn't long before they were lost. At first, Jonathan didn't say anything, but Elizabeth could see he was unsure of exactly where he was going. Then after a series of stops and corrections in towns or on roads, asking directions of the local people or of just someone in a car next to them waiting at a light, she knew they were completely lost, and that Jonathan was in a combination of anger and panic. The road they were driving on was without lights, twisting and completely black.

"I *knew* the way," Jonathan said to her, as if she had told him that he didn't, which she hadn't. "I can't believe this."

A few minutes later, they neared a building on the side of a country road that up closer turned out to be a bar. Jonathan pulled into its small parking lot and stopped the car.

"Do you think we should go in here and ask for directions?" he asked her. "I don't think we're too far off."

"I don't know," Elizabeth told him, not wanting to say anything to upset him more, though she was beginning to wish that maybe she shouldn't have agreed to go on the trip with Jonathan. Not that she was a particularly judgmental woman. She didn't think people would accuse her of that. She just felt that way.

"Well, let's," Jonathan said, apparently wishing for her to agree with him. "Let's give it a try."

"Do you think it will be all right?" Elizabeth said, the quintessential city girl. "It looks pretty run-down, and kind of strange."
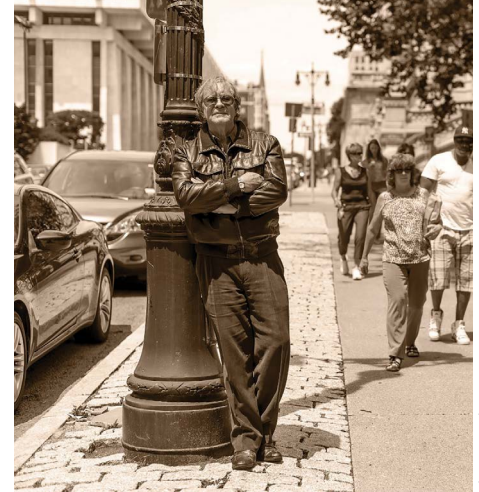
Robert Congemi

"You mean redneck?"

"Something like that."

"Don't be silly," Jonathan said to her, though he didn't look like his usual totally-assured self, as he did in the offices and hallways of the company.

The experience was unsettling, to say the least. There were a half dozen men at the bar, and they did look like rednecks even if it was up north. Maybe mountain men was what she should have called them. They were red-faced, longhaired, scraggly men in work clothes or farm clothes or whatever, and they weren't particularly hospitable by any means. Once again, Jonathan didn't seem his old, commanding self and talked to the men almost apologetically, as if he didn't want to rile them. There were no smiles to make lost people feel any better, and when they finally decided to be helpful, they did it with amused looks that were scary, and for a moment, Elizabeth, fearless in the middle of the city, worried in the middle of the country that they might follow her and Jonathan out of the bar, and then god knows what might have happened.

"Well, at least they've put us back on the right path. I really do know now the way we have to go from here." Jonathan pulled out of the parking lot and back onto the dark, empty road. "I can't believe I missed the turn back there a while ago." He smiled weakly, looking for something supportive from her. "We're so close."

"Were you scared in there?" Elizabeth asked him, brushing back her hair absent-mindedly in the dark.

"Not really," Jonathan said. "Though they did seem to like you. I was wondering what I was going to do if they decided to start something."

Elizabeth blinked. "Did you really think that?"

Jonathan seemed annoyed at her. "Of course I did. How many women do you think they've seen in their life who look like you? Why, if you get the boys in the city all hot just walking down the street, it sure as hell could happen here. Don't you think?"

"I don't know," Elizabeth said, feeling small.

When they finally got to the camp, it was a disaster. Elizabeth couldn't believe Jonathan had thought it was a good idea to spend the weekend at the place. The camp was very damp and smelled moldy, and it was really in no better shape than the broken-down bar they had stopped at. The truth was it was even worse, being simply a camp, and apparently an unoccupied building for most of the year. Of course, she didn't say anything about how she felt to Jonathan. He had been through enough, and she was going to make the best of it. But when he said he was really hungry and wanted to go back down the road a mile or two to where he saw a country restaurant that looked pretty respectable, she was happy to go.

"Getting something to eat would be fine," she said brightly. "I'm hungry, too. Yes, Jonathan, let's go and have dinner."

The restaurant was respectable. In fact, she liked it as soon as they walked in. Not that it was The Four Seasons or L'Esperance, or anything like that, but it was … quaint. It was a big, log cabin place, with moose heads on the wall and an old jukebox in one corner, and filled with old, wooden tables and chairs. The tables had pretty, country tablecloths on them, and the bar, to one side, was lit softly with different colored lights.

"Oh, I think it will be fun here," Elizabeth announced to Jonathan, wanting to make him happy.

"I hope so," Jonathan said, clearly a little discouraged. It was truly the first time she had ever seen Jonathan Trilling discouraged. It was hard to believe. If she didn't know the way he usually was, she'd say he was like a little boy with his … no, she wouldn't even think it.

The only thing now that bothered them was that except for the bartender, the restaurant was deserted. Catching the bartender's eye, Jonathan called out.

"You open for business here? I mean, are you serving dinner?" He was trying to be nice.

The bartender was a little smaller than Jonathan, about five-six, five-seven, but nice-looking, a sandy-haired guy, a little unshaven. He was tanned a golden-brown color, and he had a tattoo on his arm, the typical heart with an arrow through it, saying "I Love Mom." Elizabeth had to laugh. Of course, his black T-shirt had the sleeves cut off them, he was wearing faded-out jeans, and when he came out from behind the bar, Elizabeth could see he had motorcycle boots on. The man was very accommodating, even apologetic, which surprised her, and, if she had thought about it, was even endearing.

"Yes. We're open for dinner." He smiled, cute, and nodded a little toward the empty room. "I know it doesn't seem that way, but we are." He was holding a bar towel, which he used to finish wiping his hands. "Please have a seat." He giggled. "Anywhere."

Jonathan glanced at Elizabeth, and she smiled, and nodded her head. Jonathan turned and walked forward into the room, wandered around a bit, and finally took a table at the far end of the room, Elizabeth following him.

"Let's see. Where can we fit in?" Jonathan said, amusing himself. "The crowd makes it difficult to choose." He pulled a chair away from the table, and Elizabeth could see that his eyes flicked involuntarily over the place settings, presumably to see how clean the knives, forks and spoons were.

When they both were seated, the bartender came after them, carrying menus. To Elizabeth's surprise, she saw that the man, at first sight so masculine and cute behind the bar, was limping, almost severely. As soon as she saw his walk, she looked away.

"I gotta tell you folks you're the first people I've ever served." He was at the table now, beside them. "I'm a part-time bartender, and the girl who's usually here when I'm here didn't come in tonight. She's 16 years old. What can I tell you? And the regular waitress, Eva, she's in the back. In the meeting room, serving about 30 people. It's a Kiwanis meeting."

"Is it?" Jonathan said, rather dryly, holding his hand out for the menus, which the bartender, suddenly remembering he had, gave to them.

Elizabeth remembered seeing a number of cars parked in the parking lot, and now that was explained.

The bartender chatted on, friendly. "Yeah. They meet once a month here. We put on a pretty good feed for them."

Elizabeth nodded, to be polite, and smiled. Jonathan perused the menu. Elizabeth, who didn't want to make the man have to wait, did the same right away, and Jonathan, leaning back, moved his eyes over the menu, as if he were in a high-class city restaurant.

"What can you say about the beef?" Jonathan asked the bartender, who was holding a pencil and an order book in his hands, leaning over her and Jonathan. The bartender looked uncomfortable, the pencil and book sitting awkwardly in his hands.

The bartender grinned, a little nervously, a little confused. "What can I say about it?"

"Yes, what can you say about it?" Jonathan took a deep breath. He was just not pleased.

"Uhh … uhhh … it's pretty good, I guess. We've never gotten any complaints, as far as I know. The cook here's pretty good. The owner's sister."

"And the chops? The lamb?"

The bartender, learning Jonathan's way of doing things, could answer this one. "They're good, too. Had some of them myself last week."

Elizabeth wanted to say something, but she didn't want to intervene, either. Jonathan put the menu on the table. "Well, then I'll have the lamb chops."

The bartender didn't write Jonathan's order down. "You know, sir," he said, thinking, trying to do a good job. "Let me go into the kitchen and make sure we have them. I don't want you to see something and then find out we don't have them."

"All right," Jonathan said, and the bartender left their side, limping, almost painfully, as far as Elizabeth was concerned, Jonathan rolling his eyes a little at her. But the bartender wasn't gone long, only took enough time to stick his head into a door at the back of the empty dining room, which obviously was the door to the kitchen.

"The owner's sister says she has the chops, but they'll take a little while, given all the action she has in the back with the Kiwanis club."

"I see." Again Jonathan took his breath in deeply. Then he went back to the menu, muttering, "Well, I really can't wait. I'm very hungry. We've had a very long trip up here from the city."

"I'm sorry," the bartender said.

Now Elizabeth saw her chance to speak. She gave a little laugh. "You don't have to be sorry. It's our problem."

"Oh. OK," the bartender said. "I guess I'm just sorry to hear that that happened."

"What about the beef? Will that take a long time?" Jonathan asked. "Do you think you should check with the cook on that one?"

The bartender, ingenuous, thought about Jonathan's remark, and then agreed with it. "Yeah, you're right. I'd better." He talked to both of them, and went off again. In a few minutes, he was back for the second time at their table. He was pleased to deliver his message. "She says there's no problem with the beef. That's easier."

"Good. Good," Jonathan said, ironic. "I'm so glad." He looked up at the man, who was now poised to write down their order. "What does it come with?"

The bartender seemed stricken. Apparently, he had not anticipated the question. He tried to think and act as quickly as he could. "Uh, uh," he said, leaning over Jonathan and pretty much reading the menu with him. "I think it says there what the beef comes with, doesn't it?" He found what he was looking for. "There. There, it is." He was reading it for Jonathan, with his finger. "Choice of salad or soup. Choice of vegetable. Coffee and dessert. We even give you a glass of wine, if you want."

Jonathan, himself learning something, could see what was ahead of him, so he ordered with dispatch.

"OK," he said, leaning back again, probably feeling once more in control of the situation. "I'll have the soup." He spoke quickly. "What kind do you have?"

The bartender knew the answer to that one. "Barley and rice or tomato."

"I'll have the barley and rice. And the vegetables?"

The bartender knew that one, too, glancing at the menu for some help. "Red cabbage, spinach, coleslaw, macaroni salad. You get your choice of two."

"The red cabbage and the spinach," Jonathan told him. "And no wine." Jonathan didn't drink.

The bartender felt triumphant and wrote down Jonathan's order. "All *right,*" he said, happy that things were starting to go well. "And what will you have, ma'am?" he asked Elizabeth, looking at her for the first time. Elizabeth could see that he had nice, blue eyes.

When Elizabeth had given the bartender her order, he smiled and thanked her, thanked them both, and then walked away, limping. When he had gone, Jonathan rolled his eyes once again and shook his head. "What do you have to do to get a meal around here?" he asked her.

"He was nice, Jonathan," Elizabeth risked saying to him, hoping to turn the situation around a little. "He was trying his best."

Jonathan raised an incredulous eyebrow.

They *did* wait for some time for anything to happen. She and Jonathan made a little, further conversation about the restaurant. They looked around the walls at the stuffed, mounted heads,

and they glanced over at the bar several times. At first, the bartender smiled, probably as a signal that he was on their side during their waiting period, and then he limped off into the kitchen, presumably to see about their meal. Elizabeth watched him, making his way, his tattoo on his arm, and noticed for the first time that he was sporting a small ponytail. While waiting more, they speculated about the restaurant.

"There are probably millions of places like |this all over the country," Jonathan said.

"Yes. I guess you're right," Elizabeth acknowledged.

"At least, though, he could bring me my soup," Jonathan appealed to her, after more time. "I … am … simply … *starving."* He clipped his words out one at a time.

Finally, a very sweet-looking, older woman came out of the kitchen, carrying Jonathan's soup, and was quite apologetic.

"I'm so sorry this took so long," she tried to explain to them. She had white hair, tied in a bun, and some makeup on, and she was wearing a neat, waitress outfit. "We're so busy right at this moment. This is a pretty big Kiwanis meeting, their once-a-year meeting. Everybody's here."

"Well, at least we've got the soup," Jonathan managed to say.

"Jamie's in the kitchen helping out the cook, things are so bad. Thank goodness there are no customers at the bar."

Elizabeth, catching the bartender's name, assured her, "He's been very nice."

The old waitress appreciated this.

"The poor boy, he's doing everything he can. Whatever he can. He's a bartender, you know. Our part-time bartender. The sweetest boy God ever made."

Jonathan furrowed his brow at this.

The old waitress shook her head. "He's had a terrible life recently. Had that thing happen to his leg a few years ago. Showing off was what it was. On his motorcycle." The old waitress put her hand to her chest. Jonathan sipped his soup. "I tell you, there's no end to what a man, especially a boy like that, will do

for a woman. Anything to please her." She looked at Elizabeth. "Women should know that, shouldn't they, honey? Not that they're responsible in the end, I don't think, but they should know that."

Elizabeth had to smile and found herself nodding in agreement.

"Well, I'd better get back," the old waitress said. "I told Jamie I'd bring the soup to the gentleman." She glanced at Jonathan. He nodded, thanking her, though clearly half-heartedly. "Your meals will be out at any moment. Jamie was getting them ready when I came out here."

"Thank you for that, ma'am," Elizabeth said to her.

They waited for another few minutes, and then finally the bartender came out of the kitchen, holding a tray with their meals on it. He carried them carefully, the tray in front of him in both his hands, as if the safety of the meals meant more than anything to him. He walked slowly, his head down, until he got to their table.

"I know it's been forever," he said, putting their meals out before them, still as careful as he could be. "You people are really nice. Eva said she enjoyed talking to you. And the cook said she took extra care and also gave you extra portions."

Elizabeth wondered if Jonathan's patience was running out, or at least running dangerously low. When all the plates were off the tray, including the small ones with the vegetables on them, the waiter – Elizabeth decided to now think of him as Jamie – looked up at them brightly. "There, that's it," he announced. "You've got everything we've got." He seemed so proud of himself, and of his restaurant. "I wanted everything to get here just fine for you. I certainly didn't want to mess up."

Elizabeth had to say something. "Our meals look wonderful. Looks like a lot of fine country cooking. I know we'll enjoy it." She turned to Jonathan, who simply didn't think he owed anybody anything. Then she turned back to Jamie, their bartender and their waiter, the motorcycle boy who apparently had ended up giving up his leg for a lady he had fancied, a girl who probably stole his heart the moment he first saw her. "This is a very fine way to

end the day," she told him, but leaning toward Jonathan, too, trying to include him in her feelings. "Thanks for worrying about us so much."

Jamie brushed his hair back with his hand and made a little toss of his head. It was just darling, Elizabeth thought.

"That's quite all right, ma'am. You people are about as nice as they come. I don't mind saying it."

Elizabeth had to smile. "Well, that's very nice of *you* to say."

As Jamie limped away, Jonathan, cutting his beef, shook his head. "'You people are about as nice as they come,'" he mimicked. "Can you believe that? What does he even know about us? The presumption, really. He probably wants a good tip. Thinks he can get a good tip out of us with some of that ol' country boy charm."

"I didn't think he was trying to do that," Elizabeth said to Jonathan, gently really. "I think he meant it sincerely."

"Terrific," Jonathan said, putting his beef into his mouth with his fork. "That's what I love beyond everything else. Wait-service that makes itself part of your meal."

After that, and for the rest of their meal together, Jonathan and Elizabeth hardly spoke. Jonathan concentrated on his beef, and his vegetables, and then the coffee and dessert, rice pudding, that Jamie brought to him after Jonathan ordered it. Elizabeth declined dessert, something she had always been able to do in her life, and had only coffee, lingering over it. Still they didn't talk, as if Jonathan had decided that he'd be damned if he'd be the first one to speak. Finally, the point not at all being important to her, she spoke.

"Good meal, Jonathan, huh?"

Jonathan backed away from the table, and she even thought she heard him suck on his teeth. "It was OK. I've had better, I've had worse."

Elizabeth screwed up her face a little. "Oh, come on, Jonathan, you have to admit, that was a good meal. Mine was wonderful – the roast chicken. … " She tried to make a joke. " … The red cabbage, the creamed spinach, the gravy."

"Some of us are pleased easier than others," he said, snippy. There was no other way to describe it. He really wanted to be unpleasant, for the time being. "I thought you were the quintessential big-city woman," he pointed out to her, archly.

She didn't answer him.

"At any rate, I'm going to use the facilities," Jonathan went on, getting up abruptly from the table. "I can't wait, and god knows what's back at the camp. And I want to clean up, too. I hope their bathroom is relatively clean." He reached into his back pocket, took his wallet out, and his credit card. "Here. Pay the bill for me, will you? Sign my name. Give him 10 percent, Elizabeth. No more. That's perfectly right." Again Elizabeth didn't answer, but she took the credit card, watching him walk away, so handsome, so confident.

When Jonathan had disappeared into the men's room at the far end of the dining room, opposite them, Elizabeth looked over to the bar and caught Jamie's eye, waving the credit card and signaling that she wanted the check. A couple of men had now come into the restaurant, and Jamie was talking and waiting on them, plopping beers down on the bar. Almost immediately, he came over to her, limping, and smiled. "Was everything OK?" he asked, giving her the check.

Elizabeth waved him off and just handed him the card. "Everything was perfect," she said. "Please don't worry yourself."

"All *right,*" he said, enjoying himself, limping away with the card and check, and then returning in a minute. Jonathan was still in the men's room.

As Jamie came toward her, limping, holding the credit card, tanned, tattooed, his sandy hair with a little pony tail, his black sleeveless shirt and boots reminding her again of his motorcycle, she had a sudden swell of emotion. He looked … so cute, so sweet.

I wonder what it would be like to sleep with this man, she thought.

When he was beside her, she quickly signed the charge receipt, added 30 percent to the bill as his tip, and wrote something else on the piece of paper. Then she handed him the receipt back, placing the receipt on the little

platter that restaurants usually provide along with the bill. Out of politeness, she supposed, he didn't look at what she had written. As she stared at him, she wondered where she would be when he read her note, and if she were kidding herself to think it would mean a lot to him. She also wondered about her capacity for love – genuine, giving love – where it came from at this moment, and what percentage it was of what she had just done. She did not think he would do what she had written, didn't see how he could, but she thought it would be nice for him to know that she had made the offer.

She had written her phone number on the receipt and told him to call her.

Patricia Cranton, an important adult educator and prolific author, died in the summer of 2016. Cranton was born in Canada and served as a faculty member at many institutions in Canada and the United States, including McGill University, The Pennsylvania State University, and Teachers College, Columbia University. She is often associated with the theory and practice of transformative learning, and with Edward Taylor, edited The Handbook of Transformative Learning *(Jossey-Bass, 2012). In 2016, the third edition of her* Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A Guide to Theory and Practice *was published by Stylus; 10 years earlier, she edited the collection,* Authenticity in Teaching, *part of the* New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education *series (Jossey-Bass, 2006, no. 111). And she wrote, co-authored and edited so much more. Patricia Cranton became a member of the International Adult Continuing Education Hall of Fame in 2014.*

Two of her colleagues at Penn State Harrisburg offered these words in their reflection on her many years of work:

"Patricia Cranton has contributed immensely to our field and to the theory and development of many aspects of adult education, but of the development of transformative learning in particular. … She was a deep thinker, and a great collaborator as indicated by her numerous co-authored publications. While she was an introvert, she made her voice heard as her pen was fired alive through her great walks in nature with her companion animals. Perhaps even more significantly is that she encouraged others to share their own voices and ideas in dialogue. … What a role model! What a legacy she leaves!"

– Edward W. Taylor and Elizabeth J. Tisdell
"Patricia Cranton and Transformative Learning Theory: An Integrated Perspective," (n.d.), p. 8

Everything I Know I Learned at the Plattsburgh UB Program

Kate Dermody and Anastasia Pratt, Plattsburgh

For the last 15 years, we have had the great fortune to work with the SUNY Plattsburgh Upward Bound Program, as a tutor-counselor, classroom teacher and fundraiser. But, our main "job," through this wonderful program, has been to support local students who would not otherwise have access to college prep courses and experiences.

That, in fact, is one of the main purposes of the Upward Bound (UB) Program, which was established through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, itself part of Lyndon B. Johnson's War on Poverty. One of a cluster of offerings under the umbrella of the Federal TRIO programs, UB serves college-bound students who come from modest-income families and/or who will be the first members of their families to go to college. ("TRIO" refers to the original three programs [there are now eight] established under the Higher Education Act of 1965: Upward Bound, Talent Search and Student Support Services.)

SUNY Plattsburgh's Upward Bound Program it is one of the oldest in the United States. It was created in 1966 and has been continuously funded since then. It is the fourth largest program in the nation with approximately 200 students. Given the competitive nature of the grant-funding process and the need to demonstrate positive results in order to maintain funding, that 50-year history is quite impressive. So, too, are the 50 years of

academic instruction, tutoring, counseling and mentoring that are hallmarks of the national and local program.

In 2016, as part of the 50th anniversary of this UB program, we worked with two SUNY Plattsburgh students – Chance Phillips (a 2016 high school graduate, spending his summer before college as a Bridge Program student, completing college-level course work and taking on a work-study position); and James Winch III (then preparing to enter his senior year of high school and completing an internship at the Clinton County Historian's Office, with Anastasia, as part of his UB summer) – to gather photographs, stories, letters and archival materials about the program's history. We worked throughout the summer, digitizing materials and formulating an outline for a book to celebrate this history. And, in December 2016, we published *Upward Bound Is You: Everything I Know I Learned at the Plattsburgh UB Program*. (The book is available through Scholars, Inc., c/o SUNY Plattsburgh Upward Bound, 101 Broad Street, Plattsburgh, NY 12901. The Scholars, Inc. chapter can also be reached by email at waga1297@plattsburgh.edu.)

Throughout this process, we often commented on the similarity of student experiences, as described in 50 years of the program's newsletters and student publications. Those common ideas – the sense that UB is a place

Kate Dermody and Anastasia Pratt

of acceptance and community, that we are capable of greatness if we are willing to take some chances and work hard – form the core of this book, with each "lesson" illustrated by photographs, drawings, poems and quotes gathered over the summer.

One book is clearly not enough, though, and so we are already working on the next volume, which we hope will include stories of alumni successes, lifelong friendships forged within the program, and the ways the academic program helped to prepare students for the experiences that followed their years at UB. That future book, like this first one, serves another purpose, though: all proceeds from the sale of the volumes will fund scholarships for local SUNY Plattsburgh UB students.

To say that Upward Bound has changed our lives is an understatement. We have been shaped as teachers and community members by this program, its faculty and staff, and its students. This book begins the work of honoring the major impact that the program has had on us and on our community.

Occupational Confrontations: Regarding PLA Development at the Van Arsdale Center

Tom Kerr, The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies

"Lucky"

"In your job you're lucky. You get to learn new occupations."

– Geny Ulloa, Union Organizer
International Association of
Machinists and Aerospace Workers

Since the summer of 2015, I have been recruiting members of a union into a new partnership program. In this work, I've had great fun learning, as Geny Ulloa observed at one point, "new occupations." The job he considers me "lucky" to have is that of a SUNY Empire State College professional employee supporting students through the development of describing and documenting their individualized prior learning assessment (iPLA) requests; from initial probing of experiences, through editorial suggestions prior to submission of the requests, to the formal evaluation process. It is in that early stage of the process where I sit down, almost exclusively over the phone, with an applicant or accepted student and try to deeply understand the details of his or her occupational methods. By "deeply understand," I mean probing, quickly yet personally, areas of occupational and home life, in many cases listening for themes that will yield areas of college-level experiential learning.

Ulloa is a union organizer with the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAMAW) union. He enrolled in Empire State College's Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies through a partnership program built around a 36-credit ESC cohort study model. One expectation of the program's participants has been that they – because of their levels of experience, job responsibilities and union positions – will request iPLA credits. In a 2013 essay I published in *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education,* "An Update on

PLA for Labor Leaders and Electricians," I detailed how similar iPLA opportunities with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) in Queens, New York, had helped us develop a practice of working with students similar to the one I followed with Ulloa. In that essay, I reported that an average of 30 credits (as a result of seven to eight iPLA essays) earned per person gave prospective students a ballpark figure, and offered me a benchmark to think of both topic areas and credit requests. Those averages remain consistent with our practices today.

While the job classifications differ, electricians and machinists participate in union administration and union governance. Almost all of the electricians who elect to pursue a bachelor's degree at ESC are members of the extensive Local 3 club system, while many of the machinists engage directly in union leadership. Clubs and unions have proven to be rich areas from which students have learned; they also provide insight into examples of the learning process. Over time, I have gained an improved ability to listen to the ways students share their thoughts over the phone, in short or long conversations. As PLA practitioners, I don't think we fully stop learning about this process of identifying and describing prior knowledge, so there's no finishing point – only a continual deepening of my own understanding of my students' learning.

Continuity in Learning

I want to get back to the iPLA process, starting with the initial phone call with the prospective student. Let's say someone calls the Van Arsdale Center expressing interest in becoming a student. A good example is Geny Ulloa, since he was one of those union members who was highly motivated and wished to explore how to combine a previously earned technical trade degree with potential iPLA credits, and the 36-credit

Tom Kerr

program toward a Bachelor of Science degree mentioned earlier. Initial conversations with Ulloa began in late January 2016 when we spoke over the phone for about an hour and I identified nine (with possibly two more) topic areas for approximately 36 credits based on my initial judgments about the depth and breadth of his experiences. (His final degree program plan, concurred 18 months later, included those nine topic areas for which he received 36 credits in iPLA.)

Where Ulloa perceives breadth in my occupation (my "luckiness"), I gain depth of learning when I talk with him and others about their experiences. For example, in February 2017, I spoke with a machinist who worked on a major union organizing campaign that lasted 10 years. His final iPLA requests for Labor Organizing (4 credits) and Organizing Labor Organizers (4 credits) focused on the role of collective bargaining and labor management relations in campaign drives. As I continued my discussions with Ulloa after my work with the previous student, I was more savvy about these topics and more capable of understanding the distinction between the two areas. The fact that a student like Ulloa continues to maintain faith in his

union and is a successful union organizer (he wins organizing drives) suggested to me that there was learning in his experience. I would like to believe that almost any mentor could work with "a Geny Ulloa" to draw out his or her expertise. When I suggest this to other mentors, I am reminded that not every union member can organize, and that not every organizer wins campaigns. So it's our responsibility to focus on the learning, and to help the individual student identify and describe what he or she not only has done, but has learned.

I like to think that in the iPLA process, we're helping students develop an appreciation of the continuity of their learning, where understanding their past experiential learning supports their current knowledge and influences their future attitudes. I have witnessed this in the three-step iPLA process I have developed. It reassures me that the student is speaking honestly from the beginning, as I document our conversations with notes and an oral recording.

Those three steps are as follows.

My initial communication with a student typically involves a long-distance phone conversation of one hour or so, during which time the student and I determine a rough set of iPLA titles. A second call takes place, during which I take more careful, detailed notes to understand the experiences and the learning of the student. This step is helpful for me as I try to focus on the extent of a student's knowledge in the subject areas. For example, one student who works as a baggage handler for a major airline has training in flight safety. During our conversation, we spoke about a possible iPLA request for the topic of airport safety at the advanced level. The student also mentioned that he works with the Federal Aviation Administration on rules and regulatory compliance, dealing with certified safety training and inspections throughout the airport and airline system. These new areas of skill and learning came out in this second call of the interview process. My detailed notes of the second conversation (to which I can later refer) helped me to better understand the student's learning.

These notes are scanned, emailed to the student, and then, in a third, follow-up conversation, we talk about potential areas of learning. I have found that it is difficult for students to take notes while speaking about their own experiences, so sharing my notes with them is like providing a mirror to the students and returning their thoughts to them, or at least partially. A fuller voice comes out in the next conversation.

> "*I like to think that in the iPLA process, we're helping students develop an appreciation of the continuity of their learning, where understanding their past experiential learning supports their current knowledge and influences their future attitudes.*"

Our third phone call is a recorded one and deviates from the "interview" format of the earlier two. With scanned notes on the table in front of me, the phone on speaker and an Olympus digital recorder I have used since 2013 (despite there being more updated options, this works for me!), I go over the topics with the student one at a time. I then turn on the recorder to capture the student's 10-minute oral presentation of his or her experiential learning in each area. It is this oral account that will become the basis for the student's written iPLA request submission.

For example, at the beginning of our iPLA process, Geny Ulloa told me that he organizes workers. We talked about the details of organizing campaigns in the second conversation, and I emailed him scanned notes I had taken while I probed his experiences. Then, during the third conversation, with those notes in front of both of us (I was in New York and he was in the Midwest), we quickly reviewed some of the areas that we agreed built

an argument for learning around the topic, or returned to a brief point he made that seemed worthy of an elaborated anecdote.

With the Olympus recording, the phone's speaker playing, and the student retelling his or her experiences and exploring areas of learning, the makings of an iPLA request are in the works. When the recordings are complete, the digital files are emailed to the student, who has transcription options. The student can opt to use the recordings to prompt self-directed essaying, or, more commonly, have a third-party service create transcriptions for a fee. When utilized, the third party transcriptions become the basis of the student's iPLA essays, and with some editing for clarification and general content, they are often ready to submit (or have been in the past) to the college's assessment office where an evaluator of the student's learning is assigned. I have found that my recorder can only handle a 10- to 12-minute length interview because of the file size when emailing to students on the ESC system; at 10 minutes of fast-paced talking, that's about four pages of edited text per request, which most often adequately allows a student to describe what he or she knows and the skills gained. Again, it's important to remember that the students are working from notes already established, so the conversation is already somewhat focused.

I would like to add here that I remain cautious of the level of details I seek from students about their experiences, which means that I try to get at the heart of their *knowing*, rather than lead the question in the legal or journalistic sense. I make the assumption that the evaluator – who will scrutinize the essay and speak with the student after my part of the process is complete – may not be so easy on them; and that the past probably was not so easy on them, either. Knowledge, I have found, truly *does* come from the school of hard knocks. After all, what I know about most of these topics, such as union organizing, has come from my own experiential learning working with student organizers.

Confrontations

The transcription service I recommended to the initial student four years ago still has a prompt return time (of two to four days, though the company advertises a shorter

turnaround). The transcript produced includes speaker designations in the left side margins, and indications for "unclear" language. Its rates are a modest $1.50 per minute. Once recorded, some students agree to have their files sent by me to the transcription service website directly, where I upload the files on their behalf; I also send the student a file (a few students opt to undertake the transcription themselves). The transcription service then contacts the student for payment (I have nothing to do with the financial transaction). Completed transcripts are emailed to students who share copies with me. From the beginning of this iPLA work, students are informed that they will need to document the learning they have described in their essays. I have no stake in which transcription service students chose (or whether they use one at all); my efforts have been singularly based on the appeal of a short turnaround time in the overall iPLA process.

While I continue to advocate for this interview-record-transcribe model, there is one aspect of it that has become outdated and is in need of both new thinking and a revised practice. Since 2013, I have asked students to include a statement at the opening of their essays announcing to the evaluator that, "This essay is intended to be an introduction to my experience(s) and as a basis of formative discussion with a PLA evaluator." This disclaimer was, in essence, a summary of my philosophy behind the entire iPLA request process. However, I had failed to consider the responsibility the student has in developing a strong understanding of what constitutes "learning." I also have come to question the responsibilities (and the limits of responsibilities) of someone in my position as a professional employee trying to help a student describe his or her experiences and begin to identify what he or she had learned. I had focused on creating a successful method that would result in a proud statistic of success (and one exists), but the fact is, my role with students is complex. I know now that I did not fully think through all of the angles in developing a system that supports a record of knowledge gained and learning expressed, which is what it takes to prepare a student for the assessment process at Empire State College, or elsewhere. In short, I left a great deal up to the evaluators, particularly in

moving from a description of key *experiences* to a description of *learning or skills/knowledge* gained.

Furthermore – and this is at the heart of things – in many cases, a transcription of a series of interviews between the student and me (followed-up with some careful editing) did not adequately prepare students for questions from evaluators who asked: "What did you *learn?*" That is, there were situations in which the student's essay lacked thoughtfulness about knowledge gained, and was short on reflection by the student of his or her process of learning in the topic area requested. As a result, the document the student produced sometimes bore no connection to how such learning might fit into a field(s) of academic or intellectual thought that could help the student and evaluator reach a common understanding of the nature and the level of college learning gained.

While I am challenged by "an occupational confrontation," I continue to believe the method to be an efficient solution that has helped me learn how to help dozens of students engage in the iPLA request process that is heavily writing-centric. In fact, the Van Arsdale Center's reputation for helping students through the iPLA process (often a very difficult one for students collegewide) has become a recruiting boost, building a small but solid reputation that, joined with Empire State College's outstanding progressive curriculum, draws in labor leaders from many unions. If our prior learning assessment operation appears unorthodox, it may be because its weight rested on the shoulders of evaluators to really focus in on the student's "learning." However, the iPLA system has still maintained the standard checks and balances that the rest of the college follows and that external organizations recommend.

Still, while readdressing my own concerns, I now ask more from the students as we have gone through these three phases. Thus, for example, during the process, I re-emphasize the difference between "experience," "experiential learning" and the ability to articulate "college-level learning." In this spirit, upon completing the editing of their transcriptions, I have asked students to work on another step: to examine the Global Learning Qualifications Framework (GLQF;

SUNY Empire State College, n.d.), and similar online resources, to help discover where their topics fit into similar areas of academic thought and learning domains. The three students with whom I've shared the GLQF so far have liked this additional process, and so have I. This experience has given me ideas for incorporating the extra work into an iPLA development course. However, asking students to turn to the GLQF to develop a section of their iPLA request in justifying or defending their learning feels like asking them to write a learning objective for each essay, something quite onerous that adds yet another challenge to a process already full of challenges for the student.

Beginnings

Back to the main questions that have been nagging me (and perhaps nagging an interested observer): How much is *too* much concerning prompts to students as they try to unravel their experiences and present them as learning and skills they have gained? Or even more, how much interaction and handholding, scanning and phone calls, are too much effort before infantilizing the students' efforts in this process? In response, I wonder: How much effort does a mentor take with a face-to-face student working on iPLA? Since our students average seven to eight iPLA topic area requests, is working in this way (relying on the telephone and on edited versions and transcriptions of those conversations) actually

> *"I ask the student to list her experiences and to describe them; I ask her what types of knowledge she gained in a particular role, and I do begin to ask her how she saw some of those practices as 'learning' that she believes may have changed her life."*

efficient? And, regarding the issue of my role in guiding the student through the process, I do ask questions and request clarification. I ask the student to list her experiences and to describe them; I ask her what types of knowledge she gained in a particular role, and I do begin to ask her how she saw some of those practices as "learning" that she believes may have changed her life. I suggest that we talk about this in detail. From a student's perspective, that sort of dialogue can result in a more informed point of view; from my perspective, these are interesting aspects and curiosities, and are worthy of better understanding. By the time the entire iPLA request is completed, such a focused-upon series of questions will likely have made it into the interview with the evaluator, and the student will have made an effort to understand why, for example, a particular

area of knowledge is being presented as "introductory" or "advanced-level," or as "liberal" or "applied" learning.

In the end, as an ESC professional employee, I am doing my best to help ensure an excellent iPLA system at all levels. As is the case with any institution, we have limitations, but I believe ESC provides many special possibilities. One of those is our innovative model of education, one that allows Empire State College to maintain an arena of experimentation, both encouraged and permitted. It has sometimes been said that mentors learn along with their students. Well, the progressive spirit of my own continuity of learning about PLA has brought me to a point where I am trying to develop more thoughtfulness in my work. All of this began with an interest in speeding up the process

from initial meetings (or phone calls) to evaluator interviews. I was confronted with continual challenges along the way; I have tried to face them with innovative ideas, and revised my practices in my efforts to continue to excite students with healthy intellectual motivation. I am now at another one of those points in my work, and this is a moment when it feels like I should share my own *learning*.

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"We need a new mental model of college that suits post-traditional learner realities. Embracing post-traditional learners as innovation partners and not excluding them as aberrations is the key to unlocking this new mental model. Postsecondary education leaders must be our guides in … fomenting learner-centric innovation."

– Louis Soares, "Post-traditional Learners and the Transformation of Postsecondary Education: A Manifesto for College Leaders"
American Council on Education, 2013, p. 15

On My "Bucket List"
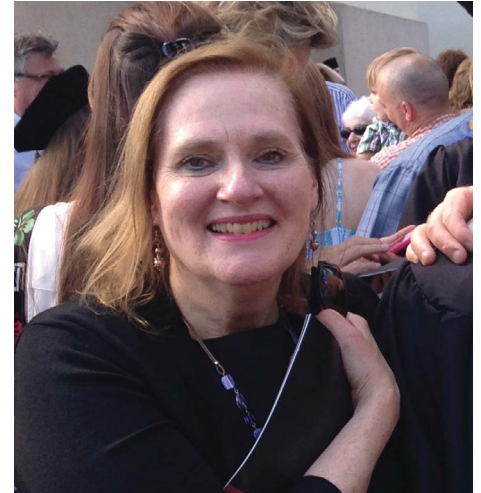
Mary V. Zanfini, Staten Island

According to Merriam-Webster, a "bucket list" consists of things you want to do before you die. Last year I composed the list of things I want to accomplish before I kick the proverbial "bucket." On the top of this list was my desire to create a partnership between SUNY Empire State College and an organization called Lifestyles for the Disabled (http://www.lfdsi.org/) that is based on Staten Island. This organization was formed as a result of the closing, in 1987, of the infamous Willowbrook State School,[1] an institution for developmentally disabled children. The residents of this institution needed somewhere to go, so a former teacher at Willowbrook, Richard Salinardi, began "Lifestyles for the Disabled" in 1994. Its mission includes providing as many real-life learning experiences for their students as possible.

I am a strong believer in experiential education. This kind of learning has numerous benefits for the students involved, and the people and organizations they serve. I wanted to give back to the community in some meaningful way. I also wanted my students to be part of the plan. How was I going to make this a reality? Setting up this kind of experience could be a risky undertaking … what if I fail? As I was pondering the situation, SUNY Empire's Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation sent out an email looking for participants in its Institute on Mentoring, Teaching and Learning (IMTL) Summer Residency. I went with my gut, jumped into the deep end of the pool and sent in my application. Next I emailed an old friend who is a teacher at Lifestyles, Louise Vallario. I had worked with Louise and her students at another local college. Louise teaches developmentally disabled adults all kinds of life skills there. We both wanted to reconstitute the wonderful working relationship we had in the past. She responded promptly to my email and we set about making the partnership a reality.

I was accepted for the IMTL Summer Residency in Saratoga in 2016. As I outlined my plans to the group, I received both praise and encouragement. I thought I had a good idea and now other people were validating my concept for the project. It was a heady moment for me! The Summer Residency blocks off a great deal of time to actually work on the project. I did research on teaching developmentally disabled adults. I wanted our ESC students to have an opportunity to teach them poetry. How would I do that? I began to create lesson plans on teaching haiku, color poetry, blackout poetry, acrostic poems and concrete poems. By the time I left the residency, I had most of my lesson plans outlined.

When I returned to Staten Island, I found that Louise had secured permission to have her students take a poetry class at Empire in the spring of 2017. The Empire students would be getting credit for the course, which was titled: "Teaching Poetry to Developmentally Disabled Adults." The Lifestyles students would be taking what was essentially an enrichment class on our campus. My next step was to inform our unit coordinator, Gina Torino, of my plans for the spring. She thought it was a wonderful opportunity for our students and gave me the go-ahead. Next, I had to secure the permission of my associate dean, Megan Mullen. Megan readily gave her approval, for she is a strong believer in experiential education. I was happy to find myself quickly jumping over what I, at first, thought might be difficult hurdles. I was anxious at this point because I did not want to disappoint any of the people involved at Lifestyles. Failure was not an option!

At that point, I entered the study into the Learning Opportunities Inventory and began recruiting students. Many of my own mentees were interested. Unfortunately, the latest the Lifestyles students could make it to our campus was noon. Most of our students work and find it difficult to get to our Staten Island

Mary V. Zanfini

location before 3 p.m. Still, I mentioned the class to many of the mentors on Staten Island and they agreed to help me promote it to their mentees. I was quick to point out to everyone that this group could fulfill the "Application and Integration" expectation included in a number of area of study guidelines. These guidelines require that students demonstrate the application of knowledge, values and skills related to their field. This can include practical applications included in studies, prior learning assessments, and/or relevant volunteer or work experiences.

The final hurdle I needed to overcome was the liability issue. Lifestyles had to provide us with a form that cleared us of any liability regarding the Lifestyles students. This took a great deal of time to secure, but it arrived the day before our group began. During this time, Louise was busy selecting students. By the time spring arrived, I had four Empire students enrolled, and Louise was bringing 11 of her high-functioning students to us.

Louise, Urszula Zalewska (transportation coordinator for Lifestyles) and I met at Lifestyles to start planning the logistics. I outlined our lesson plans for the term. Louise

was anxious about her students' ability to handle writing poetry. I wasn't worried. As long as the students were verbal, I felt sure we could create poetry. The last part of the plan was to make sure that my ESC students would be able to visit the two Lifestyles campuses on Staten Island, so they could understand what the organization is all about. I also wanted them to see the work that disabled students can do. Louise arranged for tours.

Part of the study I designed involved educating my students about the history of the developmentally disabled on Staten Island. I had them watch two documentaries: *Unforgotten: Twenty-Five Years After Willowbrook* (1996), and *Willowbrook: The Last Great Disgrace* (1972) about the atrocities committed at the Willowbrook State School. Some of the scenes depicting the treatment of the residents are quite graphic and disturbing. Willowbrook's children were used in some unethical experiments and their parents were coerced into signing releases. I also had my students read and discuss articles on the lawsuit that closed Willowbrook. The lawsuit led to federal guidelines for providing services and treatment to the developmentally disabled nationwide.

Recently, the *Staten Island Advance* newspaper began to publish a series on the developmentally disabled and the services available to them on Staten Island. They started the series as a reaction to a proposal to cut services to this population funded by the state of New York. This is happening at a time when the institutions that run programs for this population are trying to secure a living wage for their staff and teachers, most of whom only receive a minimum wage. In the year just prior, Governor Cuomo had added $2.4 million to his budget to support employment of individuals with disabilities (New York State, 2016).

My first group meeting with the four Empire students enrolled in this class was held on Tuesday, January 24, 2017. I wanted to explain to them how the class was to be conducted, what poetic forms we would cover and what Lifestyles was all about. I assigned them some reading and asked them to review the Lifestyles website. They were also to review the lesson plans posted in Moodle, so they would be ready for the class on the haiku.

My lesson plans for each class were sent to Louise a week before each lesson was delivered. Louise reviewed the plans on Tuesday mornings with her students before they came to Empire. She often brought a poem that they had already done, which I shared with the group during the class. Louise did an excellent job preparing her students for class; they were really enthused when they pulled up to ESC in their van.

We greeted the Lifestyles students at the door of the college each week and welcomed them back. My students and I helped them get into the building. One of the Lifestyles students uses a wheelchair. Some Lifestyles students have difficulty walking and one student is legally blind. It took a few of us to help them to our classroom at the Staten Island ESC campus.

Once we were inside, Louise, Urszula and my students helped the Lifestyles students unpack their lunches. Louise and I decided it would be best for everyone to lunch together each week so the Lifestyles students could get to class on time. Once everyone was settled, we reviewed the lesson plan again and began a group poem. Louise gave her students their notebooks and pencils so they could compose. Then we brainstormed about a "prompt" or a topic to write about. Everyone threw out ideas, which I then wrote on the board. When we had enough topics, I read them aloud and the class voted on the one they wanted to write about. Then we wrote one class poem on the topic, which the Lifestyles students recorded in their

notebooks. Any work I gave out was taped into their notebooks so they could take it home to show their work to their families.

I then divided the class into four groups. An Empire student led each group of three to four Lifestyles students each week. Louise and I act as facilitators; we only step in when there is a problem or some students need motivation or supplies. Each group decided what topic they wanted to write about. They can use any of the topics we brainstorm about or create a new one. Each group gets a large Post-it sheet so we can hang the poems in the classroom and share them. We give out colored markers because sometimes the students like to illustrate their poems.

After the class, Louise took the Post-it sheets back to Lifestyles to hang them in her classroom. This is so that visitors can see what the Lifestyles students were doing at Empire. All the students had a great deal of pride in their work. Louise, Urszula and I reviewed all the poems at the end of the term and asked our students which ones they would like to share at the "poetry slam,"[2] which takes place at Lifestyles' coffee house on their campus. This is an old-fashioned "luncheonette" where Lifestyles students learn to run a business. It is open to the public. The Lifestyles students work there and earn a salary.

Family members of all students were invited to the celebration. There was an open mic and each Lifestyles learner who wanted to read was accompanied by an Empire student at the mic. If the Lifestyles student decided not to read,

Poets from Mary Zanfini's class at the Staten Island location

Photo credit: SUNY Empire Student Amanda Haddad

the Empire student would take over. No one was forced to participate if they did not wish to do so. The "poetry slam" was a celebration of our partnership together. While we were reading, coffee and cookies were served.

One class meeting involved a visit to Lifestyles' main campus. It is housed in a former Catholic grammar school. As we entered, we noticed that there was a hum of activity in the hallways. We were greeted warmly by the campus secretary; it was clear that she knew Empire was coming for a tour. We met up with Louise and she began to show us her classroom while the Lifestyles poetry students were seated at a table eating lunch. Once again, we were welcomed warmly. My students readily seated themselves and began conversations with their Lifestyles counterparts. After this initial respite, Louise began the tour.

We went to the art room and met the art teacher and some of her students. They were preparing for an art show where their work would be showcased and sold. Lifestyles does not have a great deal of money, and they rely on donated materials. Louise showed us some work that looked like square painted medallions. Each was unique and colorful. Louise pointed out that they were done on donated personal-size pizza boxes! I marveled at the creativity of it all and was impressed with the quality of the artwork.

We were also shown knitted work made by Lifestyles students. One was a beautiful "granny quilt" afghan. Some of the Lifestyles students were making hats on round looms and gladly explained their work to us. On the shelving at the back of the classroom were empty painted wine bottles. They were covered with flowers and vines. Louise flicked a switch and the wine bottles lit up – they were wired and made into very attractive accent lamps! My students and I were flabbergasted by the sophistication of the artwork.

Next, we went to a wreath-making class. Lifestyles students were making wreaths for Valentine's Day and for a celebration of spring. The wreaths were also beautiful. The students used ribbon, yarn and wire hangers for their creations. My Empire students asked the teachers if they could take photos of the work. They agreed. The artists stood holding their creations while my students took photographs.

For the final class, we visited a music class where Lifestyles students were practicing for a spring concert. They sang songs for us. The songs and the singers were wonderful. What a pleasant visit.

After my students and I finished this tour, we thanked everyone and said "goodbye." My students marveled at the abilities of the Lifestyles learners and could not help contrasting this school with what they learned about the Willowbrook institution. My students were surprised at all the capabilities of these Lifestyles learners. I mentioned that you never know what people are capable of until you challenge them. The Lifestyles learners certainly are rising to the challenge.

On a subsequent trip, we visited Lifestyles' other campus where they have woodworking classes and a greenhouse. They sell the plants that they grow before Mother's Day. At this location, they also have a laundry and coffee shop where the Lifestyles students work and earn money.

The final part of the project focused on memorializing the collaboration between Empire and Lifestyles. I tried to think of a project that could include some of the lower-functioning students at Lifestyles. Lifestyles gives sewing, woodworking, painting and craft classes. I thought the Lifestyles students who were not part of my class could make a "poetry quilt." I explained the project in detail to Louise and Urszula. They thought it was a wonderful idea. I gave them a brightly colored flannel sheet with flowers on it. This would serve as the backdrop for the quilt. The students in the sewing class sewed plastic pockets on the quilts. We then slipped copies of the poetry we composed into the pockets. In the center were the photos we took when we were in class.

What else can I say about this experience? I think that my students said it best in the journals that they compiled as part of their learning activities for this ESC study. Here is a sampling (my students granted their permission to share these quotes):

> *"I always looked at disabled people as those who would have to struggle through life and not be accepted, but I was wrong. **These [students] gave me a new definition of someone with a disability."***

After our first class, another student wrote:

> *"**It was an experience I will never forget.** It was humbling to say the least. I am so eager to continue to work with this group, and I applaud Professor Zanfini for reaching out and helping Lifestyles, and giving us the opportunity to work with such amazing people."*

Other students shared:

> *"Today we worked on recipe poems with the Lifestyles students. We had so much fun with it, and it was amazing what their minds came up with. … Half the time I sit there and I'm like, **"Wow, why didn't I think of that?"***

> *"One of the students I tend to work with a lot told me how much she wished to attend Empire … but she was very happy Empire was allowing them to visit. **I feel like anybody, with a disability or not, should be able to get the college experience they deserve. … The Lifestyles students appreciate it so much, if only there were more colleges open to it."***

We plan to move this project forward in the fall of 2017. Lifestyles will be back at Empire, but the subject matter of their new study will be math. Mentor Michael Nastacio will be teaching Lifestyles students everyday math to address questions such as: "How do I make a budget and stick to it?" Many of the Lifestyles learners are married and manage their own households. I also intend to collaborate again with Lifestyles on internships for my mentees. I hope to keep working with this group in the future, for it is tremendously satisfying to see what our Empire students can do "outside of the traditional classroom." I am tremendously proud of their work and their ease at forming relationships with the students from Lifestyles. My students' compassion, understanding and enthusiasm have made my job as their mentor effortless and immensely enjoyable.[3]

Notes

[1] According to DisabilityJustice.org (n.d.), "Willowbrook was a complex of buildings on Staten Island housing children and adults with developmental disabilities. At its highest population, in 1969, 6,200 residents were living in buildings meant to

house 4,000. Understaffed, overcrowded and underfunded, Willowbrook was little more than a 'human warehouse.' The institution's overcrowding fostered abuse, dehumanization, and a public health crisis. Hepatitis was so rampant that several researchers took advantage of the situation by using residents as participants in a controversial medical study in which residents were intentionally exposed to the deadly virus in order to test various vaccines" (Inhumane Conditions at Willowbrook section, para. 1).

[2] A video of the poetry slam is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpYfTqaMYJc&t=86s.

[3] An article by Kristin F. Dalton, "Emotional Poetry by Disabled a Moving Inspiration," was published near the conclusion of this study in the *Staten Island Advance* and can be found at http://www.silive.com/news/2017/05/lifestyles_for_the_disabled_pa.html.

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Poetry from Mary Zanfini's class

Recipe Poems

MOM

6 cups of love

5 cups of peace

4 cups of patience

3 cups of kindness

2 cups of Italian cooking skills

1 cup of being a lady

2 tablespoons of understanding

1 tablespoon of sewing skills

Mix together with tranquility. Pour into a baking pan. Bake for 2 years.

I will have good and sweet memories about my mother.

By Mary P.

TOMMY

4 cups of love

3 cups of kindness

2 cups of generosity

1 cup of helpfulness

2 tablespoons of attention

1 tablespoon of hard work

1 teaspoon of care

Blend well. Pout into a heart shaped pan.

Bake for 2 hours. Pour rainbow sprinkles on top for hope and dreams.

I will have a wonderful husband, one day.

By Marguerita D.

Color Poetry

GREEN JEALOUSY

Sometimes my boyfriend acts like a green monster

He is green with jealousy

Everywhere I go he accuses me of things

Sometimes, he has his way of being sweet like a green apple

Sometimes, he has his way of being sour like a green lime

Sometimes, I can be sweet like green grapes

And sometimes I can be mean like a green monster

By Megan S.

"Major" Changes in Adult Students' Lives: Educational Planning as an Ongoing Process

Maureen Kravec, Watertown

Introduction

"The best of times … the worst of times." With apologies to Charles Dickens, some students and faculty might describe educational planning at SUNY Empire State College in these terms. The course (or courses) is, for many, the most difficult and time-consuming one the college offers. Some would like to forgo the experience, while others believe it is the cornerstone of an Empire State College education. Yet no matter what shape(s) this study takes in the future, its goals of promoting self-understanding and sound decision-making will remain integral to our students' experiences. Furthermore, some students successfully complete the planning process and later decide to change their concentrations. In fact, for many students, the real "educational planning" can be an ongoing process that begins before their first enrollment and ends after completion of their last formal course.

Scouring our college's Online Library, I found little about the factors that influence adult students to change "majors." Citing a 1994 study by Kramer, Higley and Olsen, which the authors noted might be outdated, Drysdale, Frost and McBeath (2015) stated that up to two-thirds of first-year college students and almost half of second-year students change their major fields "at least once" (p. 146). Many of our Empire State College students already have gone through this phase at another college. Whether for personal or academic reasons, many have dropped out of their previous institutions one or more times before. We tend to assume that our adult students – whether retirees, midcareer professionals, veterans or millennials engaged in community, work and family responsibilities – have achieved greater self-understanding and

commitment to career goals than traditional-age students. Nevertheless, some adult students still need opportunities to continue to change.

Several months ago while searching NotesDP, I noticed many student records are marked "Changed Degree/Area of Study."[1] Counting the first hundred or so graduates of the location formerly known as the Central New York Center, I found 39 records of students with concurred degree programs designated as such. Some of these notations could have been technical – perhaps a change from intent to pursue a B.A. to final attainment of a B.S. in the same area of study – but even these slight modifications could signal important insights and decisions.

These changes, ranging from slight to major (no pun intended), raise several questions: Who influenced the students (interviews with professionals, mentors or other faculty, peers, supervisors at work, or scholars whose work they had read)? What changes did students make? When (at what point in their education – formal educational planning, a period of stopping out and working or raising family, or workplace changes) did they shift direction? Did participating in residencies, fieldwork or internships help them to decide? Did students perceive these changes as positive or negative? And, perhaps most importantly, why and how did they decide to change direction? If students changed their initial goal because they became disillusioned or had academic difficulty, did they consider withdrawing from their studies? Conversely, did students discover more suitable, rewarding degrees or curricula? A broad study of data, including student surveys and a statistical analysis of NotesDP and other enrollment and retention data, could give us more definitive answers, although any study could not entirely gauge the motives of our nearly 19,000 students. Yet we must start somewhere, and like an adult student, I will

Maureen Kravec

start from what I know: my own experience in mentoring students in all areas of study at a small, upstate New York location, Watertown.

As I noted earlier, many of our students have left college at least once before enrolling at Empire State College. When they come to us, we – and they – often assume that since they are mature that they know what they want, will take courses that meet whatever external expectations are applicable to the degree they are seeking, and will move to a new level, professionally and personally. Adult development literature, from Malcolm Knowles and Associates (1984) to Jack Mezirow (1991) and others, records the importance of life experience in shaping life choices. If students follow a self-discovery process, we assume they make better choices in meeting concrete goals such as degree attainment, and will learn skills that will help them to be effective in their careers and personal lives. While we educators tend to rejoice when students develop as learners, we need to remember that the process can be a painful, uncertain one, especially in an era when students face increased pressures of cost, time and a widespread belief that the primary goal of college is job preparation.

Some of the changes reflected in NotesDP may reflect a simple clarification. Some students apply to the college as "undecided" and quickly choose an area of study (division) after discussion with a mentor, or student success or retention professional. Other students might select Educational Studies before understanding that Empire State College degrees do not lead directly to teacher certification at the bachelor's level. They may then choose an academic field taught in elementary or secondary school, or child development, preparing to enter a master's in teaching program. Some students initially may choose concentrations in recognizable areas. Even apparently simple changes can open new doors, such as an eventual second area of certification or a career in a different field. Other students enter the college expecting to complete a concentration in psychology or business administration, only to find that their goal is better met by another business concentration, or through the Community and Human Services division. Still other students modify degree design as they complete new studies and discover others. Sometimes, more significant changes may occur for either negative or positive reasons.

Students With Math/Technology Issues

Unfortunately, re-entering higher education leaves some students feelings alienated and inadequate. The high student attrition rate in many nontraditional programs that seek to meet the needs of working adults suggests that many students hit snags and roadblocks – and give up.

Our college offers self-assessments in computer literacy, learning styles and other related topics. Although many of our students have taken math courses at other colleges, assessing what they have retained can be difficult for them – and for us. Some of our students – particularly women, minorities and others who may lack "college preparatory" math courses from high school – may have had only a year of secondary mathematics. Before the Regents diploma was required for high school graduation in New York state, many students earned a "local" diploma,

taking General Math 9, which contained no algebra, and adding perhaps only a course in business math.

Furthermore, many of our students, including military and veterans, come from other states or countries that have different math standards. Fewer of our students have used higher math in daily life than have practiced critical reading, writing and decision-making skills, leaving even those who have taken four years of high school math at some disadvantage.

Math anxiety is another common obstacle, as Jameson and Fusco (2014) noted. Add to this the common misconception that some people are just "good at math" while others are not, and the fact that some students do have (often undiagnosed) math-related learning disabilities, and we have a tangled mass of logical and emotional reasons why students may feel unprepared in math. Jameson and Fusco (2014) stated that we do know "self-efficacy and self-concept" correlate with math anxiety and performance, and that "self-concept contains a self-efficacy component" (p. 309).

Mathematics can be difficult to study independently because it tends to be sequential: later concepts rest upon previous ones; whereas in a reading-intensive course, it is often possible to skip and skim in a textbook with at least moderate comprehension. Mathematics may also seem divorced from the student's area of interest. My colleague, Marina Privman,[2] tells her students that much of the value of math lies in what can be done with it, but students may not see its usefulness until they reach advanced-level or even graduate study. So, should we advise students to delay the mathematical component of a degree program for a term or two while they absorb "enjoyable" courses, or should we encourage them to take mathematics – perhaps to begin a sequence– early in the degree program? The answers will vary depending on individual students' needs and wishes.

One field of study students may enter with naive preconceptions is computer science. People who can install programs and fix problems at work, but who have little or no programming or mathematics background, sometimes want to plan computer science concentrations. They soon find that they

will have to take several foundational courses or switch to a more applied information studies focus.

A few months ago, I spoke with a student who is taking a Microsoft certification and had listed computer science as her chosen concentration in her application. With an associate degree in liberal arts and no programming, pre-calculus or calculus in her background, she would have to start with introductory-level studies. She had a number of biology and physical education courses on her associate degree transcript. She once had wanted to become a physical education teacher but believed that path was now closed to her. For her first term at ESC, she chose a computer science course, a biology course, a math course and educational planning, the latter so that she could further explore her options and strengths. Another student with whom I spoke recently had planned a degree in Business, Management and Economics with a concentration in information systems, but when she learned that she could pursue a Community and Human Services degree with a concentration in alcohol and substance abuse studies, she chose that avenue instead.

Some students indeed do choose a concentration in computer science, information systems or information technology. Seymour and Serumola (2016) found that "losing passion for a previous major" or simply enjoying an information systems course, rather than financial or status-related goals, were the strongest factors leading students to change their major to information systems (p. 1). For such students, the extra effort will reward them in many ways.

Math and technology are not the only studies for which students may enter somewhat unprepared. Students who come to us excited about studying environmental sciences, for example, may not have not taken basic biology, chemistry or physics. We also admit students who have an associate degree in a field such as office technology or liberal arts and find that they will need economics, business law and accounting, as well as advanced-level studies to apply toward a bachelor's degree in a business field. In situations such as these, students need to weigh their decisions carefully. They may need to assess not only their own abilities, but

also the short- and long-term pros and cons of taking extra time or even a student loan to achieve their ultimate goal.

Students Who Make Positive Discoveries

Sometimes students plan degrees they believe are practical, but still find they also can pursue seemingly lost dreams in their college studies. For example, a student may say she has always wanted to teach a certain grade level or subject, and we often can map out a path. Sometimes, an undergraduate degree can lead in more than one direction: a literature and writing student may pursue an M.A.T., attend law school, or take a master's degree in information studies. One of my mentees recently chose the latter after exploring all three options. Other students may plan for a retirement career. Some of the Army veterans with whom we work, for example, decide to choose career satisfaction over financial potential and enter helping professions. Or a student may want to start a small business or, in one case, a retreat center.

Students also may find they have room to take studies not demanded in their concentrations. Often, a new student will say she does not want to take any "extra courses," but may find time and interest to develop in more than one area.

Helping students achieve realistic goals while not quashing their dreams can be a delicate balancing act. Burgeoning opportunities for online graduate study offer place-bound students more choices; nevertheless, some students, accustomed to almost-open admissions on the undergraduate level and finding new success as adult college students, may need to explore graduate admissions requirements, which often are very competitive. They may discover they need to take some additional undergraduate courses, even though these may not have been included in their preliminary degree program plans.

The most initially adamant students can be the ones who change the most! Several years ago, a young man brought me a degree plan in Business, Management and Economics that one of his friends had followed. "I want a program just like this," he said. As we talked, however, it turned out that he was interested in the sciences. He found he could modify his degree so that he could take some studies in science as well as in business. Recently, a student who had been rushing to finish a degree in Human Development decided she would like to take an extra term of creative writing courses. On that very day, another student, who had planned a degree in Cultural Studies with a concentration in English, decided she would like to switch to Human Development, in line with her current employment at an agency for clients with disabilities. Since she had taken courses in both fields for her associate degree at Empire State College, she still could enter an M.A.T. program and become certified to teach secondary English. Without doubt, positive discoveries can suggest the need to change course.

Students Who Leave

Occasionally, a student may decide Empire State College is not the best path forward. If the college cannot provide the appropriate educational opportunities, it is to the student's advantage – and probably the college's – for him or her to seek other alternatives. Students whose main goal or need is to find employment may indeed find it before completing a degree. I sometimes suggest that my students obtain an associate degree "as a step toward the bachelor's" if this can make them eligible to take a civil service exam or procure a better job. These students sometimes do stop out, but may return later.

Powell (2013) followed three of her students who stopped out of college after completing her writing course. Each had a different set of reasons, but each felt he or she had gained something from the college/writing experience. Statistically, these students count as failures to complete for the institution and themselves. Yet, Powell

> make[s] connections between retention scholarship and scholarship in the fields of basic writing and disability studies in order to make the argument that the real failure in all of these areas is our own failure of imagination, our inability to envision an institution of higher education that can successfully educate every student who sits in our classrooms,

a radically inclusive institution that may, ironically include students who leave. (2013, pp. 84-85)

Powell's inclusive goal is an ideal: some students will leave even the best university with negative feelings, but having even "some college" should generally be a better preparation than having none.

That said, when adult students return to college, we can assume most plan to complete a degree and better themselves in some way. Researching, interviewing professionals in the field, and writing about their choices can help students acquire the critical thinking skills necessary to succeed in their studies and in life. Many have had hours and years to think about their goals by themselves or with family and coworkers. Yet they may need more: more time; more and better advice. In a study of adult students, Goncalves and Trunk (2014) found that: "Eighty percent of participants thought it would be beneficial to have an advisor who only dealt with nontraditional students, and several participants suggested that an advising team would be useful" (p. 167). At Empire State College, we are continuing to explore the concept of mentoring: whether the student should have a mentor in her declared division, whether she should have perhaps more than one mentor, the strengths of limitations of working with one's mentor at a physical distance, and the role of student support and retention professionals in the process. There may be no one-size-fits-all answer.

Students' Attitudes Matter

Breese and O'Toole (1995) studied a group of 221 women college students age 28 and older using the concept of Role Exit Theory, which explores "the process of adult persons moving from one social position to another" (Role Exit Theory section, para. 1) in terms of adult development theory. In the surveyed group, women who were transitioning for "external" reasons, such as job displacement or divorce, felt they had less choice in "sifting through [their] options," and for them the significant "turning point (following initial doubts) narrowed the options available to them and caused an intense focus on the decision to be made" (Results section, para. 4). They more often tended to choose "traditionally female-dominated areas of study," which Breese and

O'Toole identified as elementary education, nursing and social work (Results section, para. 1). Conversely, women who decided to attend college for "internal" reasons rather than external necessity felt more freedom to choose an area of study that interested them personally. The study results are unsurprising, but they do reinforce the concept that people choose educational and life paths for emotional as well as logical reasons. Like Jameson and Fusco (2014) studied students' reactions to math anxiety, Breese and O'Toole (1995) suggested that students who do not feel impelled by external forces, but who have developed an internal locus of control, see more options for success.

It is important to note that this study was done in Great Britain over 20 years ago. Today, women may feel less bound by tradition. The Great Recession (2007-2009) also affected males, so we now see many more students expressing great anxiety about the value of their education. Yet keeping on a path chosen at some "turning point" before actually entering college and experiencing the actual coursework may not always be viable. Reactions to disjunction between initial goals and reality can range from devastating to exhilarating. We should be there to support students who feel a need to change direction.

Conclusions

One could argue, then, that although educational planning, formal or informal, can be regarded as frustrating and time-consuming, the process itself will remain a necessary and often rewarding part of adult higher education. Students will continue to engage in their educational development no matter what we do. However, Empire State College, with its grounding in adult learning theory and wide array of study and degree choices, is well-positioned to offer guidance and resources to adult learners as they change or modify their goals. Snyder-Duch and Schwartz (2017) advocated "relational advising" in higher education, based on Relational Cultural Theory (RCT). They argued, "Although the scholarship [on advising] is vast and worthwhile, something is missing … focus on the advisor-advisee *relationship*. We propose that the relationship is, in fact, the most important factor in effective undergraduate advising, not the tasks, nor the

interpersonal style of the advisor, nor even the developmental process" (p. 9). Relational advising can be successful for faculty and staff whose primary field is not adult development, or who have not graduated from some "mentoring charm school." Just being there as a consistent presence comprises one of the five keys to success, which include "energy, self-esteem, knowledge, ability to take action, and desire for more connection" (p. 9). As faculty take on higher instructional targets and work with more students at a distance, they may find it ever harder to maintain commitment to relational advising; the authors concluded their article by advocating for institutional support of relational advising as crucial for student success.

As the college grows its enrollment and moves to offer a greater number of structured programs, and while mentoring and educational planning may change for some students and faculty, these processes will nevertheless continue to have an integral role in ensuring student success, retention and satisfaction. A change in academic direction marks a crucial point in any student's education, and supporting students through this process can make the difference between failure and success. SUNY Empire State College should be an ideal environment for further research into the reasons why students change academic direction, and into strategies to support their decisions in the best way we can.

Notes

[1] Notes DP ("DP" for degree program), a component of LotusNotes, is an old system, and although I asked several people around the college what the term "Chgd Degree/AOS" (as abbreviated in the system; "AOS" for area of study) encompassed, no one could tell me exactly. The notation occurred only for students who had concurred degree programs. I was able to access only the records of Central New York students.

[2] Thanks to colleagues Teal Abel and Marina Privman for sharing their experiences and ideas.

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Institute on Mentoring, Teaching and Learning Year-End Project Summaries

2016-2017 IMTL Fellows

The Institute on Mentoring, Teaching and Learning (IMTL), a program of the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation (CMLAI), provides time and support to those who mentor, teach or are involved in research relevant to teaching and learning. With input from colleagues, IMTL helps those who are pursuing projects that further their development and enhance their mentoring and teaching practice. In addition, college librarians, educational technologists and instructional designers support the participants during the summer residency and throughout the year. In 2016–2017, 23 faculty, academic administrators and professional employees proposed a wide variety of projects. Below is a sample of the progress made by this cohort.

Leslie Ellis, Bernard Smith, Nan Travers and Amanda Treadwell "Experiences, Persistence and Completion in PLA"

National research indicates that prior learning assessment increases students' persistence and completion rates. Our IMTL study examined three different sources of information:

- Data analysis of different types of PLA participation compared to non-PLA participation for different milestones of persistence and completion.

- An undergraduate student survey to learn more about students' individualized PLA (iPLA) experiences.

- Faculty focus groups to learn more about experiences mentoring students through the iPLA process. Faculty would be canvased using the following questions:

   o What ideas do you have that would help students with the iPLA process?

   o What are your most successful ways to help students describe what they know versus what they do?

   o What are some of your successful practices working with students pursuing iPLA?

   o What do you think inhibits students from pursuing iPLA?

   o What supports do you need to help your students through the IPLA process?

Himanee Gupta-Carlson "Doing Hip-Hop Through Food and Farming"

Like the "garden" of food and community that the project sought to capture, this one sometimes grew out of control. I kept trying to weed, and realized that weeds can also nourish a garden, a body and research. Over the past year, I did an enormous amount of writing for popular media on local food and farming: I now either write or edit a weekly piece for the *Saratoga Today* newspaper, and am a contributing writer for the twice-yearly magazine *Healthy Saratoga*. I had a piece on my farm published in SUNY Empire State College's *Connections* magazine. I have added a farmers market-to-food pantry food donation project to other projects that connect the Saratoga Farmers Market and the Franklin Community Center. I have begun to build a bibliography, and have written a draft paper on autoethnography as a research method. I taught about farming in American history to Lebanese students in ESC's International Education programs, and learned about their family farms during a July 2016 Cyprus residency. My travels to India in March 2017 helped me find a link between my family's history and hip-hop, local food and small-scale farming. This connector establishes continuity between the themes that animate my book, *Muncie, India(na): Middletown and Asian America* (2018, University of Illinois Press) and this project.

Debra Kram-Fernandez "Youth-in-Transition from the Foster Care System"

What effect would a 12-session, weekly, Integrated Trauma-Informed and Dance-Movement Therapy group intervention have on youth and families touched by trauma? Would pre- and post-tests indicate a decrease in symptoms of anxiety among youth and family members, or a decrease in depressive symptoms? Would a decrease in disruptive behaviors and emotion dysregulation be an outcome?

Although these questions are not yet answered, I write this blurb with optimism for the future of the project. It was this year of pounding the pavement – face-to-face meetings, proposals, drafts of Institutional Review Board applications, revisions, numerous clearance activities, more meetings and more revisions – that evolved into this concise and hopefully realistic study.

IMTL faculty and participants provided support at the point in this project where I thought next steps were impossible. When I was out of ideas, IMTL 2016-2017 members provided the unthinkable – new ideas for overcoming obstacles. This project remains viable! Thank you to all.

Joanne Levine and Michele Cooper "Pursuing Higher Education in the Third Age of Life"

The lifelong learning goals for older adults are changing dramatically as people are living longer, retiring later and redefining their retirement years as the "third age" of life – "a stage in recent years marked by personal achievements and learning for self-development" (Lakin, Mullane, & Robinson, 2008, p. 4). This qualitative pilot study addressed this trend by interviewing 10 ESC alumni, purposely sampled for diversity in terms of gender, race/ethnicity and areas of study, who graduated at age 65

or older. Interview topics included motivation for pursuing higher education later in life, modes of study, prior learning assessment and mentoring experiences, college support, why they chose ESC, and their advice about how colleges can better serve this population. Findings from this study will help guide the development of practices that best meet the learning needs of our older adult students.

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Peggy Lynn
"Enhancing Moodle Course Shells"

For the 2016-2017 IMTL residency, I proposed to work with librarians and educational technologists on enhancing the Moodle shells for my online and blended studies. At the residency in June, I worked with Michael Fortune to learn to embed music videos into my courses. This is especially helpful with Music Across Cultures, American Roots Music, and Women in Song. I also worked with Sara Hull to learn to research scholarly sources in Performing Arts. I was inspired by hearing the plans of my colleagues at the residency. On November 2, 2017, I attended Digital Day in Rochester and attended a workshop on using LEARNscape to make personal videos for course announcements and content. Rhianna Rogers was helpful and informative in explaining the process, the importance of transcribing the text, and the benefit to students. This is a component of course shell enhancement I look forward to adding to my palette of course design skills. I appreciate all the information and support I was given and am grateful for being accepted to take part in the residency.

Susan McConnaughy
Child Welfare Policy and Practice Course Development

In this year's institute, I developed a blended study on Child Welfare Policy and Practice. Institute committee members and invited resource people helped me develop new skills both in designing a blended study and in designing a course using Moodle. During this year with IMTL, I was supported in

expanding my knowledge of the shifting child welfare policy climate and developing fruitful relationships with experts in the child welfare field so that I can ensure that my teaching is cutting edge. These relationships also help me link students who take this study with the tremendously rich resources in the child welfare field for active learning and service.

Michael Nastacio
"Environmental Mathematics"

For many years, I have taught College Mathematics, Business Mathematics, Algebra, Geometry, and Trigonometry. While such studies have merit, for me, something was missing. Most students I have had in these studies were interested in and talented in some area, such as: history, dance, art, music, literature, poetry, psychology, philosophy and literature. Most, however, because of math anxiety and fear of failing, were trying to avoid mathematics entirely until the dreaded SUNY General Education math requirement caught up with them. Students saw no connection between a study of math and their everyday lives. The IMTL provided me with the tools necessary to create a study group to meet the needs of these students. Facilitators and colleagues offered resources necessary to make this endeavor successful. I contacted past Empire State College math mentors, in addition to collaborating with current colleagues. Participation in the IMTL provided me with a tremendous learning and growth experience. In a new study that I designed, the learning outcome will teach students how to make informed choices using fundamental mathematical tools, encouraging them to find solutions to critical real-world problems. Finally, if a student uses what they have learned to help them act in their own self-interest, then the course is a success for all.

Connie Rodriguez
"Readiness for Advanced-Level Accounting Courses as ESC"

My direction changed late in the fall term. After a summer researching and analyzing results from prior terms, plus working with two students in the fall, it was clear that the amount of time needed to support each student was too great. Given the demand for accounting courses and my support of the upcoming registered degree in Professional

Accounting, it seemed best to address a different group: adult learners who need to learn how to manage their time and improve writing skills before taking their first accounting course.

I've created a new independent study in Personal Finance with two goals:
1. Increase student comfort through their use of online tools and personal guidance.
2. Increase the chance the student will continue to their next term by learning finance and accounting topics that are meaningful in their personal life.

The course was first available in the fall 2017 term for Rochester area students.

Gina Torino
"Microaggressions Chapter"

My goal was to complete my chapter on multicultural supervision for the co-edited book, *Microaggression Theory: Influence and Implications.* The support provided by the IMTL enabled me to complete the book chapter. John Wiley & Sons will publish the book in 2018.

Mary V. Zanfini
"Poetry Writing With an Experiential Component"

My project was to develop a partnership with a local organization called Lifestyles for the Disabled. Lifestyles' mission is: "to provide quality learning experiences that will enable all program participants, regardless of their present disabilities, to become productive members of society and live their lives with dignity and as independently as possible." Empire State students were paired with Lifestyles adults in order to give them instruction in how to write poetry. Students from both institutions composed various types of poetry together. This was a unique experience that was also supported by staff from Lifestyles. Students from Lifestyles came to our Staten Island location at least eight times during the term. We also visited their campus three times. We learned about the types of disabilities they struggled with and also learned about Staten Island's unique history with regard to people who have disabilities. We culminated the term with a poetry slam celebration. (Read more about Mary's project in this issue of *All About Mentoring.*)

Recent Work
Barbara Kantz, Hauppauge

Though at SUNY Empire State College I teach history and human services, I grew up in a family of artists and musicians. For me, the visual arts are an important element in examining the human condition. I developed an aesthetic sense from my father, a commercial artist, neon sign maker and outdoor enthusiast whose favorite artist was Rembrandt – a man who understood light and would have been a famous photographer. Though I never developed an artist's hand, I have developed an artful eye.

I am fortunate to live on Long Island, in a historic 1770 home on a tidal marsh. I tend to photograph what is local and regional. Each December, I create a holiday photo card, shot exclusively on my property at 44 Shore Road. My neighbors, friends and family look forward to receiving these each year, and many display the entire 30-year collection each winter season.

I am currently developing a wider range portfolio based on new aesthetics and other travels. I shoot with a small, compact Panasonic Lumix camera and use a digital darkroom. Each of the photos shown here has been displayed in galleries throughout the country, and several have won awards.

"Masai Wind," Tanzania, 2013

"Newport Harbor," Newport, Rhode Island, 2016

"Snowbank Erotica," Locke, New York, 2014

"Last Light," Setauket Harbor, New York, 2011

"Diner," Las Vegas, 2014

"The Cure," Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 2015

"Tug," Port Jefferson, New York, 2012

Teaching, Mentoring and Activism in an Age of Trump

Himanee Gupta-Carlson, Saratoga Springs; Lisa Parkins, Manhattan; Anastasia Pratt, Plattsburgh

Introduction

America's presidential inauguration is public history: It is a public event that creates history as it happens in the nation's capital city every four years.

The public event typically draws a crowd of hundreds of thousands and in the case of Barack Obama's inaugurations in 2009 and 2013, a million-plus spectators. Via television, the internet and other vehicles of mass communication, the inauguration also offers an opportunity for citizens and others to reflect individually and collectively on the past, present and future of the principles upon which the nation is founded: democracy, freedom, equality.

The 2016 presidential election made this moment of public history different. For many of us, it marked a moment of uncertainty, disgust and perhaps even fright. It has raised questions of how to be teachers and how to be mentors in the SUNY Empire State College way, and months into Donald Trump's presidency, it is forcing us to ask where (and even whether) we should draw the line between our personal politics and our professional roles, between our activism, our art, and our teaching and mentoring responsibilities.

The following pieces from mentors Himanee Gupta-Carlson, Lisa Parkins and Anastasia Pratt share teaching experiences tied to the presidential election and inauguration, and the protests that emerged in the aftermath of Trump's victory. These reflections grew out of a dialogue that they, with Residency Specialist Lori McCaffrey, initiated at the March 2017 All College Conference in Saratoga Springs.

HISTORY AS IT HAPPENS

Himanee Gupta-Carlson

Since 2009, I have used the presidential inauguration as an opportunity to teach U.S. history and politics. I went to Washington, D.C. for both of Barack Obama's public inauguration ceremonies, and communicated with students via Facebook and Twitter in 2009 and 2013. I fully intended to go again in 2017. I also fully expected the historic event to be the swearing-in of the first woman as president. I did not expect Donald Trump.

As an instructor in a fully structured online environment, I build much of my pedagogy around dialogue. Some of that dialogue involves me sharing with students my political views, inviting students to share their views, and then structuring and guiding discussion in a way that allows for our varying views to be present but *not* the focus of the study. The focus, as I try to emphasize, is on the learning of history and on connecting that learning to ourselves: How might we understand the present better through an interrogation of the past? What might the present political context be telling us about the past? In what ways might we bring our learning and our life activities together?

I taught the online courses, U.S. History to 1865 and U.S. History from 1865 including the presidential election, the inauguration and the Women's March on Washington with these questions in mind. The Fall 2 term ran in 2016-2017 from October 31-February 24. This timing let me cover both the November 8 election and the January 20 inauguration in a single term, with goals for students to:

- Gain a real-time experience with a historical event.

- Get to know public history by immersing themselves in it.

Washington, D.C., January 2016

Photo credit: Himanee Gupta-Carlson

- Think critically about their own roles within American politics.

The Election

The term began nine days before the presidential election. I asked students to research a president they admired and to comment on the history and controversies of selecting the president via the Electoral College. On election night, I asked students to follow the returns and to comment in discussion forums as their schedules allowed.

Many of the students stayed up with me well past 2 a.m., conversing about the returns, the shock of many voters, and their own impressions. Their political views varied, and I was careful to treat the activity as one of reflecting on how the outcome would inform understandings of the past and the present.

This activity culminated with a short essay assignment asking students to compare the president-elect with the president they had researched earlier, and to consider what challenges that individual might face.

Inauguration Week Planning

Having been to D.C. for inaugurations twice, I knew that the inauguration was not a singular affair. Museums, public interest organizations and activists create special exhibits, commemorative events and rallies. While some things like exhibits are planned months in advance, many events like the Women's March on Washington are put together just weeks – or even days – before the inauguration. This unpredictability creates a special challenge for courses that take place in fully structured online environments because, theoretically, all of the curriculum is set before a term starts. The unpredictability also makes the online environment exciting because opportunities to integrate set activities with evolving events emerge.

Before the course opened, I planned what I could plan with certain wishes in mind: I wanted my students to get a taste of how Washington, D.C. as an historic site of public gatherings for celebrations, commemorations and protests embedded visual displays on these topics into the museums that comprise the Smithsonian Institution. I also wanted to prepare them to be open to the unexpected so that they could see that history is not a stagnant topic. Finally, I wanted them to see that they could be part of history themselves. After the Women's March on Washington (organized very quickly after the election) opened that opportunity, I planned the inauguration around four days of teaching live in D.C.: Two days on history told through museums, a day at the inauguration, and a day of rallies and protests. While I told students early in the term that this would be the game plan for the inauguration, I waited until the Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend to write the actual activities because I wanted the prompts to reflect the current political environment as much as possible.

Knowing that I was asking a lot of the students, I tried to keep the modes of communication and evaluation of work for the inauguration week as simple as possible. While I only required students to participate in discussion forums, I created opportunities for them to exchange tweets with me and with each other via a course hashtag and to follow my postings from D.C. via a Facebook event page.

I organized the forums around an initial entry into the inauguration week and built the learning from there. The first forum asked students for a brief "check-in" comparing their own moods with what they perceived to be the "mood" of the country. The second asked them to browse and comment on the virtual sites for the Smithsonian's national museums of American history and African-American history. The third asked them to follow the media coverage of the January 20 inauguration. The fourth invited them to observe coverage and/or attend and participate in a women's rights march occurring in their locality. The forums included links to my Facebook event page and to Twitter, and reminded them that I would be conversing via these modalities while in D.C., and that they could converse with me in those spaces or simply follow and use the course discussion space to respond with their thoughts.

How Students Responded

Students described the virtual museum visits coupled with my tweets positively. One student shared in the discussion forum that she had never been to a museum and found that my tweets and postings from the sites had opened a new world to her. Others described the sites and my posts as ways of bringing to life the history they were studying, and asked me questions about some of the different exhibits they had viewed from the museums' virtual sites. I posted photos and comments as I browsed exhibits, and when I happened to notice that The National Archives Museum was screening all of the presidential inaugural addresses from Franklin Delano Roosevelt to Obama, I encouraged students via Twitter to look up footage and transcripts from these speeches on their own. One student began viewing online footage while I was in the archives theatre watching the footage there.

Nearly every student joined the Inauguration Day discussion in some form or other. Like many public events, conversations were taking place in multiple modalities and even I, as the instructor, could not experience them all simultaneously. Many students spoke with each other in the course discussion forums, which I could not access during the inauguration itself. Some commented on Facebook postings, and others spoke one-on-one with me via Twitter.

The students wanted me to verify reports on the size of the crowd and on the outbreak of protests that news media were showing. They also worried whether I was safe, given what they were seeing. In the forums, as I saw later, they were asking each other questions about conflicting reports about the inauguration and about Trump and his politics. Many were questioning what sources to believe, given the range of differing views that were being expressed.

These questions and comments set the stage for the women's marches that occurred the day after. A few students did attend marches or conversed with friends who were at the marches. A number of students based in Manhattan had to work on that Saturday and reported that the marchers went past their workplaces. They described these moments as inspiring, eye-opening and as evidence that people were unhappy with Trump, and that if he wants to be successful as president, he needs to pay attention to their feelings.

Post-Inauguration Reflections

The live-time teaching during inauguration week was comprised of quick, often reactive bursts of commentary: 140 characters in a tweet, two sentences on Facebook, a photo here and there, quick Q&A style dialogue between my students and me. In the remaining weeks of the class, students reflected on their immediate responses more deeply in written and creative assignments, which I modified slightly to create space for them to incorporate the learning from the inauguration into the broader learnings of the courses themselves. I asked students in U.S. History to 1865 who were viewing a history of Abraham Lincoln to compare the state of pre- and post-Civil War America with the current political climate. In U.S. History from 1865, I gave students an option to create a zine (a low-budget eight-page graphic magazine crafted on a single 8 1/2-by-11-inch sheet of paper) on the election, inauguration and/or protests instead of focusing on the post-World War II era as specified in the prestructured assignment.

I also asked students in that course to incorporate reflections on citizen desires in a policy analysis due at the end of the term.

When I had taught the inauguration in 2009 and 2013, many things that could have gone wrong went wrong: Communications had cross-fired, the internet had jammed, delays in responses to students had occurred, and some students had struggled with technology. All of these things happened again. Yet, as I have reflected on the term, I realize that the outcomes of this project were much less about these "failures" and more about the glimmering rays of insight into the political process, questionings of truth to power, and actual willingness to engage in citizen participation that I detected as beginning to take place in the students in the course. As I was teaching students what it was like to be a part of a historic process, they were making choices as to how they wished to be a part of history themselves.

TEACHING POP MUSIC AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Lisa Parkins

The first meeting of my spring 2017 term face-to-face study group, Popular Music and Social Justice, occurred on the eve of President Donald Trump's inauguration. The study's goals were "to explore the development of social action and social justice movements through the lens of popular music." It wasn't long before several students expressed what was in the air: a mix of anger, frustration and fear about the incoming administration. I could tell by their silence that some in the class were feeling vulnerable. One student voiced her concerns: "This seems like a pretty liberal group. What if someone has a different point of view?" Fifteen adult learners waited for me to answer. I paused, asking myself, "How should I respond?"

We were about to investigate the history of issues and events that could – even in a less polarized political climate – be upsetting to my students. I looked around the room: this was a culturally diverse group. Seasoned performing artists sat alongside those who were interested in activism and social justice;

a few were there solely to fulfill SUNY General Education credits. I took a deep breath and said, "Let's listen well, keep an open mind, and be respectful of one another." Students nodded and smiled. The tension eased. Meanwhile, I made a mental note to be vigilant about maintaining the classroom as a space in which students could share thoughts and feelings about the news as it unfolded. Still, I sensed that we were heading into difficult emotional territory.

The following week, the group was energized and upbeat. A number of students had participated in the Women's March on New York City on January 21. Everyone had been inspired to see a broad spectrum of Americans take to the streets. Reflecting on this unprecedented citizen activism led to our discussion of the first reading assignment: exploring social movements in relation to cultural expression. Then, students shared their first writing assignment: a personal response to a current social issue. We began to know each other: an immigrant longed for "dreams without borders" despite "reform that never comes"; a mother worried about the safety of her young adult gay son.

At subsequent meetings, through readings and documentaries, students surveyed seminal 20th century activist songwriters and performers: Swedish-American labor movement legend Joe Hill; the populist protest songs of Woody Guthrie; Abel Meeropol's 1937 song about lynching, "Strange Fruit" notably sung by Billie Holiday. We investigated Pete Seeger's musical journey from The Weavers to his struggles during the McCarthy era, his work with children, and his campaign to clean up the Hudson River. I encouraged students to make connections between the study materials and contemporary issues. In one example, analysis of Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" led us to discuss organized resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline and citizen response to poisoned drinking water in Flint, Michigan.

After our thorough exploration of these research activities, it was time for creativity and activism. I presented several documentaries: *Gasland; The World According to Monsanto;* and *The Empire Files: The Tyranny of Big Oil.* My goal was to facilitate each student to develop an aesthetic response to recognized threats to air, water and food safety in the form of poetic

Washington, D.C., January 2016

lyrics. I guided the class through a series of free-writing exercises. Students were asked to identify resonant visual metaphors in their writings. We explored ways to amplify and extend these images in poetic form. Then, students were invited to develop a character that personified nature at risk. The class responded with songs in a range of genres: a rhythm and blues ballad; a St. Louis blues number; a catchy funk tune and more. Those new to the creative process shared their poetry and spoken word responses. Each student's offering received constructive feedback from classmates and from me. And each student was resoundingly applauded for his or her efforts.

I was keenly aware of how the songs and movements we studied were relevant in our current political moment. Students were encouraged by the large turnout for protests against President Trumps' travel ban. But protests can be dangerous. We considered Neil Young's 1970 song "Ohio" performed by Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young about student anti-war protests at Kent State University and their tragic outcome within its political and historical context. At this point, I realized that the younger students hadn't been aware of Kent State, nor had they ever seen television documentation of violence at the1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Meanwhile, students who had thus far been silent began contributing to our conversation.

Even as students weighed in on the social and economic implications of President Trump's cabinet appointments, we expanded our investigation, cross-culturally, exploring global music and social movements. The class learned about the legacy of Chilean songwriter and theater director Victor Jara and his arrest and murder during the 1973 political coup of President Salvador Allende. We explored 1970s Jamaican reggae and roots music in a socioeconomic context, focusing on the Rastafarian-influenced, apocalyptic political songs of Bob Marley and Max Romero. The class viewed a documentary on Nigerian Afro-beat pioneer and human rights activist Fela Kuti. We also analyzed 1970s British punk artists' anarchist response to the social policies of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Throughout, the perspective of international students in the class was particularly insightful.

The class discussed threats to women's reproductive rights promoted by the new president's right-wing agenda. We looked at women's musical contributions to social justice movements past and present, some of which were not covered in the textbooks. The class admired African-American jazz musician and civil rights activist Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam" about the 1963 racially motivated bombing of an Alabama church, and her musical genealogy of African-American women, "Four Women." The class was introduced to Native Canadian musician, educator and activist Buffy Sainte-Marie – viewing her early performances of "Universal Soldier" and "Now that the Buffalo's Gone" together with clips of her impactful appearances on Sesame Street in the late '70s. We also discussed representations of women in contemporary pop culture. A lively conversation about Beyoncé's music video of "Formation" from her 2016 album *Lemonade* garnered both praise and critique.

For the final project, students were given the option of writing a research paper or collaborating on a social justice-themed song. Steven Van Zandt's 1985 "Sun City," recorded by Artists United Against Apartheid, served as inspiration for a new song, "Tell Us the Truth!" Students contributed verses and a bridge section, together with a repeating refrain. The last meeting was devoted to developing an ensemble performance of "Tell Us the Truth!"

Musicians in the class, performing on piano, electric guitar and tenor saxophone, came up with a solid arrangement; another served as vocal arranger. In rehearsal, students with little or no performing experience were encouraged to join with the "pros" in song. By the end of the session, this ensemble delivered a spirited rendition of "Tell Us the Truth!" (see Note below).

Students' reflection papers were overwhelmingly positive. Several wrote that they found writing and sharing their songs to be creatively stimulating and even emotionally moving. One student, an arts professional, asserted that this study had prompted a new career direction: social activism through the arts. The rap artist in the class wrote a powerful song commemorating victims of police violence. Another student wrote and illustrated a children's book about the dangers of hydraulic fracturing. Yet another plans to write a novel based on a fantastical character he created for a lyric writing assignment.

In teaching this study, I felt it was crucial for me to maintain my awareness of current events in order to better facilitate class discussion. Throughout, I tried to keep my own political views out of the equation. At times, animated dialogue escalated – these conversations were intense. In the development of social movements, a potent aesthetic response to an issue or injustice has often served as a catalyst for political and social change. Today, protest songs and activist art in other mediums can bear witness to these turbulent times. This postelection teaching experience has deepened my commitment to convey to students that art is seldom made in a vacuum, and to provide them with the sociohistorical framework and practical skills to fully articulate their truths.

Note

For more details and an example of this work, go to Lisa Parkins' LEARNscape channel (ESC login required) at https://learn.esc.edu/channels – search for "Lisa Parkins" and then click on the "Tell Us the Truth" video.

RECONCILING THE PERSONAL WITH THE POLITICAL

Anastasia Pratt

I have always been interested in politics. From the required daily presentation of current events in Mr. North's sixth-grade classroom to my involvement in the Model U.N. and Harvard U.N. programs in high school, I sought out ways to learn more about the world and its people and to find solutions to life's biggest problems. As I grew older, those interests blossomed into college degrees in history and American culture and, finally, an academic career that lets me explore the ways in which art, history, music and literature can become tools of activism.

Before the 2016 presidential election, though, I didn't spend much time thinking about how to weave politics into my courses. Don't get me wrong: I talked about the Guerrilla Girls and their quest for gender parity in the art world; I assigned readings focused on the AIDS quilt as a means of protest and activism; I questioned the ways in which artists of all kinds use their work to seek social justice. But, in many ways, I steered away from the more pressing political issues of the day, wanting to avoid the possibility of letting my own beliefs get in the way. Instead, I pushed students – and myself – to create strong arguments and to gather evidence to support those arguments, regardless of the form of their work.

Then everything changed. It felt like the world tipped upside down and I started to question all of those teaching philosophies. After all, I wondered, isn't it my responsibility to point out the multitude of moral, ethical and legal issues we're facing as a result of the election? While I was pondering that question, I was reading Facebook posts offered by my many like-minded friends, noting that colleagues across the country were bringing the election into their classes and working to raise awareness.

I wasn't comfortable, though, spreading my political views. It's not that I'm shy about what I believe; it's just that I try to separate the personal and public, my private views and work as a teacher. Yet, I couldn't simply avoid the election, not if I wanted to keep

my commitment to the values and principles embodied in American culture degrees, at any rate.

In the end, I decided to focus on the many ways in which political activism and social justice movements intersect with the world of public history. With my graduate students, I considered the manner in which protest signs were collected and archived. We thought about the use of ephemera as both document and exhibit artifact. We probed the history of activism by looking at archives and museums and, simultaneously, we questioned the ethical and professional standards that allowed for that use of the materials.

Political movements are intricately tied to the history and art we exhibit in museums and that we document through archival collections. We, as public historians, organize those materials not to express our own political viewpoints, but to remind ourselves that we are all political beings and that our actions have political and social consequences. We can – and should – use opportunities like the Women's March on Washington or the People's Climate March to complete oral history interviews that will help a future generation of students probe their history. We can – and should – take photographs, collect posters, arrange exhibits, and organize archival holdings that focus on politics and social justice.

At the end of the day, that is our work, our responsibility.

Integrative Public Health Practice: Pathways to Addressing Health Inequalities in Vulnerable Populations

Daramola N. Cabral, California State University, Monterey Bay[1]

Public health practice is concerned with improving human health and the health outcomes of the families across diverse communities in the United States. Public health practice extends to global health, where the nation's health interests and concerns interface with global concerns about the risk for the spread of infectious diseases and risk of biological warfare. Public health science goes beyond biological risk and employs intersectional approaches to understanding disease risk and the factors that mediate differences in disease risk and health outcomes in diverse groups. Through intervention research, public health scientists aim to prolong human life, diminish inequalities in behavioral health risk factors, decrease disparities in health outcomes, and eliminate excess mortality associated with differences in healthcare utilization.

As a public health scientist and epidemiologist, my work is largely focused on cancer prevention and control. Here, I am concerned with the development of intervention models to lower the risk of contracting cancer, where risk can be modified, and improving the health outcomes in those with a diagnosis of cancer. My research is concerned with identifying ways to address inequalities in cancer outcomes to improve disparities in the morbidity and mortality rates among vulnerable and medically disenfranchised groups. Prostate cancer intervention and colorectal prevention and control have been my primary areas of focus over the last few years.

Overall, African-American men have the highest prostate cancer incidence and mortality rates of all racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. Colorectal cancer, one of the few cancers that is preventable through the use of screening, continues to show widening disparities when comparing U.S. whites and African-Americans.

Prostate cancer disease characteristics demonstrate significant ethnic and geographic variations (American Cancer Society, 2016), and prostate cancer incidence and mortality represent a significant public health concern in men of African ancestry worldwide. Approximately 29,530 African-American men were diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2016; this represents 31 percent of all cancers in African-American men. Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer mortality in African-American men, with approximately 4,450 (12 percent) prostate cancer deaths in 2016 (American Cancer Society, 2016).

Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer mortality in African-American men and women, with 7,030 deaths and 17,250 incident cases estimated to occur in 2016 (American Cancer Society, 2016). Ethnic differences in colorectal cancer screening, incidence and mortality are well documented (Zeigler-Johnson et al., 2008). The incidence of colorectal cancer is higher in African-American males and females compared to white Americans (27 percent and 22 percent, respectively) (American Cancer Society, 2016). Trend data in colorectal cancer incidence and mortality have consistently demonstrated an increased risk of colorectal cancer and disease-specific mortality for African-American men and women compared to all other ethnic groups (American Cancer Society, 2016; Zeigler-Johnson et al., 2008). Higher colorectal cancer mortality rates among African-Americans may be indicative of disparities in access to appropriate screening tests, the timeliness of abnormal screening follow-up and treatment, as well as the stage of colorectal cancer diagnosis (Zeigler-Johnson et al., 2008; Kelly, Dickinson, DeGraffinreid, Tatum, & Paskett, 2007).

Daramola N. Cabral

Colorectal cancer, when diagnosed in the early stage, confers considerable survival advantage, and evidence indicates that screening reduces incidence and disease-specific mortality (Carroll, Seaman, & Halloran, 2014). Social determinants potentially associated with colorectal cancer risk perceptions and uptake of timely screening among African-American men are poorly understood. One example of the complexity of the social determinants of colorectal cancer is seen in the following study conducted by Cabral, Dagne and Gishe in 2014. To better understand colorectal cancer risk perceptions in African-American men, we examined the social factors, economic status, and health care utilization patterns in relation to colorectal cancer risk perceptions among participants of the Florida Black Men Health Study (Odedina et al., 2012).

Data were collected using a cross-sectional study design and self-administered survey among men attending organized health forums targeting African-American men (Odedina et al., 2011b). The chi-square tests were used to examine the association between categorical

variables; regression analyses examined the relationship between predictors and outcome variables. The confidence level was set at 90 percent or higher.

The study included 425 African-American men, ages ranging between 30 and 80. Perceptions of risk of colorectal cancer increased with age (P=03). Higher income was associated with greater perceptions of colorectal cancer risk as was health care utilization (P=0.09). Men likely to visit a doctor when sick compared to those who were not, had a higher perception of colorectal cancer risk (P=0.08). Health care costs posed barriers to care and were significantly associated with lower perceptions of colorectal cancer risk (P=0.03). Married men, compared to those widowed or divorced, were more likely to perceive their risk of colorectal cancer to be much lower than the average risk in men (P=0.03).

Overall, African-American men have the greatest colorectal cancer risk and mortality rate, yet their perception of the colorectal cancer risk is low. Financial barriers to health care limit timely screening, which perpetuates inequalities in colorectal cancer survival. The above results suggest that accurate tailored education about colorectal cancer screening is needed. The influence of marital status on colorectal cancer screening warrants further exploration. In addition, while this study did not find differences in colorectal cancer risk perceptions within ethnic groups, the need for larger community-based studies to elucidate and address disparities among subgroups of black Americans is recommended (Odedina et al., 2011a).

Studies such as the above informed and inspired the development of the Pathways to Total Health Community Summit,[2] which provided a forum to engage in conversations about ways to improve total health and to address challenges in cancer control research and practice. The summit, cosponsored by SUNY Empire State College and the Brooklyn Health Disparities Center, was held on October 14, 2016 and aimed to elevate community conversations and actions about improving the health outcomes in African people in general, and specifically health disparities that could be addressed through timely and adequate cancer screening and

follow-up of abnormal test results. The take-away message from the Pathways Summit was that a stronger and more vibrant "culture of health" can ultimately lead to consistently wiser individual and collective choices, which would lead to better health and health outcomes in the black community. The keynote speaker, Robin Roberts, MD, from the School of Clinical Medicine and Research at the University of the West Indies, offered a fresh perspective in his opening address: " … Go upstream" and identify risk of disease early. Upstream is where you have the opportunity to provide interventions early when the chance for cure and survival are optimal.

We live in a global society with dynamic population shifts, and rapidly changing societal norms. New public health challenges are emerging, and existing models of health promotion and risk intervention may not delivery the anticipated results. New approaches are required to address the public health needs of the diverse populations in the U.S. A new 21st century perspective, integrative public health, is a much-needed model to guide public health practice going forward.

Integrative public health, just as in integrative medicine, considers the whole person. " … [K]ey dimensions of human experience, frequently presented in opposition to each other (e.g. subjective-objective; individual-collective), need to be understood as integral to the whole" (Hanlon, Carlisle, Reilly, Lyon, & Hannah, 2010, p. 1). My current research employs integrative approaches, wherein I seek to understand the key dimensions of the health experience. Included in the model are cultural-factors, which inform perceptions/beliefs about disease; bio-social-environmental factors, which help to understand disease risk; and historical factors, to gain greater insights about factors that influence health care utilization in vulnerable populations. This approach is integral to understanding the "whole" and guides the development of integrative models of health promotion to address health risk, health care inequalities, and disparities in morbidity and excess mortality in vulnerable populations.

Notes

[1] Daramola N. Cabral was formerly mentor and lead faculty in the ESC-CAHE Allied Health Partnership, Brooklyn location. She is now professor and chair of Health, Human Services and Public Policy at California State University, Monterey Bay.

[2] Visit https://www.esc.edu/totalhealth2016/ for more information about the Pathways to Total Health Community Summit.

"New approaches are required to address the public health needs of the diverse populations in the U.S. A new 21st century perspective, integrative public health, is a much-needed model to guide public health practice going forward."

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Sustainability, Passion and Writing for Children

Lorraine Lander, Canandaigua

Like many people who loved to read as a child, I once dreamed of becoming a writer when I grew up. That desire was pushed aside, however, by what seemed like more practical and concrete goals such as acquiring an education, earning a doctorate, establishing a career as a college professor, raising a family, and realizing a personal dream to have a piece of land and live in the country. I have been very fortunate to have achieved these goals and more over my lifetime, and like many lifelong learners, I sought out a new goal when these pieces were in place.

Twelve years ago, I took up the issues around sustainability education after attending a local conference, and have worked since to make it an important piece of my academic work, both in teaching and in scholarship. After moving to Canandaigua and settling into my home there, I sought a new challenge for my personal time and wanted something that would give back to the world, as well as engage my imagination and self-directed learning interests. The idea of creative writing had come and gone over the years, although there was never sufficient time to seriously consider it. As I contemplated becoming a writer, the idea emerged that I could do something that would contribute to the knowledge and development of children related to the environment and sustainability. The fact that writing for children pulls together many of my academic interests and understandings (from my doctoral studies, which focused on cognitive and motivational development of children), and allows me to combine these with creativity and a little fun, made the idea of working to become a children's author a worthy goal for my free time.

Still, there were decisions to make about what style of writing I wanted to use and what audience of children I wanted to reach. I also wanted my writing efforts to be meaningful. I settled on writing for preteens and young teens because these ages fall within an important time cognitively when children are just beginning to explore abstract ideas, pull away from their parents, and venture out into a world of peers and ideas other than those of their own family and culture. The type of stories to write was another issue I explored and considered. There is a range of styles and approaches to stories that could connect with this group, but I remembered back to the stories and authors that influenced me. As a result, I made the decision that part of my goal was to write stories involving magic and adventure that children would enjoy reading, but that would also help them to think differently about our world. One important goal was to instill in children some of the values that underline sustainability and protection of the environment. There was also a strong civic engagement motivation for me, in that focusing on themes related to sustainability in an engaging way would be another means for me to make the world a little bit better place. Thus, my journey to becoming an author began seven and a half years ago, although I was not sure how to be an author or if drive alone would be enough.

Academic Background Ideas, Themes and Concepts

There are several intriguing ideas from my academic studies that connect with my interest in writing for children. One of those involves the concept of "bibliotherapy." Broadly conceived, bibliotherapy is about using the reading of stories to connect emotionally with a reader in ways that deepen or change their understandings. Among those to first use the term was Samuel McChord Crothers in an article for *The Atlantic Monthly* published in 1916, but bibliotherapy has a much longer history going back to ancient times. It is primarily used in two contexts: education and psychotherapy. Bibliotherapy in education involves helping readers to change their thinking or to grow in understanding. For example, having a child read about someone
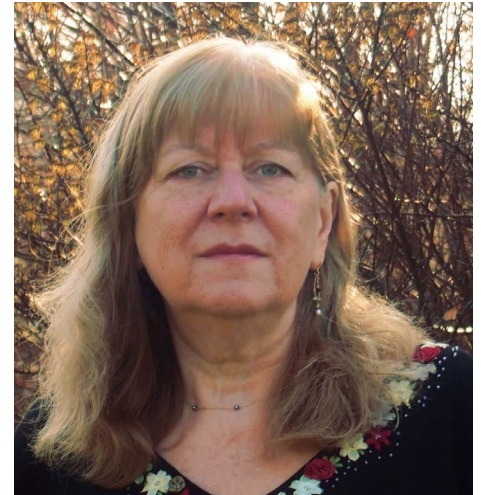
Lorraine Lander

who is bullied is a far more effective way of helping that child understand bullying and reducing its prevalence, than having a standard academic lecture about the topic and telling children it is wrong. Bibliotherapy has also been used in the context of psychotherapy, again to help readers to explore emotions and change thinking. My main interest lies with the first usage, as I see stories as important to children's development in multiple ways. For example, reading can be particular valuable to their growing moral and ethical reasoning, particularly because these abilities come out of experiences of empathy (Kohlberg, 1976), which can be gained through reading stories. Bibliotherapy is also considered one important approach of character education.

Character education (Berkowitz, 2002; Hayes & Hagedorn, 2000) focuses on encouraging children to become good citizens. As such, and because it promotes more ethical and responsible behavior, bibliotherapy and character education, I believe, support the future development of wisdom, another topic I have explored for several years in my academic writing. One of the important overlapping components of both wisdom and sustainability is a concern for others. In my scholarly writing

Volume One: A Color Chronicles Novel

Curse of the Golden Eye
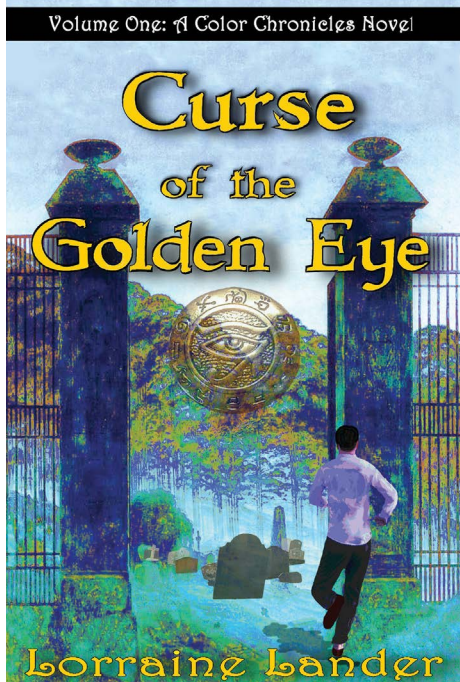
Lorraine Lander

The Color Chronicles Series

(Lander, 2017), I propose that sustainability thinking and behavior is a subset – a kind of wisdom-in-action – and that there are four "pillars" or components of wisdom. These pillars include knowledge, thinking skills, ethical reasoning and civic engagement (acting in the best interests of others). My writing for children most specifically connects with the last two: ethical reasoning, as it relates to character education; and civic engagement, the application of the first three pillars, including encouraging prosocial behavior toward others and our communities, as well as the planet. Knowing that the stories I write can provide this broadening of understanding of ideas and can encourage civic engagement is one of the most exciting parts of my efforts to be an author.

My academic background and interests are foundational to many of the themes and character motivations that I write into my stories. Having been immersed in the field of sustainability and sustainability education for several years now, there is no shortage of issues that can be woven into stories for children. For example, one prominent idea written about by Louv (2005) and others is the loss of access to experiences outside in nature, either informally through play, or formally through nature education. Promoting a love of nature

is a major goal of one book series on which I am currently working, and this work draws on my own childhood and the awe and wonder I received then and still experience from time spent in nature.

The goal of incorporating the environment and sustainability into my writing is always in the background of my thinking, either through having characters explore a theme like peer pressure and consumption, or engaging in an activity like helping animals poisoned by toxic waste dumping. Sometimes I need to research and learn more about an academic idea when it is foundational to a story element. For example, in my current book, the main character must complete a quest to be awarded her magic wand. Part of this quest involves demonstrating five virtues that will be inscribed with mystic symbols into her wand. Writing this story idea has me looking back at the academic work on wisdom and virtues and considering which to have the story include. This is just one of many examples of how my stories weave back and forth with my academic work.

Hard Work, Big Doses of Creative Energy and Learning a Wide Range of New Skills

I started my journey to becoming a writer by taking a Creative Writing course through the college, and began to learn about free writing and finding my voice while I wrote short stories (not knowing at this time that I would settle on writing for children). Another first step I took was to join several writers groups and associate myself with published authors, since I have read that in order to be successful at a venture, it is helpful to find those who already are. I found that beginning writers were welcome and it did not matter what type of writing I wanted to do, since I was told that much of the craft of writing is the same across genres. I took my first tentative steps and when a few pages were complete, I was given feedback from group members. My knowledge grew as I learned to revise my work, as well as how to take constructive feedback with thick skin. I became familiar with the phrase "let go of your darlings," which refers to the emotional difficulties of hitting the delete button, particularly over long sections of your work.

Volume Two: A Color Chronicles Novel

Legend of the Blue Skull
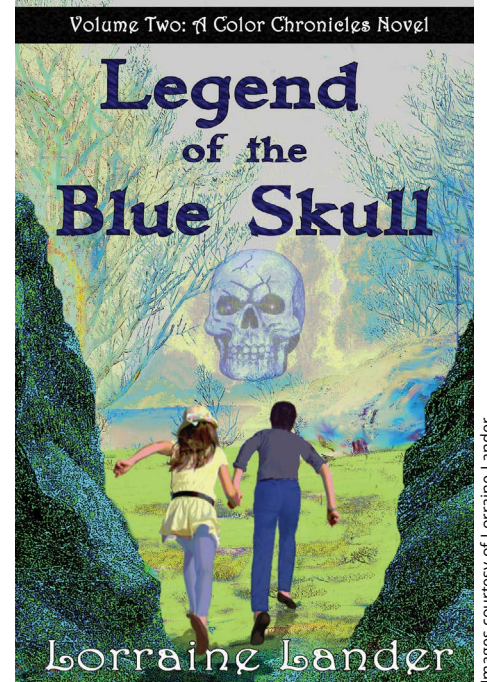
Lorraine Lander

The Color Chronicles Series

Over time, I learned to give helpful feedback, as well, as I built my repertoire of writing knowledge and skills.

I immersed myself in other learning opportunities related to writing and subscribed to magazines for writers, attended workshops and even a national writers' conference in New York City. Most of all, I kept writing and experimenting about how to go about it. I tried plotting my work in great detail, which did not work well, as I found when I got into the middle of scenes in my story and realized that it no longer made sense for a character to act the way I had plotted them to respond. That meant I was a "pantser": someone who "writes by the seat of their pants." I actually tend to think of it as more of a psychological approach, in that when I put a character into a situation, it is then and only then, when I am deeply in their point of view, that I can conceive of how he or she would likely respond.

Other basic elements of writing were also investigated. For example, I explored writing in third-person and first-person constructions and finally made the decision to use the first-person perspective to better immerse my reader in the experiences of the main character, and promote the kind of empathetic response and exploration of alternative views that I was
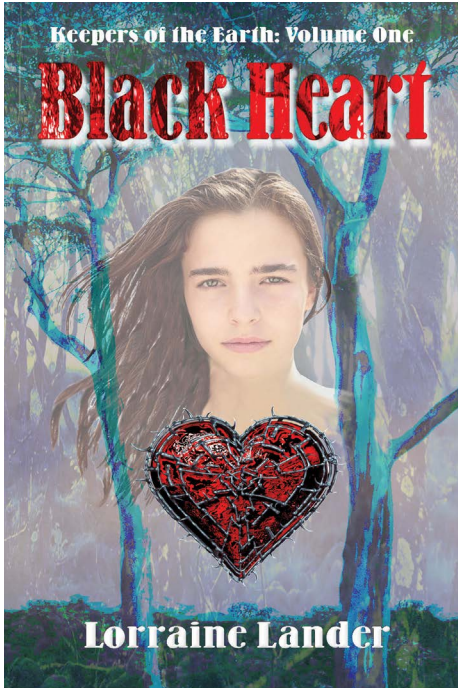
Keepers of the Earth Series

Keepers of the Earth Series

seeking to evoke. After two years, I finished my first preteen (also called middle grade) novel, called *Curse of the Golden Eye* (2016: Wellbrook Publishing). I shared it with friends and family and as many children from 8 to 12 years of age as I could find. The feedback was positive or people were nice – writers are never completely sure, especially when they are new.

I learned so much with this first book about myself as a writer, what I was inherently better at (plot and dialogue), and what I needed to work on more (word choice and avoiding passive tone). I learned I had "pet words" I used too much and that my characters should not plan what they are going to do in their heads and then do the action, as this was boring for readers, but that characters should just *do* whatever the plot needed. As time has gone on, I have acquired an even deeper understanding that writing stories is not exactly the same as describing what happens in real life, but it is about taking the right bits and pieces of real life to convey the story in a way that engages the reader's own imagination. In other words, readers are co-creators of a story as they are experiencing it, and this was important to understand and support as a writer. Thus, it didn't matter if I envisioned the slope that my character climbed down to have trees on it or not, but if that is how the reader pictured

it given their own experience with climbing on slopes, then he or she would be more immersed and the story more real for him or her.

I learned so many things with this first book, but I knew that in order to get better and learn more that I needed to write another book. This one was a young adult novel, *Black Heart* (2017: Wellbrook Publishing), with a 14-year-old main character. As I wrote and the story went on and on, it ended up being too long. I had to face my rambling approach to writing and learn to be more succinct. I went to a writers retreat and reduced my novel by 25,000 words in three days by ruthlessly deleting all of those roundabout phrases and useless scenes. Some of these tendencies to write passively still drift back into the early drafts I write today, but I know now to edit them out. In fact, the important lessons I learned about being succinct in my writing have not only helped my fiction writing, but also my academic writing.

Probably the most important step I took in my writer's journey was to band together three years ago with two local, published authors to form a critique group. We meet every two to three weeks and our goal is to share 20 new pages of writing for each meeting. This has been wonderful to ensure I am productive and keep getting work completed, as well as to work on becoming a better writer and gain the benefit of two excellent editors of my work. We critique each other's pages and provide a wide range of supports about other aspects of writing and being an author, such as how to market our work. At this pace, I can write approximately 500 pages a year, which is two books for my audience. Since joining up with my critique friends, I have rewritten my first novel, broken the second one into two separate books, written two more books, and recently finished a third. Two books are now in print as of 2016 (described below); two are newly in print as of spring 2017; and the other two are planned for summer 2017.

One important thing I've learned about writing is a lesson about productivity. If you write often, even if not for very long, you can be very productive. The time it takes to me to write those 20 pages for each meeting and polish them varies greatly, but may be two to four hours in total, not counting thinking time
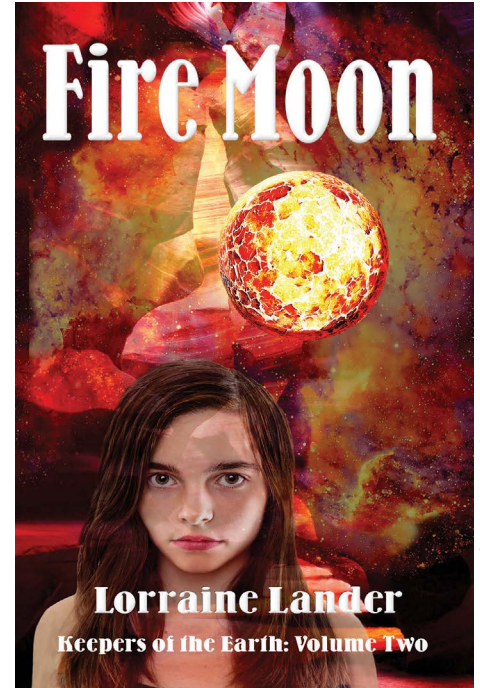
to come up with ideas, so I meet this goal for most meetings. One benefit I have found to the regularity of these critique meetings is that I can now anticipate the comments of my friends and know that if I take a shortcut in the story, that one or the other or both of my critique partners will call me on my sloppiness at our next meeting. Thus, my draft pages for critique have become better than when we started working together. I am not sure if any author ever feels they have gotten as good as they might be, and I freely admit that part of the motivation to write is to continue to grow and learn. I doubt that will ever go away.

People ask me sometimes how I find time to write, and I respond that I do not watch television, for one thing, nor have I had cable in more than 10 years at my home. This means I cannot engage in active discussions of the latest episode of *Game of Thrones* or other popular television shows, but I am OK with that trade-off. My evenings are about reading or writing. I have found that both are essential to being a writer.

More on What I Learned

In addition to what I mentioned earlier about readers being co-creators with the writer, I have learned other important things

and changed other understandings as I have worked on my writing. For example, I feel that it is not true that an author should always show and not tell, although this advice is commonly given to new writers. In fact, you cannot "tell" everything that happens to a character. I believe that the true craft of writing involves knowing when to show and when to tell.

I attended an interesting workshop two years ago on the importance of engaging your reader in "rooting" for your main character. The presenter reported her own research into the differences between beginning writers and experienced, successful writers where she found that those who sell more books include more details in the opening pages of their stories to pull the reader in and ensure that they want to "root for" or empathize with your characters. I concluded that not only was developing my readers' interest in rooting for my main character important to marketing my stories, but it also seems important to help readers to identify and empathize with characters, thus strengthening the bibliotherapy effects.

Another article I read suggested that an author does not necessarily need to engage a reader at the beginning of a story, as much as maintain that engagement. This idea is based on the premise that readers are trained by their previous reading experiences to suspend their disbelief and enter the world of the story. Thus, what an author needs to concentrate on, perhaps, more than initial engagement is maintaining the engagement of their readers. This is where story logic, believable dialogue, matching motivation with action, and a host of elements of story become important. Having had the experience myself as a reader immersed in a story where in the early pages the heroine has brown hair and suddenly on page 40 she has blond hair with no explanation, and being pulled right out of the story world at this inconsistency, I appreciate the importance of these story elements.

Using my creative energies as a writer is another area that I have learned a great deal about during the last seven and a half years. One of the first ideas I encountered as a new writer in the Creative Writing course I took was the belief that being too critical of your work as you write your early drafts can stifle creativity. Turning off your "internal editor"

thus becomes important. One fascinating aspect of this process for me has been going into a "flow state" where the ideas of what should happen next and what characters will say in dialogue come so quickly that I must type as fast as I can what comes into my head. Time flies by, and when these hot streaks of writing take place, I may stay up until midnight or after as the words fly out. I especially want to take advantage of these sessions, given there are also many times when the words do not come out much at all.

There is also a cognitive aspect to writing stories. As a writer, I often have story problems that I am trying to solve. The irony is that I typically spend the first parts of the story building a host of problems for my main characters, and then the latter parts trying to figure out how they will solve them. Because I am a pantser, I often do not know the answer. Part of what I have learned about creativity, then, is to trust that somehow, my subconsciousness works on these issues in the background, and if I am patient, the answer pops out into my consciousness, usually in a day or two. And when this happens, I quickly jot down notes on the details so I can incorporate them into my manuscript.

There is an emotional side to being a writer that also involves gaining new insights into my own psyche and acquiring skills to handle the ups and downs of the process. For example, early on, I had to learn to take friendly feedback, but there are still times when it is not easy to listen to numerous suggestions for improvement or questions about why I did this or that. I keep reminding myself that it is part of the process of being a good writer. Having had numerous people volunteer to read my work, I would much rather hear that this part dragged for you or that you did not like when I did this to a character, than to hear all positive comments because the positive comments do not help me get better and grow as a writer. I think this continuous striving for improvement connects with one of the most difficult things that a new writer needs to learn, and that is, when do you put your work out there and consider it finished? No one will tell you when it is time to share or time to seek publication; it is a decision that you have to make for yourself.

I have also learned many things about the current state of the publishing industry, which is changing rapidly as a result of mergers, competition with Amazon, and the emergence of e-books. Historically, the route to being a published author led either through direct solicitation and acceptance by a publisher, or gaining representation by an agent who would find you a publisher. A third option, self-publishing, has emerged as a viable option, particularly for newer authors. The reality of the current state of the publishing world is that new authors are not given much in the way of marketing support by publishers, as most of that goes to established authors. The expectation, even with a traditional publishing contract, is that you do your own marketing when you are new. I believe that the publishing field is becoming similar to the music industry where musicians make their own CDs, develop a following and "prove" themselves before being offered recording contracts. In similar fashion, new authors may benefit from initially self-publishing their work, since they do their own marketing either way and self-publishing allows them to keep a far larger amount of the royalties from their sales. Then, once they have established some following, they can look for traditional publication paths. It also takes time and energy to market your work to publishers and agents, which could better be diverted to marketing actual book sales. The realities of the options of the traditional route versus newer options have encouraged many new authors, including me, to venture into the new frontier of self-publication.

> " … I would much rather hear that this part dragged for you or that you did not like when I did this to a character, than to hear all positive comments because the positive comments do not help me get better and grow as a writer."

My Books and Series

As I mentioned earlier, my primary goal is to write fun stories full of imagination and adventure that also convey important ideas. To this end, I have ambitiously started three series, each with a slightly different focus in relation to environmental and sustainability ideas.

- *The Color Chronicles Series* (two volumes published in 2016, including *Curse of the Golden Eye* and *Legend of the Blue Skull):* This series revolves around the adventures of a 12-year-old boy and girl who are best friends. It is a series that blends science fiction and fantasy with an *Indiana Jones* flavor to the stories. Themes in this series revolve around what being a hero means as the main characters acquire magical powers that they must learn to control and use. It also explores how peer pressure influences both children and their parents, as well as delves into greed and its consequences. Themes about the environment are woven in, for example, the girl's grandmother is the leader of a group called DIRNT (Do I Really Need That) which raises the issues of the "three R's": reduce, reuse and recycle.

- *Keepers of the Earth Series* (two volumes published in spring 2017: *Black Heart* and *Fire Moon):* This series' stories are more true ecoadventures, as they focus on a group of teens with special abilities who work to help the environment and save animal and plant life, although this brings them in contact with villains they must confront. There are strong Native American influences to the stories. Other themes involve protection of habitat and how greed affects the natural world in terms of pollution and habitat loss. The main characters also struggle with being heroes and learning how best to use their powers to make the world better and safer.

- *Terra Everlasting Series (The Gaia Tree* and *Foreverwood,* due out soon):* This series I laughingly call *"Harry Potter* for girls,"* as the stories revolve around a school for magical children, although that's where the comparison tends to end. The main character is a 12-year-old human girl who finds herself suddenly immersed in a world of magic and invited to attend a school for magical Elven children. I try to incorporate awe and wonder about nature into this series as the characters have both fun and not so fun experiences learning to use magic and making magical friends, with much of the magic involving nature. For example, the main character is friends with two dragonflies that end up being magically turned into real dragons. Themes of this series also include what it is like to be different and experiencing discrimination and prejudice as the main character is the only human at the Elven school.

In addition to writing the stories, I am also developing educational materials for readers, parents, teachers, and librarians to use, including discussion questions and lesson plans related to the themes. Other materials include activities and projects using recycled materials, such as making bookmarks, how to start a DIRNT group, and looking at the lifecycle of products. There are many materials out there to support sustainability education for children, which connect with the themes of my stories. Finding and organizing them is my goal with this work.

Marketing is a current frontier of learning that I am immersed in right now. Many of the workshops and articles I have been reading since I began writing have been about marketing, as it is essential to getting my message out to readers. One of the basics is having a website and a domain name (I bought and created www.lorrainelander.com), but that's only the beginning. Facebook and other social media formats are also important, so I am in the process of creating Facebook pages for each of my books where I will post the educational materials described earlier, as well as other relevant information. For example, one thing I have done is to create a Pinterest board for each of my books with images that inspired me in the writing of the book. Book covers are another area of consideration in marketing and include not only the image on the front and back, but the back cover content where you must describe your story in an enticing way. Marketing decisions about pricing and advertising are also important areas to explore and become competent in.

More Plans and Goals: The Future

At this point, I have three series well underway, each with their own flavor and themes. I have become fond of my main characters, and like me, they must learn and grow. New adventures will help them with that growth and I hope my readers will grow along with them. As I finish up my current work in progress, I must decide which series to work on next. In this regard, I wish that I had a crystal ball to see which series will be more popular with readers or reach a wider audience so I could know best where to put my energies. All I can do, though, is keep marketing and see what sells and what does not.

There are other marketing opportunities that I have yet to explore. School visits are one option for writers who target preteen and teen audiences. Actually talking about writing or reading short pieces of work to classes in school will not only help promote my work, but will give me valuable insights into the hearts and minds of these age groups. As well, book signings and book talks at libraries and bookstores may be on the horizon, which will involve research about what to do and how to do a good job, then carrying out what I learn.

I believe I will always work on the craft of writing and I continue to feel that I am growing as a writer, while deepening my understanding of the process. I am also becoming more efficient, in that it takes me less time to get a scene or a section of dialogue in a way that I (or my critique partners) are happy with. I take the work of writing for children very seriously because I feel that it

> *"Actually talking about writing or reading short pieces of my work to classes in school will not only help promote my work, but will give me valuable insights into the hearts and minds of these age groups."*

is important for helping children deal with difficult issues, so they can grow and develop, and become better people. On the other hand, it has been great fun at times to put myself back in the mindset of a 12- or 14-year-old and imagine what it would be like to have to hide two baby dragons in my bedroom, or have the magic books I got for school start fighting with each other. The question I often ask myself as I write a story is "what next?" I believe the answer to this question for my work as a children's author is to keep reading and writing stories for children.

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"Post-traditional learners:
1) Are needed wage earners for themselves or their families;
2) Combine work and learning at the same time or move between them frequently;
3) Pursue knowledge, skills, and credentials that employers will recognize and compensate;
4) Require developmental education to be successful in college-level courses; and
5) Seek academic/career advising to navigate their complex path to degree."

– Louis Soares, "Post-traditional Learners and the Transformation of Postsecondary Education: A Manifesto for College Leaders"
American Council on Education, 2013, p. 2

Exploratory Study of Perceived Barriers to Program Participation and Completion

Jung Min Lee, University of South Florida

Introduction

The State University of New York (SUNY) Manhattan Educational Opportunity Center (MEOC) is part of a network of educational institutions funded by the New York State Legislature through the SUNY University Center for Academic and Workforce Development (UCAWD). Founded in 1966, the MEOC offers academic and vocational training programs to New York state residents, particularly in the Harlem community. The primary goal of the MEOC program always has been to effectively serve the adult students in their catchment areas through providing high quality educational experiences. This study describes the program's first systematic attempt to help to explain how low program enrollment could be increased by focusing on determining possible barriers to student participation in the SUNY-MEOC, as well as factors and techniques that could promote student retention.

Methods

Setting

The SUNY-MEOC student population is diverse in age, ethnicity, country of origin and catchment area. Approximately 50 different countries are represented in the student population. In addition, 30 different languages are spoken in the students' households including French, Haitian-Creole, Swahili, Mandarin, Bengali, Arabic and Spanish. Most students identify as African-American or black and Latino/Hispanic descent, with many speaking English as a second language. The median age of the students is 33, with Generation Y or millennials (ages 19 to 34) accounting for the largest group of students, and women accounting for approximately two-thirds of the student population. This rich diversity enhances and challenges the environment

for students, and reflects the global and intergenerational reality in educational and occupational settings.

Participants

There were 10 EOC programs in the SUNY system at the time of this study, but this research focused on only one: the Manhattan program. The participants for this study were 35 student volunteers drawn from the 300 students who had an email address among all those who registered during the 2017 spring semester, and 15 teachers who volunteered from the 30 teachers (four full-time instructors and 26 part-time instructors). Participation was anonymous, voluntary and uncompensated.

This study used quantitative methods to identify perceived barriers to program participation from both students and teachers. The study also assessed teachers' self-perceptions of competency related to adult education standards, and also their insights regarding sources of student motivation and methods and techniques for maintaining program participation among adult students. All student and teacher survey data were collected using SurveyMonkey (a free online survey tool).

Results

Student Survey

Survey results indicated that only 3.3 percent of the respondents reported child care as an issue. Elman and O'Rand's (2007) study supported this finding because there was no statistical evidence showing that marital status or having children early affected the likelihood of women returning to school as adults.

This was noteworthy given that program directors might have assumed this would be a significant barrier because the majority of program participants were women. Survey

Jung Min Lee

Photo credit: Jerry Em

results indicated, in order of importance, the following institutional barriers: "Amount of time required to complete programs" (40.7 percent); "Amount of class time required" (37 percent); and "Strict attendance requirement" (37 percent). Interestingly, it was still less than half of the respondents who stated lack of time for program completion as a main institutional barrier. This, too, was noteworthy, and somewhat contrary to stereotypes regarding adult learners.

Ostiguy, Hopp and MacNeil (1998) identified "no course interest" and "lack of course information" as major institutional barriers, and Sloane-Seale and Kops (2008) found "insufficient offerings of courses of interest" and "lack of course information" to be most important. Both results are different than those for SUNY-MEOC students.

It is noteworthy that around one-third (34.6 percent) of SUNY-MEOC respondents stated that concerns about age and "school failures in the past" were important. The outlook for participation in adult education programs will vary based upon the influences of past

TABLE 1. RESULTS OF STUDENT SURVEY

Answer Options	Response Percent
Situational Barriers	
Not enough time for study/homework	66.7%
Home responsibilities	50.0%
Job responsibilities	40.0%
No or not enough money for MetroCard	40.0%
No place to study or practice	16.7%
Friends, family or relatives don't like the idea of going to school	13.3%
No or not enough child care	03.3%
Institutional Barriers	
Amount of time required to complete programs	40.7%
Amount of class time required	37.0%
Strict attendance requirement	37.0%
Did not meet entrance requirements for desired program	25.9%
Entrance or progression to higher program requirements	22.2%
Not enough opportunity for workshops that fit my schedule	14.8%
Courses/programs are not scheduled when I can attend	11.1%
Dispositional Barriers	
Afraid that I'm too old to begin or continue with program	34.6%
Low grades and school failures in the past – not confident of my ability	34.6%
Not enough energy and stamina to keep up with school work and other responsibilities	30.8%
Don't understand classroom materials but afraid to ask questions or ask for help	23.1%
Don't know what to learn or what it would lead to	15.4%
Don't really enjoy studying	11.5%
Don't want to associate with classmates and instructors	03.8%
Tired of school, tired of classrooms	00.0%

experiences, such as, the influence of family and education experiences as children and youth. "Having a troubled education history and poor performance in high school is negatively associated with participation in adult education" (Bamber & Tett, 2000; Belzer, 2004). However, none of the participants (0.0 percent) indicated that they were tired of school or tired of classrooms. This suggests that although self-confidence or self-efficacy as a student may be low, intrinsic motivation and determination remain at high levels.

Teachers' Results

Several open-ended questions addressed barriers to program participation, sources of student motivation, and methods and techniques to motivate these students inside and outside the classroom. Among the barriers noted by the teachers who responded to the first open-ended question were: "transportation problems," "trouble arranging childcare or elder care," "too little time for studying," "lack of preparation for the study program," "difficulties competing with younger students," "physical and mental illness," and "substance abuse."

The second open-ended question addressed sources of student motivation. Teachers indicated that learners are often "motivated through tangible awards" (certificates, recognition of their accomplishments), "immediate positive feedback," "a sense of belonging and being part of a community," "peer support," and "resources being available and extra support to help them balance between their daily responsibilities" in order to develop increased participation in learning experiences.

Finally, when asked how to motivate students inside and outside the classroom, teachers suggested "providing technology for learners with special needs," "promoting laws and regulations to further assist students," "taking periodic refresher workshops on adult learning theory," "more communicative and learner-centered approaches to literacy development including a discussion of concrete ways to apply these theories," and identifying ways "to engage with students inside and outside the classroom." "Sheer determination and self-reliance" (Goto & Martin, 2009; Kasworm, 2010) are driving forces for adult learners, even though dispositional barriers can often be resolved individually (Cross, 1981).

Discussion and Conclusion

This exploratory study investigated the extent to which situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers influenced program participation and program persistence among students in an urban adult education center. Findings suggest that situation barriers still exert a substantial influence on program participation, though the expression of these barriers may not be as expected. It is reasonable that program directors and other administrators agree that situational barriers and home responsibilities, serve as impediments to returning to college for women. (Osam, Bergman, & Cumberland, 2017). Nonetheless, one factor stands out in this research: students lack sufficient time to participate in these programs. This finding

is consistent with other studies noting the influence of situational barriers (Chang, Wu, & Lin, 2012; Dench & Regan, 2000; Ostiguy, Hopp, & MacNeil, 1997; Pevoto, 1989; Sloane-Seale & Kops, 2008). Lack of time is also a barrier represented under institutional barriers, though course scheduling, per se, was not among the most significant barriers reported by students.

Finally, one important factor that stood out in these results is the importance of student self-confidence (dispositional barrier). Advisors and counselors must work with individual learners using strength-based approaches to build students' self-efficacy and self-confidence as learners. They should also work closely with course instructors (before or after class) to offer encouragement and course-specific advisements. This could also be done by offering regularly scheduled life skills, career and employment preparation workshops, and by implementing technology workshops.

Findings from this study suggest that personal motivation is essential in order for adult learners to overcome deterrent barriers to program participation. Programs, however, can help by providing friendly and welcoming learning environments, both in classrooms and outside of classrooms, opportunities for self-exploration, realization activities and community engagement. In addition, they should provide counseling services and other supports to help those students who experience difficulty in dealing with admissions and advising staff (Kasworm, 2010). Institutions and programs should also consider access to emergency cash in case of dire financial situations to help students to persist with a program.

Instructors should provide constant and consistent feedback on student attendance and classroom performance, as well as programmatic incentives upon successful completion of a milestone. In addition, they should share with adult learners how a skill they are about to teach had helped a real person in the past or even saved them academically. They also should make an effort to identify successful peers and have them share their experiences.

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What Is It Like to Teach Online Courses?

Miriam Russell, Latham and Saratoga Springs; Linda Lawrence, Saratoga Springs

Miriam Russell has taught college writing classes online since 2002, specifically the Introduction to College Reading and Writing, and Effective Academic Writing courses. In addition, she teaches an International Programs course, Communication for Success, with students from Turkey and the Dominican Republic. Linda Lawrence, coordinator of instructor development, interviewed her for a podcast,[1] an edited version of which is provided here.

Linda Lawrence: Miriam, would you tell us what it is like to teach online classes?

Miriam Russell: Each online class section offered by [SUNY] Empire State College uses the same Moodle templates with updates from time to time, but basically they are so well constructed, it's hard to improve them. Each term, the experience is wonderfully challenging and rewarding because the students are always different, with different skills and points of view.

L.L.: What has been your biggest challenge in teaching online?

M.R.: I started teaching college writing courses at a distance before they went online. We received written assignments from students by mail and returned our responses the same way. When online courses appeared, and discussions became an important activity, we had to decide how much students and faculty would take part in the discussions. Therefore, we had to grapple with two questions:

1. How can we get students to participate in the discussions?

First, provide students with clear expectations in regard to quantity and quality of posts. Grading discussions gives them the importance they have in the online learning process, and the grader function makes it easy to grade each student's participation in each discussion topic. We expect at least three posts and/or replies for each discussion topic. The course information should also list the qualities of *excellent* posts as the following:

- Show excellent understanding and command of the content.

- Participate frequently (more than three times per week).

- Summarize the conversation in order to make a point.

- Give specific examples, suggestions, and comments on course concepts and others' writing.

- Analyze the content by applying course concepts.

A clear contrast is also provided for students. *Unsatisfactory* posts are characterized as:

- Showing minimal understanding of the content.

- Occurring fewer than three times per week.

- Adding no ideas to the conversation (e.g., posts such as "I agree" and "I disagree," in themselves, do not forward the conversation).

2. How can we use our instructor presence to guide or coach students toward greater critical thinking when they post in their discussions?

Students will likely be challenged to think critically in the discussions themselves if instructors strive to become partners in learning with their students by using Socratic questions that may probe assumptions like, "What do you imply here?" Or question viewpoints like "What would someone who might disagree say about this topic?" ESC mentor Nazik Roufaiel's Hierarchy of Socratic Questions chart (see following page) is a highly useful tool for discussion forum feedback.

Before I leave the topic of online discussions, let me share a brilliant method for using self-assessments of discussions that comes from one of the college writing courses I teach that was created by our colleague, Susan

Miriam Russell and Linda Lawrence

Oaks. At midterm, one of the graded writing assignments is for students to write a reflective self-assessment of their own performance in the first half of the term, which I grade. In the last module, they will do another self-assessment the same way. Their final discussion grade is an average of the two! Interestingly, students are often harder on themselves in these assessments that I would be.

L.L.: How is teaching online different than in a face-to-face setting?

M.R. When I taught writing in "face-to-face" classes, I was responsible for preparing and organizing the curriculum and course schedule, which often is already done when you teach online in a pre-designed course. In face-to-face classes, I had two 50-minute periods weekly to introduce new material, provide feedback and help students use it to write assignments. There was never enough time during class to accomplish this, and very few students could meet with me during my "office hours," as they ran to their work or family obligations.

By teaching online courses, not only can I provide individualized feedback that students can use to master any individual writing problems, but I can concentrate on meeting the Empire State College motto to become the "guide on the side" rather than the "sage on

HIERARCHY OF SOCRATIC QUESTIONS

Question Function	Socratic Question Examples
Clarification	What do you mean? Give me an example; What does this relate to? How did you reach this conclusion? Help me understand.
Probe Assumptions	What does he assume? How do you justify your point of view? Why does she think that way? Is it always the case?
Probe Reasons and Evidences	What evidence do you have to support this idea? Is there a reason for this?
Question Viewpoint	How do you view the group responses? What would someone with the opposing view say?
Probe Implications	What do you imply? What is another alternative? What effect would that have?
Questions about Questions	Would you put the question differently? Is this issue important to your argument? Is it possible to answer this question? Why is he asking this question? Can you tell me what type of solution do you think it might be? Is your question asking us to evaluate? Is that the right question to ask in this case? How could someone settle this question?
Source: Based on Roufaiel as cited in Russell, 2013.	

the stage." I like to think my teaching is more like coaching, where I can observe how the student performs. A tennis coach might note how the student grips the racket well but isn't following through. He is certain to point out both characteristics.

With formative feedback, it's as vital to find the strengths in each assignment and note progress from one assignment to the next as it is to point out weaknesses. For example, if a student is "comma happy" using comma splices that create run-on sentences, I send him or her a YouTube video on the topic. By the way, there are a number of wonderful videos on practically everything on writing. Not all are good, but I have made it a point to send students to the best ones on punctuation and grammar. Because so many students need to master citations, I have created some YouTube videos on how to attribute to the author in-text. When you are not occupied with daily lesson plans, you can explore new feedback technology that is easily shared in the online setting.

L.L.: For your colleagues who are new to teaching online, what advice would you offer about ensuring student engagement and success?

M.R.: Let me offer the same advice given to me when I first started teaching at a distance: "Call each student before or at the beginning of each term." Ask them if they have any questions or concerns; ask if they have gone through the Moodle orientation, if they have their books; tell them to look for your feedback and use it to do revisions if needed. In an announcement, ask the students to send a message with a good time/day when you can call to "chat." The experienced online students will appreciate the effort and those new to online learning will be greatly reassured. For the rest of the term, don't be afraid to use the phone when a personal touch seems needed. Tell the students they can ask for this option.

Make a diligent effort to respond to all student questions, concerns, course messages and emails as soon as possible. In the process of reassuring your students, you will reassure yourself about using the online tools to communicate. Understand lateness, give second chances and allow revisions based on your feedback. It's important also to write an announcement on the course home page at least once a week. This adds to the feeling of a community of learning. At the end of all my course announcements, I quote Garrison Keillor: "Be well, do good work, and keep in touch."

Note

[1] The podcast segments can be access at the following links: 1) "Miriam Russell, What has been the biggest challenge in teaching online?" – http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/qxjwg; and 2) "Miriam Russell, What advice would you offer about ensuring student engagement and success?" – http://www.kaltura.com/tiny/x4tcj.

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Future of Digital Media and Digital Culture Offerings at SUNY Empire State College

Nicola Allain and Diane Shichtman, Saratoga Springs; Cindy Conaway and Ruth Goldberg, Manhattan; Anastasia L. Pratt, Plattsburgh

What follows is an edited version of comments made by some of the presenters at Plenary Session II of the 2016 Fall Academic Conference, "Future of Digital Media and Digital Culture Offerings at Empire State College," offered by colleagues Nicola Allain, Megan Mullen, Cindy Conaway, Susan Forbes, Ruth Goldberg, Anastasia Pratt, Diane Shichtman and Peggy Tally. As the session description described: "The closing plenary explor[ed] some of the ways that ESC might create programs that are interdisciplinary, flexible and able to draw on a wide range of existing faculty expertise. We offer exciting possibilities for students in fields incorporating digital media, which is a growth area for job opportunities, personal and professional development, artistic expression, political engagement, research and scholarship. Using studies in digital media and digital culture as focal points, faculty from various parts of the college discuss[ed] current practices and future strategies for making high-quality learning experiences available to new and prospective students."

We thank everyone for their help in creating this version of the proceedings for All About Mentoring.

MENTORING DIGITAL MEDIA ARTISTS

Nicola Allain

As an arts mentor, I primarily find myself mentoring digital media arts students online, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. These are students dedicated to the creative arts, who apply their artistic knowledge and skills to development and production within digital media. Broadly defined, digital media encompasses any type of media that is produced within a digital format, programmed with binary numbers rather than produced in a physical setting. Digital media arts might also be produced within mixed-modalities.

For example, cartoons may be hand-drawn, then scanned into a digital format. Paintings may be created on a physical canvas, then processed using digital tools or exhibited in digital galleries. A dance performance may simultaneously happen live, in real time, on a stage, while a computer generates parallel imagery and movement sequences.

Though digital artists and designers create art and designs using digital media, they are first and foremost artists and designers. As such, they need an artist's education, learning artistic practices, methodologies, aesthetic principles and forms of expression, in addition to the history and theory of their art form. They should learn to "see" as an artist, understand the language of art, and judiciously examine and critique art (of various genres) and designs with an understanding of what works, and why – and when it doesn't work, why not. This provides the foundation for both the development of their own work, and the ability to respond effectively to project requirements in the workplace. They should also understand the history of their artistic medium, key influencers, and how that history has been shaped by technological developments, along with social, political and cultural contexts.

Artists need strong skills in their medium, and need to practice their art in order to develop and maintain fluency. Ideally, students should have at least one study per term that requires regular artistic or design practice. If they haven't already, students should take drawing or illustration, as well as basic to advanced courses in their medium. Diversifying with different genres will help them further develop artistic sensibilities and skills. Most digital arts genres are highly collaborative, and distance collaboration has become the norm rather than the exception. Students should engage in opportunities for collaborative learning and project development that prepare them for real-world roles and workforce expectations.

Visual and written communication skills are paramount to success in this field. Digital artists and designers must be able to present their ideas and their work through sketches, proposals, plans, storyboards, statements and portfolios. I encourage my mentees to take the course Proposal Writing unless they have an equivalent study or professional expertise. If they plan to develop digital stories, studies in nonfiction and fiction creative writing strongly reinforce the skills applied in the courses Digital Storytelling and Media Arts, and in filmmaking courses. Students with a focus on web design and application development should take Technical Writing or the equivalent. Film students should take at least one screenwriting study.

Arts Management or Project Management courses prepare students to take on larger roles, either as freelancers or within organizations. This is important for either the aspiring or accomplished artist as well as digital designers focusing on technical development. Some students choose to take both courses, but often select one or the other, depending on their learning goals and professional aspirations. Ultimately, to succeed in this field, a person must be able to fully execute (meaning: complete working models) artistic or design projects from concept and proposal through the final product (whether this be a work of art or a fully functioning website or mobile application, for example). They must also learn to describe, market and disseminate their projects using digital tools and platforms, social media, the internet writ large, mobile applications and whatever emergent digital developments become widely adopted.

Another critical skill for them to learn is *how to learn:* quickly, efficiently and independently – for this is a field of constant change requiring continuous adaptation to succeed. The college subscription to Lynda.com provides access to an extensive library of excellent training

videos on a wide range of digital arts programs, as well as artistic skills development and technical training. Students may also search YouTube and other web-based resources for how-to videos, which proliferate; providing step-by-step instructions on various topics seems to be a popular pastime for social media enthusiasts, from introductory to advanced levels. Students should become familiar with these resources and develop a regular practice of independent learning using the appropriate tools for their medium. In my teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, students are free to choose the tools, technologies and platforms they would like to use to create their digital art and designs. The caveat is that they must take responsibility for learning and troubleshooting them. This provides them with the type of experience and process that mimic real-world requirements.

I don't recommend requiring students to produce and disseminate their work using proprietary college-based platforms within closed environments. Students should learn, and become fluent in the industry standard platforms, programs, tools and technologies used in the workforce (and their artistic and design fields). They should also become skilled in optimizing and disseminating their projects through a variety of social media channels and digital hosting sites.

Digital ethics, including a strong grasp of intellectual property, digital sharing, copyright management, privacy and security issues, are essential topics for students to cover. These are touched upon in most online (formerly Center for Distance Learning [CDL]) digital media courses. I require my students, both undergraduate and graduate, to research the ethical considerations and write an ethics statements for each of their digital project developments. These concretize their learning in this area.

Special Considerations

Access

Digital media arts is no longer a field for which access and entry are cost-prohibitive. Industry standard tools such as the Adobe Creative Cloud Suite are available to students for a $20 monthly subscription. Autodesk, a leader in 3-D arts, design and engineering

software, including Maya, 3ds Max, AutoCAD and other programs, now provides the (once very expensive) programs and training free to students and faculty.[1] There are also open source or freely available alternatives to industry standard software, such as Google SketchUp or Blender. The game design engine Unity is now free to students and educators, as are many mobile and digital applications.[2] Students can use smartphones, tablets, laptops and desktop computers for digital content creation, rather than the highly specialized equipment required previously for this type of work. High-definition webcams and cameras now come integrated with most entry-level devices, as do reasonable quality microphones.

Learners in Need of Accommodation

In recent years, I have seen an increase in students with disabilities or social anxiety seeking a concentration in digital media arts in order to establish a home-based freelance business, or telecommute. Their educational planning research points to continued opportunities in the field, particularly for artists with a diversified portfolio in 2-D, 3-D, multimedia, game design and mobile applications. So far, I have found that the disabilities declared do not preclude students from fully participating in their learning activities, or from using industry standard platforms, programs, applications and media. In fact, these tools are in the students' comfort zone, and are a reason why they choose to immerse themselves in digital arts and media.

Of these students, a majority who declare a need for accommodation due to their disability receive the standard letter issued to instructors that grants additional time on tasks. However, I find that they generally require additional services from their mentors and instructors. In some cases, student learning activities need to be adapted to accommodate their particular disability. In others, the student needs extensive one-to-one "walk-throughs" and "talk-throughs" of individual assignments, at a level normally not expected in college. Or, when anxiety is the issue, the majority of mentoring or teaching time may be spent providing reassurance and de-escalating anxiety in otherwise successful students.

Artistic or Technical Focus

It should be noted that some students have purely artistic interests, others are technically oriented, and some blend both options. Some artists are good at math and have a strong interest in computer programming. Others do not. Some students with strong computer programming interests or technical project management skills are also skilled artists. Of these, some want to combine the artistic and technical components of their learning, but others may choose a purely artistic or technical path. The same may be said about design students. Some want to focus on the design side of web development, whereas others are interested in backend programming and management. As a mentor, I encourage them to research the expectations of their artistic or design field, and ensure that they meet the requirements for the types of professional position or graduate learning that interests them. They find this information on professional association websites and job boards such as CreativeHeads.net, which advertises current digital media arts positions.

Digital Media Arts Students

Though we accept entry-level students, our students often have previous training in one or more of the following areas: digital art and design, computer arts, video, electronic music, digital storytelling, filmmaking, game design, animation, visual effects, motion graphics, animation art and design, digital photography, 3-D virtual worlds, digital performance, mobile media design, and audio production. We also draw advanced students with professional backgrounds in the visual and performing arts.

Some of these students come to Empire State College with a strong foundation in fine arts (or theater arts, film arts, dance and so on). Others, especially digital natives (but not always), chose to work primarily in digital media from the inception of their interest in the arts. Not all of these students are seeking degrees in order to enter the workforce as graphic artists, designers and media-makers. Some are already employed in the profession and wish to pursue a degree so they can receive a promotion, or prepare for graduate school. Others want to freelance, and use their time at the college to build their portfolio and learn

a little about marketing and entrepreneurship. Some are simply interested in pursuing a lifelong interest, and taking their learning in the field to the next level.

My mentees are often accomplished artists and educators. Several write comprehensive learning essays to demonstrate that they have completed learning in a domain that is equivalent to college-level learning. Some already teach college-level courses in their domains, demonstrating *a priori* (and attested to through the college's prior learning process) that their knowledge exceeds the expectations of a college-level course in their concentration area.

I have a steady stream of mentees who complete degree plans in concentrations related to digital arts and design, digital media arts, or some variation on a title related to these fields. This includes students with prior degrees, learning or experience in graphic design and graphic arts. These fields have changed tremendously with the evolution of the internet, web 2.0 technologies and social, mobile and augmented reality media. According to the United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (2017a; 2017b), employment for graphic designers has a 5 percent projected growth for 2016 to 2026, but multimedia and animation artists have a projected growth of 10 percent. There are fewer paid positions available in, for example, the print magazine and newspaper industries, whereas opportunities in design for the web and other digital media environments have grown systematically over the past decade. The Pew Research Center provides robust, ongoing data on these trends, notably in the "State of the News Media" fact sheets (formerly annual reports) and the "Media & News" section of their website, but also in their "Internet & Tech" section, which covers digital media and technology trends, issues and adoption rates.3 The flexibility of our degree planning process, combined with The Arts guidelines, allow these students to design a pathway that will best serve their learning and professional goals. My section of the Planning and Finalizing the Degree course provides a framework for arts-based learners, and I offer an Educational Planning Workshop course with a focus on prior learning assessment (PLA) for artists and designers.

Here are the general characteristics of my mentees with an interest in the digital media arts:

1. Students seeking associate degrees

Every once in a while, I receive a mentee with no prior transfer credits. They may, however, have prior professional experience with print or digital media and design. These students usually choose to complete an Associate of Arts in The Arts, with a digital media arts or digital art and design concentration, though some may have a more technical than liberal focus and decide to do an Associate of Science degree.

2. Students seeking bachelor's degrees

a. Students with a narrowly defined focus in a particular arts or design discipline. They tend to be millennial males bringing in associate degrees, or the equivalent, in an area related to digital media arts (for example, digital media and media arts). The titles of these students' concentrations may differ, but the curricula are essentially the same. Each of these students tends to have a fairly narrow focus in one of the following areas: photography, graphic design, video production, filmmaking, television production and social media production.

b. Students with a strong central focus, who wish to broaden their liberal arts learning and arts-based skillsets. These students may focus on one of the digital media art disciplines, such as filmmaking or digital art and design, but recognize the importance of diversifying their knowledge and expanding their experience with various tools and applications. The learner may be an aspiring filmmaker, for example, who wishes to master media arts, but also develop screenwriting skills. Or, she may aspire to be a graphic designer who works from home, and expands her knowledge of marketing to become more competitive in the field.

c. Students whose learning goals are to diversify within the digital media arts, because their research findings indicate that the occupational outlook

for graphic designers has an "average" projected growth. One such student's professional goals are to work from home, either as a freelance digital media artist, or for a company within a telecommuting position. His research confirms that there is a wide range of positions available, both as a freelancer or full-time employee. In order to increase the types of positions for which he would be qualified, he included the following cluster of business and marketing courses in his degree plan (while meeting The Arts area of study guidelines): Marketing Principles, Internet Marketing, Marketing Communications: Advertising and Promotion, Self-Management and Self-Marketing, and Introduction to Entrepreneurship.

d. Highly accomplished digital media artists with strong artistic, academic and professional preparation in the discipline. Their goals are to complete the Bachelor of Arts degree in digital media arts, and immediately begin a master's program. These students tend to take advanced studies that expand their liberal arts education while preparing them to undertake graduate-level work.

Each of these students chose Empire State College because of the flexible learning options and the ability to individualize their degrees. Though their paths may seem similar, they each have a different area of focus for their degree, and their postgraduate plans are not the same. As we look to future developments of our educational offerings, we should be mindful that structured or semi-structured degree plans may work for some, but not all. If we do decide to pursue related structured degrees or registered programs, they should provide the flexibility allowing students to transfer credits and courses while focusing on the arts genres and media of their choosing.

Notes

[1] Access Autodesk's software for students, educators and educational institutions at https://www.autodesk.com/education/home?mktvar004=ilt_wwm_amer_us_nc__Footer_SubscNSoftware_EDU.

2   Unity for Educators and Academic Institutions is available at https://store.unity.com/education#student.

3   See "State of the News Media" at http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/state-of-the-news-media/; "Media & News" at http://www.journalism.org/; and "Internet & Tech" at http://www.pewinternet.org/.

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WHAT IS DIGITAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL CULTURE?

Cindy Conaway

I am not sure if everyone at ESC completely agrees on what digital media and digital culture mean. Although they are contested terms in academia, as far as developing a degree plan is concerned, these terms are more or less synonymous with new media, and include social media (Murphy, 2011). It is easy to divide the world into "old media" (such as television, film and print) and "new media," but that is far too reductive. Even TV and movies these days are created and consumed digitally, many published books are also offered for e-readers such as Kindle, and even a print magazine or newspaper is full of links to the web.

Students need to know how to create digital and new media, of course, if they want to be graphic artists for the web, games or digital advertising. The needs of the web also require that at least some people know how to write for the web. This can mean knowing how traditional journalism is transformed by moving it from print to digital, but also how to write specifically for the web, as in blogs or "listicles" or for podcasting, or writing for digital advertising, and also how to get messages seen using social media, while still following rules of good research and journalistic integrity.

One of the hardest things to learn and teach, I think, is that anyone can do these things, for free or for a very small price, but it takes a lot of effort and timing to do it well. There are countless webpages, articles, images, audio files and video files competing for everyone's attention, along with "traditional media" like movies, TV, magazines and books, but each person still has only the 24 hours a day they did before, and breaking through the clutter is complex.

In addition, it is essential that students study "web culture": How has it transformed our thinking and our lives? How does it influence what we use or buy? What does it do to our politics? What does it do to our mood? Particularly in light of the 2016 presidential election – which many say was skewed by "fake news" on the internet, often placed there by people with less a political motive than a wish to make money – we have to be sure students understand why they are developing the digital tools and media they are, not just how to do so.

What is my experience?

I started my career in advertising, fresh out of getting an undergraduate degree in English. I had an internship where I helped make TV commercials, and jobs where I worked on print ads and travel brochures, and helped plan events. I only enjoyed some of that, so I went back and got a master's degree in instructional systems design in 1990. One of the courses I took was called Emerging Technologies and it discussed this thing called the internet, but we didn't actually use it or even see it in that course. I worked in management consulting and computer-based training, and got my company to pay for me to have access to AOL and started surfing the web. For the most part, I used it to make connections. I am still friends, in real life and on Facebook, with people I met in 1993 in a discussion forum on the TV show *Melrose Place.* I moved to Silicon Valley and worked at several start-up firms there.

About 15 years ago, having transferred my skills to Florida International University where I was helping faculty put their courses online, I decided I liked what they did better than what I did, and went and got a Ph.D. in American culture studies with an emphasis on media and film, writing my dissertation about TV. No one else in my program seemed interested, but I took an independent study in new media there, as well. Since then I've kept my own blog, published in a number of online journals – the three most recent pieces because they liked the "voice" on my blog and wanted me to write for them – have an active Facebook presence, and less active Twitter and LinkedIn profiles.

What do I teach in the area?

Since I've been at Empire State College, as I develop new online courses and revise old ones (a big part of the role I've had as area coordinator with the former CDL), I've made sure there's a digital element. For example, in the course Television and Culture, one of the questions we ask is not only *what* students are watching, but *how* they are watching it and whether that influences how the shows are received. In Women, Girls and the Media, they keep a blog. There are practical skills in Media Writing. They promote some kind of agenda in Communication through New Media. Most promote themselves and their work using some sort of digital form in the Capstone in Media and Communications.

What are my students doing?

In Communication through New Media, I have them pose three potential problems they could work with. These might include a news story they feel hasn't gotten enough attention, something they want to sell, or something they want to market, which can include themselves if they are job hunting. Then they pick at least two social media tools of their choice and they try it, make some tweaks at midterm, which can include a change in approach or change in tool, and try again.

A lot of the students who take the Capstone in Media and Communications course want to be journalists or promote their own writing or artistic work. This may be because they want to work freelance, or because they are poets or fiction writers, photographers or graphic artists who want others to be able to find their

work. Others want to find jobs or improved careers in marketing, broadcasting, TV or filmmaking. A few want to work in web design or graphics, and as a first in the fall 2016 term, make games. And then there are some outliers – I've had students whose stated goal is to be a closed-captioning transcriptionist, attend library school, work as an event planner, or join the FBI, which the students and their mentors seem to feel fall into media studies and communications.

Many want to apply to graduate school, and their projects support that. I always have all of them do what I call "The Future of the Field" essay, in which they investigate how their own particular field of interest has changed and is likely to change in the future. I ask them to interview at least two people doing that work, or professors in the field if they intend to apply for grad school and especially ask about change. Then they do three projects of their choice. Most end up building some kind of website, but it can be a personal website of their best work and a resume to show to potential employees or grad schools, or it can feature their own writing, art or films. Many use at least one assignment to plan a social media campaign to get this looked at by the right people.

Conclusion

If we are going to build a registered or structured program in digital media, digital studies or digital culture, it needs to be flexible enough to meet the needs of many different types of students with different interests and talents, and who want to work in different modes. We all as a college community need to define the boundaries so they are generally accepted – for instance, where is the boundary between this program and a concentration in digital arts, communication or marketing, any of which might include a number of the same programs or studies? We need to choose studies and courses for students that can be substituted by PLA or experience, but ensure that students still have theory, and understanding of cultural and social impact and ethics. And it needs to be done in a way so that the student who says "I just want to be done as soon as possible" (as so many of them do), can do so.

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APPROACHING MEDIA-MAKING AT ESC: "WHO *THEY* ARE AND WHO *WE* ARE"

Ruth Goldberg

Mapping the future of digital media offerings at the college has meant approaching a fundamentally "ESC" set of questions from new perspectives:

- Who are our students (actual and potential)?

- What do our students hope to/need to learn about digital media, and for what purposes?

- What have we already learned about serving our digital media students (in my case, at the Manhattan location)?

- In our rapidly changing world, how is the study of digital media inextricably bound to the civic engagement, social justice and social responsibility that form a core part of the college's institutional commitment?

- How can we center the andragogical principles that are fundamental to our past successes at the core of new developments – i.e., how are media students at ESC guided and encouraged to become more independent learners and to shape their own learning?

- What challenges we can anticipate?

Background

ESC's New York City locations have always attracted students who work in film and media; and studies in film history and analysis have been offered at the Manhattan location continuously since 1972. Over the last 10 years, new opportunities for students in film and media arts and screen studies have included study groups and residencies in screenwriting, film production, post-production, documentary studies, production and post-production

internships, residencies built around film festivals and screening series at the Museum of Modern Art and Film Forum.

Focusing on new media and available technologies, we added a popular Web Series Development study five years ago; and a series of group studies using the high-definition capability of our students' smartphones to learn cinematography, along with new digital editing studies and studies of interactive documentary filmmaking.

Building on Our Successes

Our media students come to us at all stages of their careers: in Manhattan we have Emmy award-winning filmmakers and acclaimed film scholars and screenwriters sometimes sitting in group studies next to teenage students who are just starting out and see media and media-making from radically different perspectives. The magic of this diversity is that in a small group setting, ESC students can learn from each other in a uniquely dynamic way, forming working relationships that often continue into the students' professional lives. Our arts and media students have an extremely high acceptance rate to graduate school, even at a time when it is very hard to get into Master of Fine Arts programs; this is one of the college's many under-sung successes.

The Challenges

Our challenges are simple: we have few resources, and not enough equipment to offer as much hands-on production as our media students want and need. We have established a vital digital lab in Manhattan over the years, pioneered by mentor Betty Wilde-Biasiny and now under the supervision of mentor Terry Boddie, and we are very grateful to have it and proud of the work that comes out of it. Convincing the college to invest in keeping the software updated and the lab staffed with instructors so students can use it, however, has not always been easy.

In addition to applying for grants and creative funding for the lab, we have developed three winning strategies to serve our media students: 1) partnering with organizations who can offer us the use of their technology and their infrastructure (i.e., using the "city as classroom"), 2) placing students in

production internships, and 3) employing first-rate "visiting artist/activists" as adjunct instructors to teach new media studies as the media technology quickly changes and evolves. You would imagine that we would be at a disadvantage since we enter into these partnerships with little to offer financially – but what we do have to offer are our unique media students, and to the right partners and the right visiting artists who really "get" ESC and get what we are doing, this, as they say, is everything.

Innovations, the Future and Finding the Right Partners

With the support of the Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship, in 2013-2014 we designed new film and media production group studies and opportunities that would train and engage students who are interested in working in the fields of community-based media activism and digital media production. We bring in award-winning new media artists to teach these studies: these have included web series directors, digital editors, gamers and media activists.

Among our goals are to:

- Foster a collaborative, teamwork approach to media-making.
- Train committed, socially conscious media-makers.
- Create sustained public awareness of the important student achievements in film and media studies at Empire State College.

The Allied Media Conference: Connect, Create, Transform

As a critical part of this work, we have created lasting relationships with media activism organizations in New York and beyond. One such partnership is with the annual Allied Media Conference (AMC) in Detroit. Indeed, a promotional video on the AMC was created and featured some footage shot by two of our graduates, Pauline Bellins and Bianca Jones.

Our alliance with this cutting-edge international conference has become the Detroit Media Activism Residency that is open to all ESC students and is a strong example of one of our most dynamic, progressive and

forward-thinking learning opportunities for media students at the college. Now in its fourth year, the students who travel as a group to the Detroit residency find the experience of meeting with and learning from other media activists (and each other!) in Detroit to be inspiring and transformative. The annual trips advance our goals of launching our students into a networked community of supportive practitioners, and of getting the word out about the work we are doing at ESC.

Media-makers, artists and activists come from all over the world to attend the AMC. The AMC uses Detroit as a classroom, with a combination of guided tours, panels, workshops, practice sessions and screenings, to create an immersive experience in media activism. In the residency, students can choose from hundreds of sessions and activities, and we come together as a group twice a day to share our experiences and continuously re-evaluate our learning and our goals during the four-day period.

For me, the Detroit residency is also important "recharging my mentor batteries" time. To see our students on fire with new information, ideas and questions and to meet with them in such an intensive way as we learn together is pure teaching joy. This year, one of our students presented his own work at the conference, and I had the added pleasure of being his student and being able to support the important work he does as a member of the Black Trans Media collective. We all learned a tremendous amount from Amari (coincidentally, the youngest participant in the residency) in the strategy session he led on media-making by and for the Black transgender community. He is a patient and inspiring teacher. This, for me, is ESC at its absolute best – getting back to the deepest roots of our unique educational identity.

Some samples of other learning highlights from the past few years, quoted from the residency students themselves:

1. "The Spatial is Racial"
   "'Narratives of Displacement: The Anti-Eviction Mapping Project' promised more discussion of data visualization. I was pleasantly surprised to find the mapping project was rich with video, audio and personal histories

that fleshed out and personalized the sometimes-invisible issue of creeping displacement of families from gentrifying neighborhoods. It helped me see these weren't just dots on a cool map but real people with real stories. I was struck by a presenter's admonition to not 'define someone by their eviction story, talk about their whole lives in the neighborhood.' Furthering this point, one of the presenters talked about her confusion when outsiders told her how dangerous her neighborhood, The Mission, had been. Her perception from the inside was that it had been a great place to grow up. The session, and interactions with people sitting next to me helped me consider the intersections of capitalism and racism, and the gentrification of U.S. cities as compared to the colonization of other countries. Two questions went unanswered: What does it mean if I'm one of the gentrifiers? And where is the balance between people with privilege bringing more and better services to an area, versus economically displacing the people who are already there?"

2. "You can't teach for the future when kids are dying today"
   "One of the most important workshops I've ever taken was on 'Humanizing Detroit Schools.' It was led by the Detroit Future Schools' director, Nate Mullen. It was layered with an interactive activity and three different entry points into the work that DFS does. The truly revolutionizing concept explored was how and why we need to separate schooling from education. It was dissecting that simple issue that really opened the door for me as to why this workshop was necessary.
   "We heard from young students who are currently in the Detroit Public Schools system that is failing them. We got a glimpse at one specific in-school project happening at the Boggs School where fifth graders researched and filmed a movie on the current relationship between Detroit and water. It was exciting to watch how place-based education really works in a school setting. We also met three young people who were doing a long-term out-of-school project with

DFS around humanizing schooling. They used many methods to show their findings from oral history projects to an animated short video. I left with new tools, understanding, and more knowledge about Detroit as a city."

3. "Throughout the four days at the conference, the overall theme that kept emerging for me was one of narratives. Specifically, who's crafting the narrative, who's telling the narrative, and why is the narrative being told.

    "During the 'From Growing Our Economy to Growing Our Souls' tour, Richard Feldman, the tour's facilitator, stressed the need to effectively counter the narrative of Detroit's supposed rising with a fact-based rebuttal, namely that Detroit is still suffering the pangs of economic blight. Throughout the tour, Feldman emphasized that whatever gains were taking place in Detroit, such 'progress' was on the backs of the historically marginalized. Its schools are in disarray, water is being shut off, and homes are being destroyed or condemned or even, by way of so-called eminent domain, effectively confiscated. The years-long, systematic abuse of power has left Detroit in tatters. The new stadium is nice, but at the expense of how many homes? The proposed Heinz Ketchup plant is great, but who is displaced? The Cass Corridor makes for a good photo op, but what heartache lingers just beyond the pictures?"

4. "Meeting Tyree and Tim on The Heidelberg Project tour blew my mind. These two men have been collecting trash, for years, and defiantly turning it into art. Metaphorically, to me, their art implies that, that which the system considers expendable is, in fact, that which is most beautiful and recyclable. The citizens of Detroit are being treated as expendable, but their beauty and usefulness has yet to be fully explored. The citizens of Detroit are on the front lines of discrimination and government oppression. Where else would a conference dedicated to social justice and media activism take place?

"The level of commitment, expertise and wisdom from each presenter was humbling. There is an honest sense of public service in the AMC that is both refreshing and hard to find. For example, I attended three film screenings. Each film's subject matter centered on helping an oppressed group by highlighting our shared humanity. These filmmakers spoke from the pain of their characters without placing blame or pointing fingers. They each found ways to disarm the audience and allow their stories to emotionally connect beyond prejudicial borders.

"The AMC is a melting pot of people, ideas and solutions. For four days, there is this almost utopian fellowship of human beings dedicated to becoming and enabling a new breed of media activist heroes. Four days of intellectual and identity freedom. Four days of discovery and sharing in a safe place. Four days of teaching and considering what could be, while finding the strength to change what actually is. Four days of information that for me will take far longer to process than the four days it took to take it in."

5. "These are the lessons I took away from AMC and Detroit. Overall, Detroit was an overwhelmingly positive experience. It was great to be able to discuss and process all of this with the other students. I also loved our residency dinners, trading stories with Larry and Claude over vegetarian cuisine. I think being able to learn with and from the group was one of the most meaningful aspects of the residency. The lessons learned from my time in Detroit could never have been taught in a book or classroom."

Some of the students' images from the 2017 residency are available in a Tumblr blog at https://escattheamc2017.tumblr.com.

The Detroit Media Activism Residency and other immersive opportunities like it are our future – a bright future – for digital media at ESC, as we find dynamic ways to bring our students to the visionary creative centers of digital media experimentation. A final anecdote, by way of illustration: On the last day of the 2017 conference, I met historian Scott Kurashige, one of the keynote speakers,

who I had met once before from his work with activist Grace Lee Boggs. As I reintroduced myself, he exclaimed, "Empire State College! I've been meeting your students all week – they're amazing! Margaret and Charles are both with you, right? Hey – next year, bring your students by the Boggs Center [The James and Grace Lee Boggs Center to Nurture Community Leadership in Detroit] and we'll give them a special tour, OK? Please keep in touch with us. We want to know more about what you're doing at Empire State."

So here was a public intellectual and activist, a prominent figure in this network, who had just met hundreds of people as a keynote speaker at the conference, and promoted his new book at the book exhibit and at a well-attended roundtable session, and he remembered us and our students by name. We stood out for him, because of who *they* are, and because of who *we* are. This is what it means to find the right partners for our unique mission as we develop our digital media opportunities at ESC. They "get" us, and they want to work together with us toward our common goals, as we explore the possibilities of digital media to create social change.

PUBLIC HISTORY IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Anastasia L. Pratt

From archives to exhibitions, public history exists within the digital realm. Once considered the work of the dusty, unused stacks in libraries, historical research – especially when that research is focused on public history – now requires the use of digital archives, online exhibits, and complex systems of coding and tagging to digitally identify materials.

Public history students at SUNY Empire State College engage with those digital materials regularly. In the Advanced Certificate in Public History program, students complete four courses and one internship. Those courses – Museums and Public History, Archival Theory and Practice, Exhibition: Planning and Interpretation, and Oral History: Theory and Methods – focus on issues of great importance to the field, which can be defined most

basically as history that engages people and communities or as history that is not confined to the textbook.

With an increasing number of digitized and born-digital sources, that public history work has become increasingly digital in nature. Graduate students learn about encoded archival contexts and descriptions when discussing archives. Later, if their internship takes them into an organization working on a catalog of archival offerings, they use that knowledge to create EACs (Encoded Archival Context) and EADs (Encoded Archival Description). Similarly, they visit online exhibitions, making note of accessibility issues, of design possibilities and of the digital interplay between items in the exhibits … and then use their knowledge to create an exhibition. In this way, they move relatively quickly from theory to practice.

That focus on digital realms also allows students to consider what they value most in documents and artifacts. When designing an exhibit, for example, should they emphasize the appearance of an object (photograph or drawing) or the explanation of its usefulness (section of a letter or oral history account)? How do they integrate various historical documents and artifacts within an exhibition without overwhelming the audience? What role do hyperlinks, QR (Quick Response) codes, and other digital tools have in standard, face-to-face exhibitions? How can a digital environment be used to promote public history?

As the academic pursuit of public history continues to grow, these explorations of digital media and digital culture will persist. And our course offerings, at both the undergraduate and graduate level, will reflect those changes.

DIGITAL STUDIES

Diane Shichtman

During our panel at the Fall Academic Conference 2016, we heard about concentrations with a broad range of goals that mentors and students had worked on, such as:

- A mathematics education game.
- Digital storytelling.
- Social media.

Of course, advanced standing credit options including transcripts and PLAs were also discussed, and we already offer a variety of digital arts, video production and other titles for PLA. My focus, however, was on some additional areas that we might not yet have pursued, but which could help us think creatively about multidisciplinary opportunities as we move forward.

Computer/electronic game design is my favorite example because it is highly multidisciplinary. An academic gaming program would typically involve:

- Computer science.
- Mathematics.
- Digital arts.

I'd like to spend some time focusing on game design because it is an example of a very multidisciplinary program. Game design typically involves programming and other technical skills, as well as arts and humanities, including graphic design and storytelling. A game design degree or concentration often also incorporates related learning, such as the essentials of "basic psychological theories of human perception, learning, social interaction, and play" (SUNY Sullivan, 2017, After Successfully Completing section, para. 1; Rensselaer, 2016, Program Goals section, para. 1).

A college or university game design program will often require students to stretch. For example, Indiana University Bloomington's (2017) FAQ section for its B.S. in game design makes that clear – regardless of whether students don't want to do programming or are uncomfortable with art, they have to take courses in both.

Beyond these core areas, there are other options that a program might include. Often, programs include history of gaming and game design. While many programs do history of gaming, at a conference I learned about a more traditional class in world history that was included in the major to encourage more engaging game storylines. Other programs include courses such as Sociology of Mass Media (SUNY Canton, 2017), and some make reference to business-oriented courses.

Thinking about these sorts of programs can broaden our perspectives on many of our offerings. For example, Guzdial (2003) predicted that introductory programming courses would look very different in the future. He suggested that "programming and computation will become part of a general, liberal education, but computing courses will have to change to make this happen" (p. 108). Toward this end, he had developed a programming course, Introduction to Media Computation, that focused on digital media using a theme of computation for communication. The whole of academia isn't there yet, but his prediction is worth some consideration as a guide to making a programming component of a digital studies degree more engaging.

All told, thinking about digital studies presents us with an excellent opportunity to explore interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary options ranging from the program level to individual studies.

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Thinking With Anthropology

Electra Weeks, Staten Island

Anthropology is good to think about, and to think with.

Anthropology as an academic discipline has grown from a dark colonial past to reinvent itself as more than just a way of conducting qualitative research, or a discursive form producing ethnographies. It has become a method of epistemic analysis, which looks at *how* knowledge is acquired, understood and reproduced by different cultural formations. It also looks at the historical and logical underpinnings of cultural knowledge as it changes and is transmitted to new generations.

While few students at SUNY Empire State College will develop a concentration in anthropology, the discipline nevertheless has much to offer in terms of developing an analytical toolkit for students that allows them to better analyze whatever knotty problems life throws their way. In short, anthropology is good to *think* with.

While anthropology and other related disciplines typically referred to as the "social sciences" have some shared concerns, the differences between them can be quite stark on both theoretical and methodological levels. Investigative journalism, for example, is good at uncovering the answers to questions the public wants answered, and sociology analyzes large groups, to explicate, quantify and compare trends. Anthropology is unique, however, in that its first questions are general and mutable, and students are thus taught to look at the intersections of environment, power, history and agency in order to determine the *specific* and most relevant questions necessary to explore and come to understand the issues at hand. This is a process that requires deep listening. For students in every discipline or vocational field, these skills are extremely useful whether you are a schoolteacher, nurse or investigator:

Essentially, the anthropological position is that one must first view events in all their richness and texture before one can be confident of having selected the appropriate variables for analysis. (Wolf, 1974, p. 88)

Anthropology is unique in that the methodology of cultural relativism asks investigators to do their best to understand a social formation in light of the cultural logic of the people involved. In this way, the anthropologist's goal is to see things from a different point of view than her or his own and understand how it fits into a worldview that the investigator might even find abhorrent. There is great value in learning (even imperfectly) to suspend your own judgment in order to look for a discernible internal logic, even if such a logic bases itself on racist, sexist or classist discourses.

Cultural relativism as a method, even imperfectly performed, has a long history in anthropology that has given way to more realistic and nuanced theories of knowledge acquisition such as Donna Haraway's (1991) notion of "situated knowledge." Her idea is that while no one can be entirely objective, given that everyone views facts through the lens of their own history and experience, we can arrive at a shared "truth" about events by cobbling together the understanding of each investigator's unique perspective. It is the job of researchers, then, to make as transparent as possible their own biases and positions in relation to their work. These representations from all over are then stitched together to form a type of objective "truth" that consists of the relative truths of many. Anthropology stands out as a discipline that asks researchers to suspend, as best they can, their own belief systems and to identify, to their best ability, those situations where they are unable to do so, thereby avoiding what Haraway calls the "god-trick" of pretending to have an entirely objective view.

Photo credit: Michele Grant

Electra Weeks

The notion of the *participant in anthropology* further defines a distinctive methodological approach, which teaches that, beyond simply watching social phenomena from afar, researchers should get as involved in the process as possible. Of course, "perfect participation" is often impossible and even unethical in cases where the researcher lacks expert knowledge. But the goal of this method of anthropological fieldwork is long-term cultural immersion that involves at the very least, listening for at least a year or longer, with many researchers returning to their site periodically over the course of a lifetime. Even what could be characterized as "failed" fieldwork, when a researcher is rejected by the group they wanted to study, has merit in supplying cultural data: Why was the researcher rejected? What does that person represent that is considered unwanted? These are vital questions to an anthropologist. The development of a theoretical toolkit that includes skills of participating, deep listening, acknowledging one's biases and attempting to understand the logic of another cultural formation have great relevance and currency across myriad disciplines and lifestyles.

From as many angles as possible, anthropology continues to ask, "Who speaks for a cultural assemblage and who does not?" In this way, anthropological analysis also begins the investigation of relations of power – who has it, and who doesn't. This is accomplished by finding out, most importantly, who is *not allowed* to speak. Students of anthropology are asked to find out from informants what they feel is important and why, to determine who has authority and voice and who is silenced. Within newer forms of "participatory action research," the division between "researcher" and "subject" is further dissolved by assuming everyone is both, and authorship is given to a group instead of to just one person. Again, students reading about and taking part in these research forms learn to suspend their own cultural understandings in favor of gaining insight as to why others may understand the world the way they do.

Finally, the notion of "historical particularism" also integral to anthropology, provides the time depth for embedded understandings. Students learn that each cultural formation has a specific history, and studying that history allows us to recognize a context in which to understand actions and belief systems over time. In short, anthropology does not assume that everyone is a "rational actor," as some economists might, but instead looks to the history and logic of cultural formations and knowledge transmitted to members to find the source of systems of belief and practice.

In an educational environment increasingly concerned with technical knowledge and quick credentialing, students have relatively few encounters with studies that teach them how to think deeply and analyze outside of their specific field. Anthropological epistemology allows a significant glimpse into the logic and praxis of different cultural worlds. Unlike many "cultural sensitivity" courses, which merely seek to explain selected types of behavior in relation to the dominant culture, anthropology looks at practices within the context of their own cultural logic. In this way, students are invited to investigate *difference* as a type of legitimate cultural formation, with an internal logic that functions in the same way as their own. In a time when polarized intolerance is the norm, anthropology is uniquely situated as a discipline – and as a method – to promote understanding and facilitate discussion across the divide.

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Teaching and Mentoring Across National Cultures: Navigating the Shallows of Naive Stereotypes and the Depths of Sophisticated Ones

David Starr-Glass, International Education (Prague)

"People only see what they are prepared to see."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882)

Some editors remain resolutely in the background, quietly doing what they do best or occasionally seeming to do very little at all. Others are more proactive and participative. Frances Kochan is one of the latter. More than two years ago, she contacted me with an invitation to write a chapter for a book that she is editing – *The Wiley-Blackwell International Handbook of Mentoring* – which is scheduled for release early in 2018. Fran has had an illustrious academic career at Auburn University (Alabama) and has contributed numerous articles and edited books to the mentoring literature, often highlighting the challenges and complexities of mentoring across cultural divides (Kochan, 2013; Kent, Kochan, & Green, 2013; Kochan, Searby, George, & Edge, 2015).

Fran is erudite as a scholar, gracious as a person, and brings equal measures of creativity and insight to her editorial work: writing and revising the chapter was a long but very enjoyable process. As it happened, the chapter that I had been invited to write did not involve mentoring across cultures; however, working with Fran and rereading many of her publications caused me to reflect on my own cross-culture work in teaching and mentoring.

As a mentor with SUNY Empire State College's International Education (Prague) program, all of my teaching and mentoring practice is shaped by the dynamics of approaching and negotiating national culture difference. For others, cross-cultural challenges might materialize in their own mentoring, in dealing with visiting students from abroad, or perhaps more commonly in their online teaching that can create learning environments peopled with multiple nationalities. In this reflection, I consider a number of issues that have been significant in my own culture-work and that might be helpful for those presently engaged in cross-culture teaching and mentoring, or contemplating it in the future.

The article is structured as follows. The first section considers ways of approaching difference, particularly when that difference is associated with culture. The second section explores the nature and consequences of national culture difference and looks at one of the most common frameworks for recognizing and making sense of that difference. The third section deals with a common obstacle in cultural sensemaking and in establishing authentic engagement with the culturally-different other – that obstacle is stereotype and stereotyping. The concluding section reflects on practice, considers some approaches that might be useful in teaching and mentoring across cultures, and suggest ways in which we might navigate the shallow waters of naive stereotypes and the deeper and more treacherous waters of what have been called sophisticated stereotypes.

Different Places, Different People

It might seem obvious and unnecessary – but perhaps also relevant and honest – to concede at the outset that the nature of national culture difference is both illusive and paradoxical. Places have a difference that is palpable and more easily understood. For instance, walking through the streets of Jerusalem is a different experience than walking through the streets of Prague, and both experiences are different from walking through the narrow streets of sea-gated Zadar on the Croatian coast. I am familiar with these places and appreciate their unique distinctiveness in terms of architectural landscapes, social ecologies and linguistic soundscapes. Their physical differences are, in a
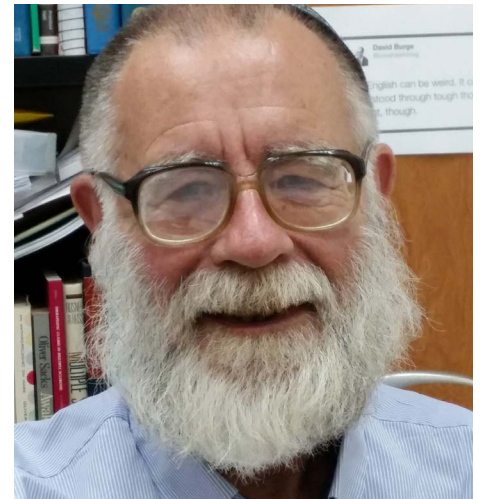
David Starr-Glass

very real sense, the reifications of an intangible and long forgotten past – local and regional histories, shifting social patterns and, of course, cultural heritages. It is as though the past has crystalized into the forms and substance of the present. We can recall this distant and fragmented past and use it to give present meaning to the differences encountered.

However – to state the obvious – people are quite a different matter. In speaking with Israelis, Czechs or Croats, I recognize their individualities and unique personhoods, but I am also aware of more subtle and general ways in which these individuals can come to represent discernable groups, and that these socially-delimited groups differ in their thinking and behaving. Perhaps it starts with language, because that is the most obvious thing that connects and separates us. Or perhaps it starts with language because "language is the place where our bodies and minds collide, where our groundedness in place and time and our capacity for fantasy and invention must come to terms" (Kaplan, 1994, p. 64).

Charlemagne is reputed to have said that a second language provides a second soul. Now, it may sound peculiarly anachronistic to talk about the "soul" in an age when Google Translate is only a few clicks away, but all matters of language – its evolution, production and translation – are part of very deep and particularly human systems. Linguists might reasonably argue about the *precise number* of words that Inuit languages have for snow, and critics may legitimately question the veracity of *Miss Smilla's Feeling for Snow* in Peter Høeg's exceptional novel, but they all nevertheless agreed that languages evolve in ways that reflect the concerns, preoccupations and social cultures of those who speak them. What we name, how we name, the syntax used and the construction of grammar all reflect deep-rooted ways of looking at the world, providing it with meaning, and then communicating that meaning to ourselves and to others.

For example, in English we *teach* and we *learn* – two different verbs each laden with quite different meanings and assumptions about the processes involved. In Czech, however, the verb to learn *(učit se)* is the reflexive of the verb to teach *(učit)* – that is, we do not passively learn but actively teach ourselves. In Hebrew, to teach and to learn have exactly the same root *(l-m-d),* but the verbal form used for teaching *(le-lam-ed)* indicates more deliberation, persistence and application than for learning *(lil-mod).* Three different ways of perceiving, describing and communicating the dynamics of what our students and we do every day. Three quite different sets of tacit assumptions, roles and responsibilities that might come into play when we engage in teaching-learning relationships with American, Czech or Israeli students.

Google Translate will provide the word-by-word translation but it will not provide the detailed picture. For that, we will need to look within the language itself or to ask those who speak it. And when we do speak with others in a shared language we might sense not only the *inclusion in* a shared system of meaning but the temporary *separation from* other competing systems to which we also belong. In the navigation of difference, we might experience a shift in self-identity and self-identification – shifts vividly described in Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation,* in which she

recounts her struggle to make sense of a new language and a new identity when she left her native Poland to live in America. She reflects on her changing linguist surroundings and on the resulting shifts in self-identity and self-identification in this way: "Human beings don't only search for meanings, they are themselves units of meaning, but we can mean something only within the fabric of larger significations" (Hoffman, 1989, p. 279). A second language can constitute a new fabric of larger significations. Or, as Charlemagne put it, a second language and the resulting shift in self-identity can constitute another soul. Learning the language of the other might not be feasible for most educators, but if a particular language is common to many students or mentees then even a basic study of it is a potent entry into their national culture.

The Nature and Consequences of National Culture Difference

Language embeds cultural assumptions and makes them available, but language per se is neither the beginning nor the end of culture. Indeed, culture has gathered around it scores of definitions that delimit its main aspects but which singularly fail to represent it fully. My preferred definition comes from Helen Spencer-Oatey (2008), who sees culture as a *fuzzy set* of basic "assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour" (p. 3). There is also a more succinct, but arguably more problematic, definition given by a preeminent figure in national culture research, Geert Hofstede (2001), who sees culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (p. 9).

Hofstede is remarkable because, more than 50 years ago, he embarked on a worldwide project to identify and differentiate national culture difference. He used a sample of convenience – local engineers and managers working in IBM's multinational locations – and subjected his data to extensive factorial analysis from which he identified a number of dimensions that seemed to be present in all cultures but

which varied in their intensity, or relative degree. Subsequent revisions of his work (Hofstede, 2001) have provided a cluster of (at least) five national culture dimensions with nations scoring differently on each, producing characteristic country profiles (Clearly Cultural, n.d.).

- **Power Distance:** In high power distance cultures, social status and hierarchy are accepted as natural arrangements and the source of personal power, social inequality and legitimate authority vested in those of higher social rank (e.g., Malaysia has a high power distance index of 104, while Israel scores an egalitarian 13).

- **Individualism/Collectivism:** Individualistic cultures focus on the individual, the uniqueness of the self, and on distinctive projections of self. Collectivistic cultures focus on the group, membership in the collective, co-operative efforts, and a dominant concern with "We" and "Us" (United States has a high individualism index of 91, while South Korea scores 18).

- **Masculinity/Femininity:** Masculine cultures find expression through the assignment of distinctive gender-based roles, rigid gender-specific activities, and assumptions of male-dominance in areas such as leadership, power and authority (Japan's high masculinity index of 95 contrasts with gender-equal Sweden's 5).

- **Uncertainty Avoidance:** In high-avoidance cultures there is a significant degree of reluctance and sense of discomfort associated with engaging in situations that involve change, innovation and risk-taking (Portugal has a high uncertainty avoidance index of 104, while Denmark scores a low 23).

- **Long-Term vs. Short-Term Orientation:** Long-term orientation cultures place value on persistence, perseverance and an investment in the future. Short-term oriented cultures tend to favor instant rewards and immediate results in the pursuit of either personal happiness or gratification (China has a very high long-term orientation index of 118, while the United States shows a short-term preference of 29).

Geert Hofstede's approach is laid out in his major publications *Culture's Consequences* – the first version subtitled *International Differences in Work-Related Values* (1984), the second *Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and Organizations Across Nations* (2001) – which remain very popular and highly influential for those who teach international business. These sources are equally popular for those looking for a theoretical framework with which to approach personal and professional cross-culture engagement. Hofstede's approach certainly provides a focused approach to national culture difference – perhaps too focused and perhaps too optimistic.

Multiple scholarly reviews and research have explored the deficiencies, biases and significant shortcomings of Hofstede's original methodology, statistical analysis and interpretations of results (McSweeney, Brown, & Iliopoulou, 2016; Orr & Hauser, 2008; Taras & Steel, 2009). It might seem particularly optimistic (if that is the appropriate word) to expect that national culture is reducible to a small number of factors that can be easily isolated. Despite the indisputable impact and influence of Hofstede, it is probably best to regard his understanding of national culture as a descriptive framework that: (a) is essentially a statistical model in which the majority of the population clusters around central values (averages) associated with specific cultural dimensions; (b) contains considerable individual variance about the defined culture dimension average (country score); and (c) produces, at best, cultural profiles that provide a generalized picture but cannot, and should not, be used to define individuals specifically or anticipate their social behavior.

There is a great temptation to make sense of national culture by reducing it to quantifiable elements, even though the attempt seems somewhat futile. This is not to say that Hofstede's approach is fatally flawed, but he may have promised too much and delivered too little. Competing perspectives and analytical frameworks exist, but none rival Hofstede's in popularity. Nevertheless, the promise of reducing the complexity of culture to a handful of dimensions has a strange power and it is to be expected that there has been considerable interest and enthusiasm for *Culture's Consequences* and its offshoots. But

there is always a danger of relying too heavily on a single framework, or a single tool. As Abraham Maslow (1966) pithily remarked, "it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail" (p. 15). The danger in our cultural-work lies in unwittingly using the tools available and mistakenly regarding the cultural complexities of others as nails requiring our administrations.

Stereotypes: Heuristic, Sophisticated and Threatening

As applied to human behavior, the construct of *stereotype* was first introduced by Walter Lippmann (1922) almost a century ago when he used it to describe powerful, persistent and generally self-serving "pictures in our heads" (p. 3). Later, with a growing interest in its broader socio-cultural prevalence and impact, Allport (1954) characterized the stereotype as "an *exaggerated* [emphasis added] belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify *(rationalize)* [emphasis added] our conduct in relation to that category" (p. 191). This present article does not allow for an extensive exploration of stereotypes or the process of stereotyping, but three issues are particularly relevant for teaching and mentoring across national culture divides: the nature of national and ethnic stereotypes, their impact on the teaching-learning process from the instructor's perspective, and their possible consequences for learners.

The Inevitability of Stereotyping

Although often understood in negative terms, stereotypes develop unconsciously, spontaneously and generally without any malevolent or prejudiced intent. They are rooted in our sensemaking efforts to classify and distinguish social groups – groups that usually possess discernable socially constructed boundaries such as gender, race or ethnicity. Based on socially-derived cues, individuals are relegated to groups and subsequently labeled. In the process, individuality and uniqueness are lost and personal identity is replaced by the group's designated label. Once labeled, group members become undifferentiated elements – cyphers, identifiable by the attributed traits and characteristics associated with their label. That is, they become stereotyped. Subsequent social encounters with members of the labeled

group – real interactions, or symbolic ones such as the mere mention of the group – become encounters with one-dimensional stereotypes.

The social world around us is thus conveniently classified, made more ordered, and amenable to almost instantaneous sensemaking. Labeling and stereotyping are inevitable, important and indispensable *heuristics* in our sensemaking efforts (Macrae, Milne, & Bodenhausen, 1994; Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). Heuristics are constantly in place and make life easier, but they have their limitations: (a) they cannot replace slower, more conscious and more considered modes of thinking even though heuristics may be over-relied upon; and (b) stereotypes in particular – if unrecognized and unchallenged – can significantly contribute to dehumanizing, depersonalizing and marginalizing those we encounter (Cuddy & Fiske, 2002; Jost & Kay, 2005; Kawakami, Dovidio, & van Kamp, 2005).

The Sophistication of Stereotyping

A second aspect of stereotyping in teacher-learning dynamics is that instructors, who may never have actually encountered learners face-to-face (as in online contexts), can come intuitively and unwittingly to rely on stereotypes. Relying on stereotypes is fraught with dangers that are all too easily ignored. For instance, there is a vast literature on situational testing in which individuals are asked to rate identical educational or work-related material purportedly submitted by different unknown people (Riach & Rich, 2002). The results are consistent and disturbing. Raters assign less merit to identical applications bearing black-sounding names than white names; rate those with recognizably female names lower than those with male names for positions in science and engineering; and even recommend the hiring of white convicted felons over better qualified black non-felons – the only trigger in most of these studies is simply the name of the candidate and the stereotypes that the name evokes (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Ghavami & Peplau, 2013; McGinnity & Lunn, 2011; Pager, 2003).

These finding are well known, but for many there is a sense that they only underscore the "wrongness" of those making the decisions – that is, that the raters involved succumbed

to their inherent prejudice and negative biases and that "we," placed in similar situations, would not make the same mistake. But there is no wrongness or mistake. Rather, there is a simple and consistent demonstration that we all initiatively and naively rely on stereotypes without much further consideration, and certainly not in an attempt to stigmatize or discriminate. Stereotypes are prevalent and unconsidered, but even when they are considered, it is all too easy to miss their insidiousness.

In what has become a classic article – and one that I always introduce to my own Cross-Culture Management students – Joyce Osland and Allan Bird (2000) developed the idea of the *sophisticated stereotype*. This occurs when we are aware of naive stereotyping but consider that we are *also* in possession of the knowledge, understanding and experience that allows us to go beyond it. Sophisticated stereotyping "is based on theoretical concepts and lacks the negative attributions often associated with its lower-level counterpart … [and yet] it is still limiting in the way it constrains individuals' perceptions of behavior in another culture" (p. 66). This takes us back to Hofstede – or rather to our reading of Hofstede and the ways in which we apply his framework of cultural dimensions in what we consider are "informed" (perhaps even "sophisticated") ways to those we encounter.

The Threats Inherent in Stereotyping

There is a third well-known but under-appreciated aspect of stereotypes. Stereotypes impact the behavior of not only those who use them but also of the targets. Frequently, targets are aware that they may be the object of stereotyping (particularly negative stereotyping) and react in ways calculated to repudiate them (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995). These are reactive responses to *stereotype threats* and materialize when there is "a negative stereotype about a persons' group, and he or she is concerned about being judged or treated negatively on the basis of this stereotype" (Spencer, Logel, & Davies, 2016, p. 416).

Sensing a threat to their identity and social categorization if they confirm the negative stereotype, targeted individuals often approach the task with greater effort, concern and

apprehension, and that "extra pressure can undermine the targeted groups' performance, making it more difficult for them to succeed than it would be for a nonstereotyped person in their position" (Spencer et al., 2016, p. 417). In a seemingly counterintuitive way, efforts to disaffirm anticipated negatively-stereotyped behavior can often result in targets unintentionally confirming it, leading to their own decreased sense of value and diminished sense of self-identity (Nussbaum & Steele, 2007; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008).

Of course, those who feel under stereotype threat have an alternative course of action. They can seek *to avoid* the negative implications posed by the stereotype by withdrawing from the task, disengaging from the challenging activity, or by demonstrating negativity toward the behavior required. Confirmation of the stereotype might be avoided, but the recognized disengagement can result in the individual undermining or jeopardizing his or her sense of self-efficacy, self-confidence and perhaps even well-being (Osborne & Walker 2006).

Again, there is an extensive body of literature in the field of stereotype threat that mirrors situational testing, except that the influence of stereotype is on the target, not the attributor (Good, Aronson, & Harder, 2008; Kalokerinos, von Hippel, & Zacher, 2014; Nguyen & Ryan, 2008). For example, it has been demonstrated that if stereotypic masculine traits are made salient prior to simulated mixed-gender negotiations, and the subsequent negotiation is portrayed as an exemplar of power-centered skills, the outcomes tend to be of the win-lose variety. If, however, stereotypic female traits are triggered prior to the negotiations and the subsequent negotiation is presented in terms of a creativity-based activity, the outcomes are more likely to be of win-wins. Explaining these results, the researchers suggested that "stereotype threat processes apply to both men and women in negotiations; implicitly activating negative stereotypes about one's group leads to decrements in performance for the stereotyped group" (Kray, Reb, Galinsky, & Thompson, 2004, p. 400).

In cross-culture contexts, there is always a concern that learners will sense they are under stereotype threats and that this will

influence their behavior or performance. They may try to disaffirm what they perceive to be negative stereotyping and, in the effort, end up confirming them, or they may simply withdraw from activities and performances that they feel present a threat. Stereotype threat comes into play when the underlying stereotype is triggered, and it is important to recast the learning activities, or anticipated outcomes, in ways that remove the trigger. Incidentally, although stereotype threat has generally been associated with negative stereotypes, it can also come into play in contexts where a positive stereotype exists, and the threat is then seen as falling short of that expectation.

Reflections on Practice: Navigating the Waters

How then might we engage in contexts where there is an obvious or potential national culture divide? What might be useful ways of negotiating and communicating with others who might be aware of that divide? How might we – as educators, instructors and mentors – best understand cross-culture work in dealing with students of different national cultures, and allow them to gain insight into the process and derive value from it? There are a number of options and possibilities.

- *Recognizing Opportunities for Cultural Learning:* In a world of difference, all engagements with otherness – especially when that otherness is embedded in a different national culture – are valuable. It is through others that we learn about them and about ourselves. Hopefully, that learning provides a bridge for better understanding, empathy and communication. Some might see cross-culture engagement in terms of personal richness; others might see it in terms that are more pragmatic. There is as much value in learning about how to spark interest and engagement in educational context as there is in learning more about subject matter, and I always try to appreciate the personal value potential in both. However, if the dynamics of the interaction are sensitively constructed to include reciprocity and mutuality, there is also a significant value potential for the learner. In a globalized world, where difference is inevitable

but where difference often serves only to divide, cross-culture explorations and growing understandings – no matter how circumscribed or limited – can potentially be of great personal and professional benefit for all members of the educational community of learning, including students.

- **Getting Culture Difference Into the Open:** Several years ago, a remarkable discussion took place between a number of world-respected national culture experts and cross-culture management authorities (Szkudlarek, McNett, Romani, & Lane, 2013). This is another article that I always share with students in cross-culture situations. In the discussion, Martha Maznevski, professor of organizational behavior and international management at IMD (International Institute for Management Development) Switzerland, recognized that some of those working in cross-cultural contexts "really believe that talking about cultural differences is futile … because it creates stereotypes and stereotypes are harmful and we should not do that, and therefore, they don't even want to go down that road at all" (p. 480). She also suggested that others involved in cross-culture engagement often avoid the issue of national culture difference because "in their experience, if you treat everybody like a human being, you're fine, so, really, there are no cultural differences. I find it's helpful just to get this out in the open to start with – make it explicit" (p. 480). In educational cross-culture contexts it is helpful for instructors and students, mentors and mentees, to acknowledge cultural difference and to get it out into the open, but it is hard to imagine that stereotypes are avoided by simply not talking about them, or by resolving to treat everybody as a human being.

- **Stressing Cultural Comprehension and Cognitive Flexibility:** In the same article, Joyce Osland, executive director of the Global Leadership Advancement Center at San José State University (California), noted that to produce genuine cross-cultural competence – for both our students and for ourselves as educators – a dialectical approach serves best. She

and co-researcher Allan Bird concluded that there needs to be a continuous process of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, in which "the thesis entails a hypothesis involving a sophisticated stereotype; antithesis is the identification of an apparently oppositional cultural paradox, [and] synthesis involves making sense of contradictory behavior – understanding why certain values are more important in certain contexts" (Szkudlarek et al., 2013, p. 485). She added that "if we can successfully guide students through this type of learning, the result is an upward spiral of cultural comprehension and cognitive flexibility" (p. 485). Cultural comprehension and cognitive flexibility are critical for our students, no matter whether national culture difference is the center of their learning experiences, or peripheral and a contextual aspect of it. Cultural comprehension and cognitive flexibility are equally important for us as educators, instructors and mentors.

- **Accentuating Learning Over Culture:** Awareness of the cultural dimensions of cross-culture education is critical for effective communication and appreciation

> *"In educational cross-culture contexts it is helpful for instructors and students, mentors and mentees, to acknowledge cultural difference and to get it out into the open, but it is hard to imagine that stereotypes are avoided by simply not talking about them, or by resolving to treat everybody as a human being."*

of learning behavior, but in most contexts, the purpose of the learning experience is to further subject-matter learning not culture-work. The proportions of subject-matter learning to culture-work vary with context – for example, both are high in teaching a Cross-Culture Management course, whereas culture-work is not the objective of most mentoring situations – but culture learning should not come to dominate or determine the nature of the learning experience. Culture may be a significant issue in the learning experience and culture difference should not be ignored, but there needs to be a sense of balance and appropriateness. When my students undertake study-abroad programs on international work-study internships, I recommend that they adopt an ethnographic agenda – that the cross-culture experience becomes an active describing of "the 'way of living' of a social group in its naturally occurring and ongoing setting … more than a retelling of observed behaviour … to cite and sort the values, attitudes, and assumptions that inform that behaviour" (Jurasek, Lamson, & O'Maley, 1996, p. 25). Here, culture-work *is* the learning experience and informal ethnography a learning tool. However, even in mentoring across national culture divides, I try to keep my observation journal in the hope that it will bring some insight into the experience, both present and future. But again, the educator is well advised to remember that his or her primary goal is to further learning in students, not only to advance his or her own culture knowledge.

- **Maintaining Openness and Mindfulness:** It could easily be argued that maintaining openness and mindfulness is a requirement in all teaching and learning contexts – and indeed, it is. However, the very difference of dealing with learners from different cultures and the challenges of managing the learning process across national culture divides can lead us to focus too intently on the process and to close down our capacity for openness and spontaneity. The problem is similar to the acts of gazing and glancing. In the *gaze* there is a paradoxical blinding, in which "the opening of vision in which

the gaze is predicated and promulgated in western thoughts turns to closure – a closing down on the very openness that is its much vaunted virtue" (Casey, 2007, p. 137). Whereas, the shifting and unfocused *glance* "discovers whole colonies of the to-be-seen world: places where sight has never before been – or if it has, it now sees differently" (p. 137). Despite the expectation of newness and the urgency of process-adjustment, our teaching and culture-work should both be pursued through an imposed openness and through a calculated mindfulness in which we avoid sustained and direct gazes, relying instead on repeated and casual glances.

The epigraph for this reflection suggests that we only see what we are prepared to see. The insight hinges on the double meaning of *prepared,* which can mean either: (a) that which we are presently open and willing to perceive; or (b) that which we have previously been made aware of and consequently anticipate. The paradox for those engaging in cross-culture educational contexts is that both awareness and anticipation are required, but both can limit what we ultimately observe and experience. Awareness and anticipation of stereotype are crucial, but in the process of becoming aware and of anticipating, we can inadvertently construct sophisticated stereotypes that conceal our more naive ones, just like Trojan wooden horses. In order to engage productively in the culture-work of teaching and mentoring, we need preparation. It can be invaluable – and certainly reassuring – to have a theoretical framework through which difference might be anticipated and identified. However, in the engagement itself, care, appreciation and thoughtfulness have to be constantly present to ensure that we are not blinded by that preparation, and that we remain prepared to see beyond it.

Perhaps, in ending this reflection on the great excitement but inherent challenges associated with mentoring across national culture difference, it is appropriate to echo the words of Kochan and Pascarelli (2000) who indirectly prompted this present reflection:

… it is important to remember that while mentoring is maturing into a multinational, multimedia phenomenon, its essence remains the connection between individuals who have overcome the artificial barriers of experience, race, or gender to create a caring partnership or network that sustains and nourishes all, enabling them to journey together to a new and richer understanding of their world. (p. 427)

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Reflections on Community Research, Practice and Engagement: A Report on My Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship

Rebecca Bonanno, Old Westbury and Manhattan

I was honored to be the recipient of the 2016-2017 Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship, an award given by the SUNY Empire State College Foundation to a faculty member each year. The purpose of the fellowship is to provide faculty members with an opportunity to conduct a community-related research or artistic project culminating in a community forum. As a social worker, the connections between scholarly work and exploring and addressing the needs of communities were part of the foundation of my education and training. This fellowship enabled me to pursue a research question – one that evolved from my own social work practice – and to engage and educate my community on an important topic. This report describes the project and highlights my learning and professional growth from the past year.

Parental Mental Health Literacy

When I first began to think about mental health literacy, I didn't know that the concept had a name. It started in my psychotherapy practice as I talked with parents whose children struggled with emotional and behavioral problems and were receiving psychiatric diagnoses for the first time. These parents had many questions: What does it mean to have a diagnosis of ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or depression? Do I have to tell my child's teacher? Are psychoactive medications worth the risks?

Most of the questions were ones I had heard many times and my answers were fairly practiced: Diagnoses are labels that help us decide how to help, but they don't define your child. Schools can be helpful partners for children with mental health problems but you get to decide what you do with the

information. Medications can be very helpful but there are risks and we should talk about them.

I had a lot of information but not a lot of definite answers for these parents. There were still so many things that they would have to learn, figure out and decide. Some families came into my practice with large amounts of knowledge about mental health, whereas others knew almost nothing apart from the negative stereotypes they had acquired. Likewise, many families were eager to engage in their child's mental health treatment, but some others were angry and fearful about what involvement with the mental health system said about their child and about themselves as parents. Many had mixed thoughts and feelings. I gave these parents as much information as I could but I began to wonder about the seemingly vast gap between groups of parents with positive attitudes and lots of knowledge about mental health, and groups with negative attitudes and very little accurate information. Where do parents learn about mental health, and what can be done to improve the quality and accessibility of the information that is available?

I discussed these questions with my ESC colleague Dr. Jordan Wright, a clinical psychologist. We dug into the literature and found that other researchers had asked similar questions and had developed the concept of mental health literacy (MHL), defined as "knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid in their recognition, management, or prevention" (Jorm et al., 1997, p. 182.). A fair amount of investigation has been done on MHL in the last few decades but we found only some application of this concept specifically to parents' knowledge and beliefs about child mental health problems. Jordan

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and I developed a preliminary study in which we sought to measure parental MHL and learn about the specific sources from which parents acquire information about child mental health.

From this study, we confirmed some of our hypotheses about parental MHL but also uncovered some surprising findings. The more we learned, the more I thought about my own community of Huntington, New York on Long Island, and returned to my original questions: How much do parents in my community know about child mental health and how do they learn it? Another question emerged, which was, how can I start a conversation about parental mental health literacy in Huntington? These questions were the seeds of my Imperatore project proposal.

Community Connections

I began with some ideas about a parental MHL research study and a possible "mental health fair" to disseminate information about child mental health to community members.

But I knew that I would need community partners – individuals and organizations with knowledge of the various sub-communities within Huntington, the needs they face, the types of projects that have been successful in the past, etc. I approached the director of the municipal youth agency, the Huntington Youth Bureau, and was thrilled that she was interested in the project. This was an opportunity for mutual learning, as youth bureau staff members shared with me what they knew from their deep connections in the community, and I educated them about parental MHL from a research perspective. We agreed that a partnership would be mutually beneficial and worked closely together for the entire year of my fellowship.

Community Research

With Jordan as a research consultant, I planned a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) study of the parents in my community. We revised the original survey to include questions, not only about child mental health knowledge and sources of information, but also about parents' sense of their own ability to get mental health support for their children, a variable we called "efficacy." To supplement the survey data, I designed a series of questions to be asked in interviews with parents, allowing me to probe their knowledge, beliefs and perceptions.

Conducting this survey provided several major learning points for me. First, as I had learned in my research methods courses in graduate school, every methodology has strengths and drawbacks. Strengths: This online survey could be completed from any electronic device with an internet connection, required only an easy-to-use and inexpensive app to design and administer, and quickly and efficiently collated the data that would be collected. On the other hand were the drawbacks: Cultural and socioeconomic factors necessarily influence who completes online surveys – those with convenient access to devices, at least a moderate level of literacy in English, and those who have the time and interest to answer dozens of questions about child mental health. Even with an incentive (a one in 100 chance to win a $100 gift card), we found that our sample was heavy with white, upper middle-class women. This did not capture the full breadth and diversity of the Huntington population. Further, it was difficult to recruit enough parents of any and all backgrounds to complete the survey. It took me two months longer than I had expected to get close enough to my goal of 200 participants.

I attempted to overcome some of the barriers and to reach a more diverse segment of the population by attending community events like health fairs and school supply giveaways with iPads in hand, hoping that parents would be interested in completing the survey on the spot. A few did, but this approach did not do much to boost the diversity of the sample.

Fortunately, a strength of the research methodology was the mixed-methods design, which enabled me to recruit parents of color and those in lower socioeconomic brackets from the survey sample and invite them to participate in in-depth interviews. In this way, I was able to reach for perspectives that were likely to be underrepresented in the survey data. In interviews, I could ask both broad and specific questions, like, "What comes to mind when you hear the term 'child mental health'?" and "How do think your culture influences your thinking about mental health problems?" I also asked parents about their preferences for receiving information about child mental health – pamphlets, workshops and presentation, online information – and who among the people in their lives, such as friends and family members, primary care doctors, and school personnel, they would trust the most to provide guidance and support should their children require help for emotional or behavioral issues.

Because almost any amount of parental misinformation or any problematic or stigmatizing belief about child mental health is potentially harmful, we created our MHL variables to have a fairly high cut-off score for adequate MHL. Our analysis has found that about half of the sample had adequate MHL and half had inadequate MHL. We had hoped to learn more about the relationship between demographic variables and MHL, but did not find that any specific variables that were correlated with or predicted MHL in this sample. In terms of efficacy – the extent to which parents feel knowledgeable about child mental health and confident in their abilities to acquire services for their children – we found that minority group (non-white) parents and those of lower socioeconomic status (SES) had lower efficacy scores. This could be useful information for community organizations and service providers; it also provokes further questions for research: Why do people of color and lower SES parents feel less efficacious? Do they simply make more realistic assessments of their own knowledge and abilities than do white and higher SES parents? Does this low efficacy affect the likelihood that parents will reach out for information and services for their children?

Parents in this sample acquired information from a wide variety of sources including their children's schools, social media, parenting blogs, and friends and family members. We found no relationship between MHL and the sources from which parents receive information. When asked to rank how reliable they believed various information sources to

> " … 'What comes to mind when you hear the term "child mental health"?' and 'How do think your culture influences your thinking about mental health problems?'"

be, parents ranked mental health professionals and doctors as most reliable. They ranked social media and clergy members as the least reliable sources.

The qualitative data from the 12 interviews I conducted adds both breadth and depth to the overall data. First, an observation about process: It was remarkably easy to recruit interview participants from this sample. I drew from parents who had completed the survey and who had indicated that they would be willing to participate in further research. I further selected a more diverse sample, contacting minorities and individuals who reported incomes that were lower than

the sample average, along with parents with demographic characteristics consistent with the survey sample (non-minority, high income). I contacted 17 survey participants and 12 agreed to participate. Given the difficulty I had in getting enough survey participants, I was surprised by how easy it was to recruit parents who were willing to take time from their schedules to talk with me about such a sensitive topic.

Overwhelmingly, parents told me that they believed mental health literacy was important and that the stigma that surrounds mental health problems in both children and adults should be addressed in the community. I was heartened to hear from several parents who, until participating in this research, had not given much thought to child mental health knowledge but were now much more aware of the need for access to accurate information, referrals and high quality services. Some participants asked how they could learn more and participate in sharing information in the community.

It stands to reason that parents would seek information from other people they perceive as having expertise in child mental health. Early analysis of the qualitative data suggests that, in addition to expertise, parents seek information from others with both knowledge and with whom they have a preexisting relationship. Several of the parents interviewed explained that if they had questions or concerns about their own child's mental health, they would contact their pediatrician or the school psychologist *only if* they knew and trusted that person. I plan to further explore the extent to which the personal relationship between the parent and the expert is important in parental information seeking.

Qualitative data results suggest that there is no one best way to distribute child mental health information in the Huntington community. Some parents preferred that written information be sent home from the schools, suggesting that if the schools believe an issue is important enough to share with parents, that it signals parents to pay attention. Others felt that they were already overwhelmed with notices and pamphlets from the school but would attend a workshop in the evening, if their schedules permitted.

Community Forum

My early thoughts about the community forum component of this project focused on the possibility of creating a curriculum to educate parents about child mental health. However, I soon realized that, until I had completed the research component, I would not know the extent of the need for this type of project or the best way to implement it. My next idea was to perhaps hold a resource fair that would be like health fairs that I have attended in the past. These events gather health and wellness service providers to conduct simple health screenings and offer information to community members about healthy living and available services. I imagined something similar that would focus on child mental health and wellness. In working with the Huntington Youth Bureau, my community partner, I learned that these events often need a bigger "draw" to get busy parents to attend. We decided that showing a film on the topic might bring in a larger audience. Online research led me to the award-winning film *No Letting Go* (Bucari, Silverman, & Rush, 2016), which is a powerful depiction of a family struggling to understand and live with their child's mental health problems. Based on the true story of the producer's own experiences with her son, the film addresses issues of stigma, misinformation, difficulty finding services, and the stress and strain of caring for a mentally ill child. The Youth Mental Health Project, a nonprofit organization created by co-producer Randi Silverman, assisted with the planning for our film screening by providing logistical advice, printed informational materials for parents and a discussion guide.

With the help of the Huntington Youth Bureau staff, I recruited representatives from several youth-serving agencies in the community to participate in a resource fair that we held immediately after the film screening. These agencies included a community mental health clinic, a program for runaway youth, a substance abuse treatment and prevention program, and the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Representatives were available both before and after the screening to speak with community members about the services they provided.

I introduced *No Letting Go* by sharing some statistics about child mental health and encouraging audience members to think about the impact that mental health disorders have on our nation, our community and our families. The film was well received by the audience, though some attendees shared that they were not prepared for how emotionally powerful it would be. I facilitated a discussion after the screening and heard many excellent observations. Audience members talked about different family roles and how these are affected by mental illness, and the extent to which the film depicted various characters' reactions realistically. They shared their own experiences and struggles with child mental health problems and with the systems that provide care. Audience members agreed that the family shown in the film was extremely fortunate to have the financial means to pay for residential treatment for their son; we discussed what happens to those families without those means.

I ended the discussion with an invitation to the community to keep talking about child mental health to help reduce the stigma and isolation that many families experience. I plan to pull together interested community members into a work group that will keep up this project's momentum, perhaps involving schools and community groups.

Professional Development

The Imperatore Fellowship has been an incredible opportunity for me to pursue a topic that is meaningful to me, to develop my research skills, and to make professional connections in my community. Additionally, I used a portion of the fellowship funds for professional development by participating in a yearlong educational program in Child and Family Therapy at New York University. I learned a great deal about child mental health treatment, much of which has been especially helpful as I develop the new online course Counseling Children and Adolescents. I also found it fun and interesting to be back in the role of the student and I appreciate the idea of lifelong learning more now than ever.

Contribution to the Community

The information I collected from the Huntington community may help members of local organizations and government agencies see the need to disseminate more and better information about child mental health. I was pleased to be able to start this conversation with so many individual community members and groups, and I plan to keep the momentum going in the coming year. I also hope to share what I have learned with the larger academic community. In the coming months, I will look into publishing and presenting my findings at conferences.

Conclusion

I am profoundly grateful to have benefitted from the Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship this past academic year. This opportunity is an example of Empire State College's commitment to faculty development and community engagement and it should be a point of pride for all of us in the college community.

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"This form of college-going is marked by more customized pathways to degree or credential completion and a focus away from credit hours to the ability to demonstrate and apply knowledge.

This new demand encompasses:

• Modular, easy-to-access instruction;

• Blended academic and occupational curricula;

• Progressive credentialing of knowledge and skills (sub-degree level);

• Financial, academic, and career advising; and

• Public policy that reflects the complex task of balancing life, work, and education."

– Louis Soares, "Post-traditional Learners and the Transformation of Postsecondary Education: A Manifesto for College Leaders"
American Council on Education, 2013, p. 3

Real Things in Real Time:
A SUNY Empire State College Sabbatical Report

Yvonne Murphy, Syracuse

"The world is too much with us;
late and soon. … "

  – William Wordsworth (1807, line 1)

To begin, I would like to thank SUNY Empire State College for this time apart to renew myself. I return from this time away a regrouped educator and colleague. It was especially crucial for me at this unprecedented time of change both as a longtime (16 years!) faculty member in the college's history and as a worried citizen in the country's/world's history. I do believe that this sabbatical, March 2016-August 2016, is what gave me the energy and refreshed activist presence of mind to accept the nomination and position of chair for the Department of Arts and Media in January of 2017.

Before the sabbatical, I was feeling ground down at the edges from the perennial stress of overload and what seemed like pointless change. As writers and artists, we are always struggling to get time to do creative work, but then, when that blessed time finally arrives in long, uninterrupted hours, what does one do with it? The blank page and the blank canvas loom large as does the question: Is every thought important? Are *my* thoughts important? This feeling doesn't go away.

Decades ago, my esteemed mentor, renowned poet and current president of the Guggenheim Foundation, Edward Hirsch, won the MacArthur "Genius Grant," and when I congratulated him and suggested it was a great honor he said, shrugging it off: "Do you really think so?" My hero, poet Elizabeth Bishop, published a book every 10 years, and I tell myself it is because she was inscrutable with her words but now I am thinking maybe it was in part due to the anxiety of the work, of public reception or, perhaps, self-immolation.

bell hooks and Joyce Carol Oates are often derided for publishing "too much," a fact I used to completely brush off as a slur based on gender. I don't recall anyone criticizing a male writer for writing too much. "That 'X,' I wish he wouldn't write so many books!" Well, maybe John Grisham – no, I guess that's me. He just published another best-seller!

Maybe writing a lot is another coping mechanism, a way of dealing with the anxiety of creation and putting one's work out in the world. This slice of the publishing wars plays out somewhat similarly to the working mom versus stay-at-home mom drama of the *Mommy Wars* (Steiner, 2006), a dichotomy to which I am often subjected through media outlets and life/work events. Someone is always getting trounced for not doing something or doing too much of something, being too acquiescent or not acquiescent enough.

At ESC, it always came down to saying no. "'So-and-so' can't say no," which was wrong and "'So-and-so' says no too much," which was wrong. I've seen women punished for both, frankly, and every kind of no or not-no in between. In *Coming to Writing,* Hélène Cixous (1991) once advocated for women to engage in a kind of overwriting and frequent publishing as an attempt to fill the world up with female voices, women's words, to counteract the already overabundant male hegemony in print and otherwise.

One of the more important books I read during my sabbatical, *The Slow Professor* (Berg & Seeber, 2016), validated my own trend toward thoughtful slowness or, perhaps lack of lightning speed when it comes to publication. "We need, then, to protect a time and place for a timeless time, and to remind ourselves continually that this is not self-indulgent but rather crucial to intellectual work" (Berg & Seeber, 2016, p. 28). This tidy volume, written in collaboration in spare moments by two female Canadian scholars and colleagues, is a

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must-read in that it adeptly condenses the last 15 years of scholarship on the corporatization of academia, as well as ingeniously applies theories of the "slow-food" and "maker" movements to the practice of scholarship and teaching in academia. Therefore, the ideas of slowness and timeless time were very helpful in keeping me away from email and checking in on most days. Certainly, the Heideggerians among us will recognize the concept, but I won't go there. …

The first days of my 2016 sabbatical were heady and filled with networking and valuable discussion about the value(s) of writing and rhetoric and teaching writing. As a result of sustained local collaboration with two ESC colleagues, we were chosen to present a panel for the annual SUNY Council on Writing Annual Conference at the University at Albany, titled, "Three Takes on the Value of Writing Instruction for the Nontraditional Student." I was panel chair and moderated a hearty crowd at our early morning jam session concerning our teaching experiences at ESC, in particular how we embed writing theory in our

work with students; and my 2013-2014 Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship project, which I showcased and explicated as community activism through writing – creative and workplace – empowerment. My Imperatore project was also designed to empower new and recently arrived Americans. Syracuse, a longtime sanctuary city, is especially open and welcoming to immigrants and refugees. I strive to embody this welcoming spirit and am fortunate to continuously work with people coming here from all over the world, both at ESC and in my community.

Then, after the first blush of social interaction faded, it was time to get to the real work of my sabbatical – the solitary reading and writing and intellectual work of the poet and scholar/professor. I always liken this experience to my students and family as the deep-sea diving phase of work, especially writing, and I underscore how, for me, it is so difficult to get far under the surface enough to write well. It takes time. It takes discipline. These are two qualities I consistently struggle to maintain and when I finally get there, coming up or out of it too quickly can feel as disorienting and unsettling as a case of decompression sickness, the bends.

Also, frequently, there is a period when one's reading must steep or marinate in the brain before becoming recognizably useful as output, at least for me – a lag time, so to speak, before one can articulate what effect a "time apart" may have had other than 20 good poem drafts completed, two large-scale art projects conceptualized, four smaller works finished. That is not to mention the false starts and aborted attempts and disasters. Creation is messy. Often the work you think you are doing turns out to be something else entirely. I did write a lot. I wrote more than I ever do. In this time period, I created more drafts and significant foundational work than polished, publishable final drafts, which was not my initial desire, or proposal; however, I am confident that this new work is going to bring me closer to my end goal of finishing my second book and quite possibly an unexpected third book and/or articles.

So, I also read. I read like crazy. As is my usual custom, every summer I read as many new and new-to-me poets writing today as I can. It is important to me to read new voices and

understand what current trends and concerns are in the poetry world and literary world at large. This is possibly a hangover from my editorial assistant days when I was tasked at reading the mountains of manuscripts in the slush pile each week in hopes of finding the one rare jewel.

What is most exciting about the poetry books I read during this sabbatical time was that there is an abundance of vibrant, mainstream books recently published that comes from young voices of varying races, sexual preferences, cultures, experiences, backgrounds and perspectives. I remind everybody that in poetry circles, one is a "young" writer until at

> *"I always liken this experience to my students and family as the deep-sea diving phase of work, especially writing, and I underscore how, for me, it is so difficult to get far under the surface enough to write well."*

least their 70s. I often mention Stanley Kunitz who won his first Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in his 70s and a second in his 90s.

At a time when police were shooting and killing black men and women almost every day, it was important for me personally to be reading poetry and essays by young African-American and multiracial writers. For example, Tyehimba Jess, who wrote 2016's intellectually formidable and utterly original *Olio,* later went on to win the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. *Olio* is a book that chronicles African-American music and civil rights history from 1816-1927 and beyond in a way that defies categories and genres. Jess (2016) described the voices in his book as "… first-generation-freed voices:/ They coalesce in counterpoint, name nemeses, summon tongue to wit-ness" (p. 3, lines 51-52). Here, he is demonstrating poetry, prose and illustration as a collective lyrical

powerhouse about the African-American experience but also as scholarly and literary process, i.e., markedly establishing public validity for poem as intellectual inquiry and re-visioning of the collective past.

In the ways poet Lin-Manuel Miranda solidified that the American Broadway musical and collective American history could be regaled in hip-hop and rap cadences from immigrant, non-white voices and points of view; Tyehimba Jess is squarely and sophisticatedly validating the ways poetry and literature can be *una mezcla,* or a mix of culture, race and tones, music(s), forms, genres, history (personal and public) and intellect. He also shows how a book can be a repository for scholarship and verse and, also, act as living stage and museum. In fact, many of Jess's pieces are so much larger than life that they must incorporate extra fold-outs for the overlapping choruses of verse, a truly exponential sense of coming into language.

Another astonishing and achingly beautiful poetic voice is Natalie Diaz, who writes compellingly and at once at the intersections of her Mojave, Latina and lesbian identities. In the title poem of her book, *When My Brother Was an Aztec,* Diaz (2012) took on the drug epidemic in her community at large and, more poignantly, in her own family. She showed the wear and tear and daily poisons of loving a brother addicted to drugs. Diaz demonstrated the ruthlessness inflicted on others in the wake of her brother's path of self-satisfaction and destruction. It is a harrowing, gorgeous poem; as her brother desperately looks for his own escape, he selfishly transforms himself into: *"Huizilopochtli,* a god, half-man half-hummingbird. My parents/ at his feet, wrecked honeysuckles, he lowered his swordlike mouth,/ gorged on them, draining color until their eyebrows whitened" (p. 1, lines 14-16).

While Diaz's poem looked at the tragic dissolution of a family and a son's life in the face of a world that is forbidding and unwelcoming to them, it is often a related desire for fitting in, transformation through acceptance, that is explored in poems from newer American poets like Ocean Vuong, whose first book, 2016's *Night Sky With Exit Wounds,* is lyrical fireworks. Here, in "Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong," he wrote about the effects of his childhood in post-war

Vietnam and his painful search for identity as an U.S. immigrant and gay man. His love for his mother radiates in this poem even as his own self-hatred and ambivalence falter: " … Ocean,/ are you listening? The most beautiful part/ of your body is wherever/ your mother's shadow falls./ Here's the house with childhood/ whittled down to a single red tripwire./ Don't worry. Just call it *horizon*/& you'll never reach it" (p. 82, lines 8-15). What these poetry books and the dozens more I read have in common is a sometimes bright, flickering, hope-enlivened quest for equality and love – even in the darkest hours of humanity, even when there is none.

Students have benefitted from my sabbatical work in the enriched ways I have brought this deep reading and creative/scholarly writing and practice to the embedded discussions of their developing work and the topics under study. In this era of one-size-fits-all academic offerings led by the confused belief that cost cutting of faculty services leads to longevity of programs, I have stood firm in my commitment to customization and, in so doing, have learned that personal connection to the learning experience for students remains integral to lifelong learning and a lasting sense of accomplishment. This customization comes from hours of personal immersion in the topics I offer, and how they relate or remain relevant to the larger world. One of my most popular study offerings is Blogging and Digital Presentation. As such, I spent a lot of time online, looking at a variety of blog styles and formats, keeping up with bloggers, trends, online publications, platforms and tools to keep my work fresh.

2016 was a particularly distracting year to be on sabbatical and to be online. It was an unprecedented presidential election year, and from the springtime up through the early fall, it was a rather giddy time for women and people whose voices were historically marginalized and excluded from mainstream literary and publishing circles. Young women went around wearing T-shirts that declared, "The Future is Female," and for a moment, we thought it was true. Magazine covers and articles echoed this sentiment, even while sexual harassment scandal after scandal broke and the Stanford rape case victim's open letter to her rapist circulated on the internet. This, in

turn, caused an avalanche of everyday women of all ethnicities, ages and backgrounds to openly chronicle their experiences with rape and sexual abuse on social media, creating an overwhelming and undeniable public maelstrom of awareness that rape and sexual harassment are not problems that have gone away with the women's liberation movement or a female candidate for president. Now, looking back, I can see this personal outpouring online as a direct precursor to the activism inherent in the #MeToo movement.

The social media sites are also alive with poetry and art world discussions and gossip. One of the big distractions in the spring of 2016 was the heated debate in poetry circles over whether Bob Dylan deserved the Nobel Prize for Literature, for example. This really got a bunch of poets mad. For me, it was kind of a fun distraction from the scary political landscape. Another not as lively but certainly passionate social media conversation revolved around a celebrated male poet colleague who had been "outed" online for sexual misconduct with numerous students and female poets by a respected literary women's group, a scandal in the poetry world akin to the Bill Cosby or Donald Trump scandals that were also unfolding in real time. This poet actually LOST HIS JOB! At the time, this felt like a radical first in creative writing academic circles to be sure.

Since then, of course, we have witnessed an avalanche of high profile men losing their jobs in very public arenas and professions for similar reasons. Another memorable viral episode that caused much debate was a tasteless, frankly racist, *New Yorker* doggerel poem about Chinese food that angered everyone. My friend, Victoria Chang, crafted a brilliant series of "Chinese Barbie" poems in response that were published in many literary journals and have now become a terrific book collection called *Barbie Chang,* published to outstanding accolades and reviews in November 2017 by Copper Canyon Press. This book is not only a refutation of rampant racial microaggressions and unexamined white privilege, it is also deeply, unconsolably feminist.

Meanwhile, black people kept getting killed by the police and I had just worked on my Imperatore project with newly arrived

Americans and I couldn't and I still can't stop thinking about and seeing those inflatable rafts from Syria and Libya and Iraq with children and mothers and fathers crying at the edges of Greek seashores telling about how they lost children at sea, and all they wanted was a better life and to escape the horror that was where they were fleeing from before. They could be standing on the streets in front of buildings in any new city. They could be working jobs and having dinners and loving their families if it weren't for the fact that fear gets cloaked and packed and pushed into closets of our own convenience … until it explodes.

I think of the mothers and fathers of the unarmed men and women shot or strangled by the police that summer and during the two years prior: Tanisha Anderson, Dontre Hamilton, John Crawford III, Akai Gurley, Michael Brown Jr., Rumain Brisbon, Jerame Reid, Tony Robinson, Phillip White, Sandra Bland, Eric Harris, Walter Scott, Freddie Gray, Ezell Ford, Dante Parker, Keith Lamont Scott, Terence Crutcher, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Alton Sterling, Philando Castile, Akiel Denkins, Gregory Gunn. In 2016, at least 258 black people were reported killed by police, 39 were unarmed, four were killed via police stun guns, and nine died in custody (Craven, 2017). The world is no longer a space they

"If I could time travel in a hot tub back to the Romantic era and have a heart-to-heart with [Wordsworth], I'd say that in getting and spending, we very often need to take care of those we love, and that in those we love, we invest and multiply our powers, long after our own lives are done."

get to take for granted; it never was. To be in the world, to have the world with us, should be predicated by thinking of others, caring for others. "Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers. …" Wordsworth (1807, line 2) said, but he was being stingy. All criticisms of the evils of capitalism and rampant over-consumerism aside, Wordsworth was turning 30 when he wrote that and was married with kids and finally facing the reality that he'd have to grow up, stop giving 100 percent of his time to poetry writing and get a "real job" to help with the responsibilities of his family. If I could time travel in a hot tub back to the Romantic era and have a heart-to-heart with him, I'd say that in getting and spending, we very often need to take care of those we love, and that in those we love, we invest and multiply our powers, long after our own lives are done. I'd like to think Mr. "Intimations of Immortality" would be open to that argument.

This sabbatical was no time apart, or perhaps it was a time apart with everyone in mind? I was, or always am, too much with the world these days. It's impossible to have eyes and a functioning heart and not be in the world. I am always thinking back to the title of one of Yusef Komunyakaa's (1986) early poems, *I Apologize for the Eyes in My Head.* He was writing primarily about his experiences growing up in Louisiana as a black man and his service in Vietnam, yet he also highlighted the artist and the activist's quandary of being a truth-teller experiencing the hurt of deep injustice and violence in the maelstrom of public hypocrisy.

Frankly, for me, it was difficult to explain or report on my sabbatical immediately after it ended and perhaps that may be due to my discipline or my nature, but I needed some distance to recognize how what had happened, and what I had learned, had impacted my work. I am still sorting out the actual written and visual work I completed and drafted during that period. In retrospect, the events of 2016 were merely a precursor for what we are experiencing now. My expectation is that I will go back to stealing hours in the evenings and early mornings, on weekends and holidays to process and continue polishing what I have created into publishable and recognizable, responsive art.

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Report on Fulbright Experience in Amman, Jordan

Richard Savior, Manhattan

In May 2017, I returned from serving as a Fulbright Specialist Program scholar at Princess Sumaya University for Technology in Amman, Jordan. PSUT is a private Jordanian university sponsored by the country's leading applied research center, the Royal Scientific Society. PSUT is a highly respected teaching-focused institution of higher education in the Jordanian marketplace and beyond, offering a comprehensive portfolio of leading edge technology-related programs and degrees. The university has received widespread and well-deserved recognition as the leading provider of higher education in many highly competitive fields of study. My project was to assess the university's current internationalization strategy as a means of furthering student experiential cross-cultural learning, faculty engagement and collaboration. The goals for the project were as follows:

- To assess the current development and implementation of collaborative international exchange programs as a format for experiential cross-cultural learning.

- To assess the degree to which current students have opportunities to learn about the larger world by deepening their understanding of themselves, their culture, how they are perceived, and how they perceive others.

- To assess the degree to which faculty are engaged in sourcing, developing, and participating in collaborative international research and teaching.

- To assess the level of understanding, support and commitment for the current internationalization strategy by the university community.

- To assess the current level of resources and funding sources that can support the incubation and development of sustainable international collaborative opportunities.

- To develop a set of recommendations based upon the findings of this assessment that may serve to enhance and strengthen the current internationalization strategy.

The project involved conducting interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, the Royal Scientific Society, the Queen Rania Center for Entrepreneurship, and members of the university community, including senior administrators, academic deans, faculty and staff, as well as students regarding the current strategy.

Through the course of these discussions, I found broad-based conceptual support for an internationalization strategy. The university had already established a solid foundation for expanding international partnership opportunities by pursuing various international accreditations (e.g., AACSB International: The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business; ABET: Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology, Inc.), and had achieved significant progress toward developing collaborative international partnership opportunities and joint programs for students and faculty in teaching, research and technology transfer, primarily with the EU marketplace. That said, I recognized that a gap existed between the conceptual understanding of the current strategy and the operationalization of the strategy, particularly as that applied to faculty engagement and participation. The various stakeholders recognized the importance and value associated with the current strategy, but were less than fully engaged and personally committed with respect to their prospective participation and contribution to the strategy.

Specifically, current research-associated policies related to ensuring adequate resources and funding were constraining progress in the pursuit of international collaboration, and faculty cited a need for greater inclusiveness and engagement in international collaboration

Richard Savior

and research. It was also clear that the current criteria for faculty promotion and tenure, with respect to the relative weighting of international research, did not provide sufficient incentives for collaborative research aligned with the institution's strategic vision and goals. Many of the individuals interviewed recognized the value and interconnectivity of international collaborative faculty research and the attainment of institutional quality assurance and competitive standing (institutional ranking).

It became clear to me that while PSUT had made considerable progress in establishing a broad set of collaborative partnerships and agreements, internationalization by itself could not be limited to institutionalized efforts alone, but also needed to be highly individualized based upon an infinite list of variables, including the personal history, interests, discipline, research availability and international contacts of the faculty. I also recognized that to realize the institution's internationalization goals, an environment/culture conducive to realizing those goals needed to be strengthened to further encourage a range of interactions, connections, and engagement tailored in support of a variety

of short- and long-term faculty commitments. Here are a few of the more significant recommendations that were developed to guide PSUT for a more inclusive, collaborative strategy toward internationalization:

- PSUT should build upon and further strengthen the infusion of international perspectives into curricular and research activities. Building a strong focus on faculty engagement is a critical element of any successful internationalization strategy.

- PSUT needs to further its efforts in instilling and supporting a culture that values and supports research, and requires both institutional and faculty leadership in setting and articulating a clear set of research goals and criteria, and a plan to achieve them. These activities must be aligned with, and rooted in, the institution's overall strategic priorities and policies.

- In advancing this culture, the university should emphasize a more open and collaborative approach. Such an approach will serve to ensure the input and contribution of all stakeholders, particularly the faculty, and help foster faculty-to-faculty collaborative research efforts.

- PSUT must be prepared to adjust its current policies to align with both those goals and the current and future motivations of its faculty. Senior administrative support for these changes is of critical importance.

- PSUT should consider further steps toward acknowledging and celebrating faculty efforts that support international engagements. By further recognizing faculty research interests and cultivating faculty international collaboration, the senior administration will realize global engagement as a shared and self-sustaining goal.

- In reassessing its internationalization strategy, which may take a few years to fully mature, the university should recognize the need for ongoing maintenance of the strategy to ensure its sustainability. New policies may need to be developed and the administration should be prepared to meet continuing challenges, such as maintaining research funding and developing additional partnerships with outside institutions.

At the end of my stay, I had the opportunity to present my findings and recommendations to the university's board of trustees. The feedback from these discussions was extremely positive and plans were discussed for implementing the core recommendations over the course of the coming academic year. I was also asked to share my report with the Fulbright Commission in Jordan and in Washington, D.C.

Given the length of my appointment (April-May), I had the opportunity to spend a good amount of time getting to know my colleagues at PSUT and venture out on the weekends to see much of the country. Although I had been to Jordan many times before, I have never tired of the incredibly warm hospitality of its people and the abundant natural beauty of the countryside. It's hard to capture those sentiments in a short article or with a few pictures, but I hope I've sparked some interest in learning more about this wonderful land. The Jordanian people embrace and embody a rich and welcoming culture and love sharing it with visitors, especially those from America.

The Fulbright Specialist Program, which is funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, serves to promote the international engagement of academic scholarship by building links between U.S. and overseas institutions. Through this program, U.S. scholars in select disciplines engage in short-term collaborative projects primarily focused on enhancing the capacity-building at eligible institutions in over 140 countries worldwide.
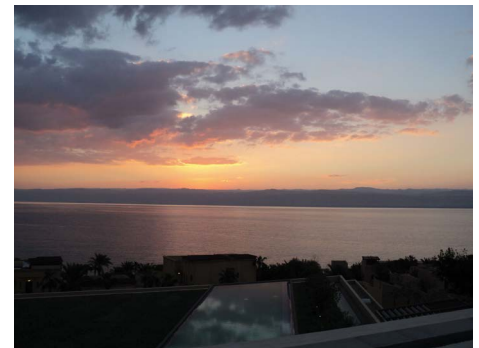

Amman's Fifth Circle

Photo credit: Richard Savior

Petra World Heritage Site

Wadi Rum Desert in Central Jordan

Northern Jordan near the Syrian border

The Dead Sea across from Israel

Applications to the Fulbright Specialist Program are accepted on a rolling basis and are evaluated by discipline peer review committees several times per year. They recommend qualified applications for final approval by the presidentially-appointed J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board. Approved candidates join the program for five years and are eligible to be selected for Fulbright Specialist projects. The basic eligibility requirements include: U.S. citizenship at the time of application, a Ph.D. or other terminal degree, and substantial post-doctoral teaching and professional experience in the discipline.

For more information on the program, feel free to contact SUNY Empire State College's Fulbright campus representative, Alan Mandell at Alan.Mandell@esc.edu or ext. 1255. Additional details about the program and the application can be found at https://fulbrightspecialist.worldlearning.org/.

"Postsecondary education leaders are too often coaxed into entrepreneurship by extra-institutional stakeholders such as policymakers. Postsecondary leaders should be the entrepreneurs of learning, not the coaxed incremental change agents."

– Louis Soares, "Post-traditional Learners and the Transformation of Postsecondary Education: A Manifesto for College Leaders" American Council on Education, 2013, p. 15

Are We Out of Step?

Ed Warzala, Saratoga Springs

A Review of:
Lower Ed: The Troubling Rise of For-Profit Colleges in the New Economy
By Tressie McMillan Cottom

The Business of Upward Mobility

Professor Tressie McMillan Cottom (2017) of Virginia Commonwealth University provides readers with an insider's perspective of what she describes as the "troubling rise" of the for-profit sector of higher education. The primary audience for this work will be academic professionals in traditional colleges and universities and those who see for-profit higher education as a threat to higher education generally; it also will appeal to those in the for-profit sector seeking to improve and legitimize their product. "Lower ed" is the label applied by the author to a range of recently established education entities including those that emerged from the "massive Wall Street financialization of shareholder for-profit colleges" that emerged in the 1990s (Cottom, 2017, p. 30). There are 3,265 for-profit colleges that are eligible for federal financial aid and 2,850,970 unduplicated students enrolled (U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics as cited in Lederman, 2016). The numbers of such institutions and enrolled students have declined slightly of late, but the sector remains a sizeable competitor for scarce state and federal financial aid funding. The consequences of the 2016 elections, discussed below, may shift the trends back in favor of the for-profit sector if policies challenging the for-profits imposed by the Obama Department of Education are reversed.

Cottom provides a unique vantage point from which to understand the dramatic growth in the for-profit sector that peaked in 2014 and the ways in which its students are exploited for corporate profits. The author's direct experience as a recruiter for two for-profit colleges in 2010 and thus her observations of the inner workings, business practices and

manipulations common to many of these entities distinguish the book from recent reports, white papers and news reporting on the for-profits. Also compelling is Cottom's sociological consciousness – her acute sensitivity to race, class and gender, and her own life experiences as an African-American woman, lend texture to a topic more commonly discussed in statistical, dollars and cents terms.

The author's professional experiences in "lower ed" help her to illustrate with human faces and real-life stories the destructive consequences of predatory education institutions, particularly staggering debt that can exceed $130,000 when a student maxes-out financial aid eligibility. (Cottom, 2017, p. 133) Through anecdotal case studies of actual students Cottom recruited as part of her former job, and through over 100 interviews of students in the conduct of research for the book, Cottom humanizes the inhumanity of debt and the deceptions that often trap students and destroy hope for a better life. Recruitment strategies and promises of gainful employment by some for-profit schools play on the vulnerabilities of the most vulnerable members of society. A key finding of the research is that poor, single, African-American women are particularly vulnerable to the allure of for-profit marketing. The book is dedicated to "everyone trying to make a dollar out of 15 cents, but especially for the sisters" (Cottom, 2017, Dedication). Cottom chronicles the socioeconomic dynamics that make for-profit colleges especially appealing to the poor, the single head of household breadwinners, the location-bound, and those identified by the author as "non-elite" students. It is the non-elite student, defined as one lacking the means and the intrinsic
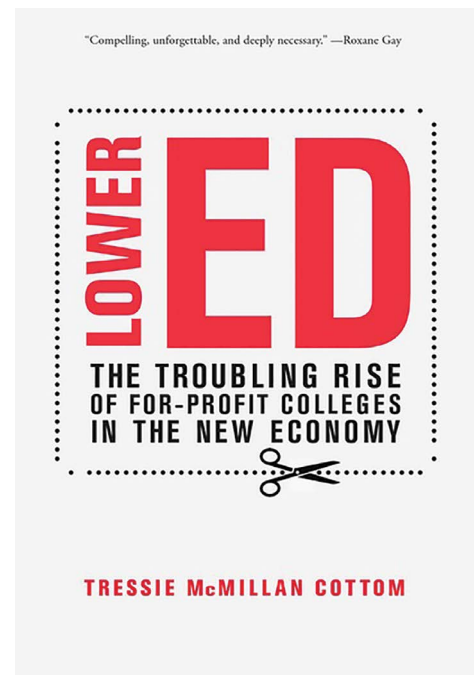
motivations necessary to succeed in traditional higher education, whom corporate for-profit education has targeted.

As a sociologist, Cottom is attuned to the race, class, gender and political-economic factors upon which this sector thrived, beginning in the 1990s and peaking in the current decade. According to Cottom, the "new economy" helped stimulate the rapid growth of the for-profit sector, and led her to her first job as a recruiter at a beauty college. Beauty colleges are not new to higher education, but what is new is the corporate expansion of career training schools and the design of curriculum that make these schools eligible to receive federal financial aid. It is the finance capital

that has been funneled into the sector, as well as the public trading of stocks in the sector, that set "lower ed" apart.

The New Economy

The new economy steered the author to her experiential learning in recruitment and ultimately to her research. Cottom (2017) noted, "Advancements in telecom technology provided the backdrop of structural changes that led me to my first interview at a for-profit college" (p. 44). The author's own employment uncertainty in the new economy drove her to a job as a recruiter with a beauty college. The author argues that the rise of for-profit colleges can be attributed to structural economic changes in the American economy, but Cottom offers this point of view without a full analysis of the broader consequences of globalization and its destruction of well-paid manufacturing jobs. The boom of the telecom sector in the 1990s was part of that story and was certainly important to Cottom personally, but many of those who seek to enhance their employment opportunities through job training and credentialing programs are displaced manufacturing workers whose jobs left the country in the corporate pursuit of low wages and slack regulatory policies in the developing world (Holzer, 2015).

Such a broader analysis of the postindustrial economy and globalization is absent from Cottom's otherwise comprehensive examination of the rise of for-profit colleges. This broader level of scrutiny begs questions about the future of traditional public and private education, as well as the for-profit sector. The book pays little attention to possible alternatives and solutions to the long-term future of education and job training in the context of permanent changes in work and employment. The book also fails to examine, in detail, the public policy choices and political climate within which the future of higher education will be determined. If, as some labor economists argue, the American economy is in a long-term, permanent decline, the political pressures for change in higher education are likely to increase. Education alone is not the solution to unemployment and underemployment problems caused by global structural economic change, but politicians will likely lose confidence in higher education as

we know it and will demand that it adapt to the demands of the new economy. As noted by Spence (2011), "The problems in quality and effectiveness of parts of the U.S. education system have been recognized for some time. Numerous attempts to improve matters, including administering national standardized tests and providing merit-based compensation, have thus far yielded inconclusive results" (p. 39). Spence added, "One comes full circle. In other words: increased educational effectiveness is needed in the United States to be competitive, and the promise of rewarding employment is a necessary incentive for committing to improving education" (p. 39). If government continues to lose faith in higher education, particularly public higher education, the disinvestment witnessed since around the year 2000 will continue and more public money is likely to be directed to for-profit education enterprises.

The financialization of education and the dramatic rise of the for-profit sector over the last two decades emerged as a cynical, profit-seeking response to the immiseration of a displaced working class in the U.S. In the future, traditional higher education, and especially public higher education, may be forced to respond more directly to the job crisis or lose government and taxpayer support. For almost a decade, public higher education has seen deep budget cuts by government and has responded with increased tuition rates, at the same time as the value of a college degree is increasingly called into question. Too many recent college graduates find themselves without jobs, or with jobs for which their degree is unnecessary.

The Challenge to Public Higher Education

Cottom's (2017) analysis of the socioeconomic forces that motivate poor students to seek educational quick fixes promised by for-profit colleges is especially insightful. "At the most superficial level, it is apparent how flexible degree programs might appeal to workers who cannot afford the opportunity costs of exiting the labor market in order to get the credentials they need to stay competitive" (p. 115). The author's research explains why students choose more expensive for-profit options over community colleges and

public higher education. The for-profits have streamlined the admissions application, registration and financial aid processes, and have facilitated these up-front procedures that non-elite students are ill-equipped to navigate. The sector has also accommodated the time and location limitations of single parents and working adults in ways that traditional higher education is often reluctant to address. Adult learners need alternatives to the traditional campus and to traditional face-to-face classroom learning. The for-profits have, for many, provided exactly that kind of alternative.

Public higher education has not been especially accommodating to non-elite students. The selectivity of public higher education preserves elements of elitism, particularly above the community college level. It has been reluctant to serve underprepared students and those seeking job and career training programs. For its part, the professoriate clings to the memories of its own education and insists on passing down to its students an elite educational experience that does not always serve students well in the new economy. On the process side, public higher education is gradually transitioning to a consumer model of admissions and student services with one-stop student services systems, but it lags behind the for-profits in front-end student services and in providing job-training opportunities demanded by this growing class of students. If the global market has permanently shifted the focus of demand in higher education, the structural conservatism of the institutions of higher education may signal the beginning of the end for one more ancient institution. Some parallels might be drawn between higher education and the institutions of organized religion, which have seen the numbers of practitioners decline as sociocultural mores have shifted in response to the pressures of modernity. Traditional higher education may be whistling through the graveyard, not fully sensing the competitive threat of for-profits. Or perhaps traditional higher education recognizes what Lord Keynes noted, "In the long run we are all dead."

As described earlier, the "non-elite" student is attracted to for-profits in part due to the ease of applying and registering. Often lacking the same motivations derived from family and from guidance counselors in higher quality

secondary schools, non-elite students need encouragement and supports that, too often, too many public institutions do not typically offer. "The enrollment processes at for-profit colleges assume little to no sustained individual motivation from students to complete the process. Beyond the first call and showing up when prodded, the motivation is all in the structure" (Cottom, 2017, p. 130). And this is why, at least in part, non-elite students have gravitated to the modern for-profit option. We find similar characteristics in first-generation college students federal student support services were designed to serve.

First-generation college students, a class of students only minimally referenced in *Lower Ed,* struggle and fail at higher rates in traditional college settings. First-generation college students lack the parental encouragement and guidance from which most college students benefit. State and federal government programs have been created to level the playing field and provide assistance for these students, but not to sufficiently support students seeking career and vocational training programs. The U.S. Department of Education Federal TRIO Programs, for example, are "designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income individuals, first-generation college students, and individuals with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline from middle school to postbaccalaureate programs" (U.S. Department of Education, 2017b, para. 1). Its Student Support Services program provides academic tutoring, advice in course selection, information and support with financial aid applications and general financial literacy counseling (U.S. Department of Education, 2017a). An expansion of these programs to serve career and vocational students is one possible public policy strategy that the government could pursue to offset the impact of globalization and the new economy. Of course, more training programs and more student support services will not make up for a declining economy that does not create meaningful employment opportunities.

Elections Matter – Alternative Futures

Lower Ed does not claim to be an analysis of public policy and it does not claim to offer policy solutions beyond a general call for a social movement to "prod real change along" (Cottom, 2017, p. 182). However, for better or worse, government will shape the future of higher education through policy choices. The recruiting and marketing deceptions of the for-profits, copiously documented by Cottom were addressed in part by the Obama administration through the gainful employment regulation. "Generally, in order to be eligible for funding under the Higher Education Act Title IV student assistance programs, an educational program must lead to a degree at a non-profit or public institution or it must prepare students for 'gainful employment in a recognized occupation'" (Federal Student Aid, n.d., para. 1). The rule establishes a formula of "Debt-to-Earnings" rates specifically designed to combat the gross exploitation and significant level of loan default by students attending for-profit colleges. The purpose of the rule is to protect students from borrowing more than a certificate or credential is worth in terms of likely income that can be earned in a respective profession. The rule required colleges to publish employment prospects and potential income data one might realize upon completion of a program of study, and provide the information to prospective students in marketing materials and advertisements (Federal Student Aid, n.d.). The rule has been met with intense resistance and lobbying by the Career Education Colleges and Universities (CECU) organization, the lobbying arm of the career-oriented for-profit sector. CECU's (n.d.-a) website claims: "In a first-of-its-kind effort, Career Education Colleges and Universities (CECU) is pursuing thoughtful policy solutions to directly connect The Higher Education Act to jobs. We need to modernize our laws for the 21st century to help meet the nation's workforce demands" (para. 1). Funded by its 460 members, CECU lobbies for public policy on financial aid, government regulation, and military and veteran education. The CECU (n.d.-b) PAC (political action committee) helps to "elect candidates who support a legislative and regulatory climate favorable to post-secondary

education" (para. 2). Lobbying efforts by the for-profit sector are likely to increase and be rewarded during the Trump presidency.

For those in traditional public and not-for-profit higher education, the appointment of Betsy DeVos as U.S. secretary of education does not bode well for the immediate future. Secretary DeVos announced a "regulatory rewrite" of the gainful employment regulation in July 2017 and delayed the implementation date until July 2018, signaling the administration's lack of concern for accountability by the for-profits (Kreighbaum, 2017). The public policy environment appears at this time to favor the for-profit sector, just as it seems to threaten public higher education, which has realized wide-scale disinvestment by state governments across the country. Public higher education should be concerned with this trend and with criticism of its own degrees and the job prospects for its graduates.

> *"The public policy environment appears at this time to favor the for-profit sector, just as it seems to threaten public higher education, which has realized wide-scale disinvestment by state governments across the country."*

Without doubt, the public education sector will be more heavily scrutinized by government and will be held to higher standards and demands to demonstrate the economic returns and employability of its degree holders. Indeed, an Achilles' heel of public higher education is "malemployment, a variant of underemployment … based on the concept of over-education. It represents a mismatch between skill requirements of the job and the education of the worker: the education of the worker exceeds the education and skill required to perform the job" (Fogg & Harrington as

cited in Caplan, 2013). The policy environment is likely to favor the for-profit sector because of its promise of employment and job training, as demonstrated by the lobbying mission statement of CECU. The rhetoric of the Trump administration and the promises of the for-profit sector are aligned in the conservative sentiment that privatization is more efficient than "government education," just as it is argued that private healthcare is better and more efficient than government healthcare.

There is no guarantee that public higher education will adapt to meet the challenges of the new economy or the current public policy environment that is focused on jobs and employment. Steeped in the liberal arts tradition and with a conservative professoriate, much of public higher education fiercely defends its elitism and selectivity. Generally and with few exceptions, it views job training as a lower order activity. With its commitment to the traditional 4-year degree and the intrinsic value of the liberal arts, higher education is out of step with the current political climate and consumer demand. Legislatures and taxpayers will increasingly demand what the for-profit sector of higher education has promised, and it will behoove traditional colleges to be far more responsive to these demands. For public higher education's part, the failure to deliver upward mobility will likely result in decreasing resources and diminished institutional respect.

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Found Things

"Campus Life: In Search of Community" by Ernest L. Boyer (1990)

The following remarks were delivered by Ernest L. Boyer, then president of The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1979-1995), to the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators on March 14, 1990. Boyer had earlier served as the chancellor of the State University of New York (1970-1977), was a United States commissioner of education (1977-1979), and spearheaded the founding of SUNY Empire State College in 1971. While the report concludes that "American higher education is basically in good health," it highlights "the impact [on colleges and universities] of [the] pathologies in society at large." How relevant all of this is today.

Thanks to Deana Baddorf, administrative assistant, on behalf of the Ernest L. Boyer Center at Messiah College, for granting us permission to use this text in All About Mentoring, and to colleague Michele Forte for her suggestion that we include it here. The full document can be found at http://boyerarchives.messiah.edu/files/Documents1/1000%200001%200251ocr.pdf.[1]

INTRODUCTION

Recently, in an informal "bull session," a handful of campus presidents – after solving such "global" problems as acid rain and Third World debt – focused on what one president called "the campus-life crisis" at his college.

There's more "alcohol abuse," he said, "and more crime, and I worry about race relations, too." Another president said: "The Hispanic, black, and Asian students on my campus live in totally separate worlds."

Later, I had lunch with the president of a large public university who poignantly confessed: "I've been around a long time, and I'm more troubled now than in the sixties. Back then," he said, "you could meet campus critics – head on – but today there seems to be a lot of tension just below the surface that could explode anytime."

All of this was rattling around in my head when I got a call from Bob Atwell[2] asking if Carnegie would join with ACE [American Council on Education] in a study of campus life. The answer of course was "yes." And we're now about to complete our year-long investigation, which I'd like to highlight for you this evening.

During our study, we visited campuses from coast-to-coast. We surveyed 500 presidents and talked with hundreds of administrators, faculty, and students. Our overall impression – which won't surprise this group – was that American higher education is basically in good health. Campuses are well managed, and we've built in the United States a system of higher learning that's the envy of the world.

But we also found that student apathy, alcohol abuse, racial tensions, and acts of incivility are causes for great concern. I recognize that campuses are facing the impact of pathologies in society at large. And it's also true that student personnel professionals are responding superbly to the crises that keep crashing in.

The problem is, however, that on far too many campuses student personnel officers are being asked to carry the responsibility all alone. And while in-loco-parentis has been abolished, no theory of campus governance has been discovered to replace it. Colleges are to keep the lid on, but ground rules are ambiguous at best.

To add to the problem, parents and the media are increasingly criticizing the conditions of student life. And on this very day, Congress is holding hearings on campus violence.[3]

No one wants to return to the days when do's and don'ts were arbitrarily imposed. Still, we need a higher standard, and we conclude in the Carnegie Report[4] that what's needed today is not a new set of rules, but a larger vision. In response to this challenge, we've organized our report on campus life around six principles that capture, we believe, the essence of higher

education, and provide a new framework within which a community of learning might be built.

I. A PURPOSEFUL COMMUNITY

First, we say in the Carnegie Report that a college or university is a *purposeful* community, a place where the intellectual life is central, and where faculty and students "work together" to strengthen teaching and learning on the campus.

When we began our study, some argued that we should look only at the so-called extracurricular activities and ignore the academic. But I'm convinced that the academic and nonacademic cannot be divided, and if students do not become intellectually engaged – if they do not take seriously the educational mission of the institution – then all talk about community will be simply a diversion.

The problem is that on far too many campuses, there *is* a great gap between the intellectual and the social. Faculty are often far removed from student life, and on far too many campuses, it's much better for professors to deliver a paper at the Hyatt in Chicago, than to meet undergraduates back home.

I'm suggesting that if we hope to improve the quality of campus life, learning must become the central focus, and faculty and student personnel professionals both must be viewed as teachers, in the classrooms, and in the dining commons, too.

Frankly, I consider it a disgrace that we recruit millions of students every year, charge them high tuition, and then suggest that undergraduates are a low priority on the campus, when, in the end, almost all of us are where we are today because of the inspiration of a great teacher who not only taught his subject, but also taught himself.

Several years ago – I couldn't sleep – and instead of counting sheep, I counted all the teachers I had had. I remembered rather vividly 15 or more. First, I thought about

Miss Rice, my first grade teacher, who, on the first day of school, said to 28 frightened, awestruck children, "Good morning class, today we learn to read." It was Miss Rice who taught me language and learning are inextricably interlocked.

I then recalled Mr. Wittlinger, a high school history teacher, who one day said quietly as I passed the desk, "Ernest, you're doing well in history – you keep this up and you just might be a student." That's the first time a teacher had said that to me directly. Suddenly I thought, "Doing very well," I just might be a student.

I suspect everyone in the room has been inspired by a teacher, and if you had a few minutes on the platform, which teacher would you honor?

I'm suggesting that the quality of campus life must be measured by the quality of teaching and of learning and that the challenge of building community rests, not just with student personnel professionals, but also with faculty who not only love their subjects, but have a love for students, too.

II. A JUST COMMUNITY

This brings me to the second principle of campus life. In the Carnegie Report we say that a college or university is a *just* community, a place where the dignity of every individual is affirmed, and where equality of opportunity is vigorously pursued.

Frankly, I know of no issue that's more urgent than affirming justice in this country. The harsh truth is that America is becoming a deeply divided nation with a terrible gap between the privileged and the poor.

Many of us recall the 1960s when Martin Luther King led a great crusade. And we recall when colleges and universities from coast-to-coast supported vigorously this call for human rights.

But the harsh truth is that this historic push for "simple justice" has been losing ground. The enrollment of the least advantaged black and Hispanic students has been going down. Especially disturbing is the fact that minority students, once they come to college, often feel isolated and alone. Racial conflict on campus seems to be increasing especially at large

universities where 68 percent of the presidents we surveyed identified "race relations" as a problem.

It's true, of course, that racism is rooted in society at large. But it's my conviction that in the decade of the 90s, equality of opportunity, for all Americans must become an urgent national crusade. Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans must be socially and economically empowered, and the nation's colleges and universities should take the lead.

We need urgently to recruit minority students while they're still in junior high; we need special orientation sessions between minority and nonminority students during the summer months before they come to college. Colleges should survey carefully black and Hispanic students to get their views of campus life, and all college seminars and courses are needed to promote interracial understanding.

Injustice, of course, takes many forms. And during our study we also found that women still encounter prejudice on campus – ranging from tenure problems to harassment. The editor of the student newspaper at one university described T-shirts that read, "Ten reasons why beer is better than women." We also found that 62 percent of presidents at research and doctoral institutions consider sexual harassment a campus problem. At the other four-year institutions, about 30 percent of the presidents said it's a problem.

Here, then, is our conclusion. If the nation's colleges and universities are to be *just* communities, prejudice in all its forms – racial, ethnic, sexual – must be challenged. In the decade of the 90s if we do *not* find ways to overcome the tragic divisions on the campus and in society, at large, I'm convinced the future of the nation is imperiled.

III. AN OPEN COMMUNITY

This brings me to principle number three. In the Carnegie Report we conclude that a college or university is an *open,* honest community, a place where freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected, and where civility is powerfully affirmed.

When I was a small boy in Dayton, Ohio, we used to say "sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." What

nonsense. I'd usually say this with tears running down my cheeks, thinking all the time, "hit me with a stick, but for goodness sake, stop those words that penetrate so deeply and hurt so long."

The simple truth is that our sophisticated use of symbols sets human beings apart from all other forms of life – the porpoise and the bumble bee, notwithstanding, and it's through the miracle of language that we are mystically connected to each other.

Consider the miracle of this very moment. I stand here vibrating my vocal chords. Molecules go "skittering" in your direction. They touch your tympanic membrane. Signals go scurrying up your 8th cranial nerve, and there is a response deep in your cerebrum that approximates, I trust, the images of mine. What an audacious act which we simply take for granted!

I'm suggesting that language is the key to everything we do. It's the way we reach out to one another. It's through words that our social relationships are either strengthened or destroyed. And if we hope to build a community of trust in higher education, students must learn to communicate, not just with *accuracy,* but with *civility* as well.

The sad truth is that today's students have grown up in a culture in which language is shockingly abused. They live in a world where slogans have become substitutes for reason. In America today, politicians use 60 minute "sound bites" to destroy the integrity of their opponents. And – very early – students learn to use words – to "hurt" – rather than to "heal."

During our study we found that more than 60 percent of the presidents at doctorate institutions reported that "sexual harassment" is a problem, and about half listed "racial harassment" as a problem on their campuses.

And when we asked presidents – in an open-ended question – what they would do to improve the quality of campus life, over 80 percent said greater "civility" on campus, and more respect for the dignity and rights of others.

I'm suggesting that we urgently need to help students overcome the stereotypes that have been imposed on them by a prejudicial culture. We need to help them listen more carefully to

each other, one-on-one, not as black people or white people or Asian people, but as human beings.

One day, when I was Chancellor of the State University of New York, I was about to speak to faculty from across the state when several hundred students moved in with placards, chanting slogans, demanding that I help free a group of students who had been arrested on another campus the night before. The microphone was grabbed and, for almost an hour, we went back and forth.

Finally, in desperation, I concluded the meeting was in shambles and that we weren't listening to each other. Even worse, it was apparent that I was talking not to *students,* but to a "faceless mob." But you can't talk to "mobs," you can only talk to people. And more out of desperation than inspiration, I left the platform and began talking to a single student. I asked her name; I asked about her family. Soon others joined us and for the first time, we began to listen to each other.

Wayne Booth of the University of Chicago captured the essence of civility when he wrote that all too often our efforts to speak and listen to each other seem to be a "vicious cycle" spiraling downward. "But," Booth went on to say that, "we've all experienced moments when the spiral "moved upward," when one party's efforts to speak and listen – just a little bit better – produced a "similar response," making it possible to move on up the spiral to a *[sic]* "moments of genuine understanding."

In an *open* community, freedom of expression must be uncompromisingly defended, and *offensive* language must be vigorously denounced. But – above all – good communication means viewing language as a sacred trust, and listening to messages that come, not just from the head, but from the heart.

IV. A DISCIPLINED COMMUNITY

This leads me to principle number four. We say in the Carnegie Report that a college or university is a *disciplined* community, a place where individuals accept their obligations to the group, and where well-defined governance procedures guide behavior for the common good.

We all remember the days when women's dorms were locked up tighter than a drum, when there were rigid study hours, and when lights were out at eleven o'clock sharp, except on weekends. We also can remember the 1960s when in-loco-parentis was abolished, almost overnight. And if I can be a bit confessional, this was the time when my hair turned from black to white.

In the late sixties, we had – in the entire State University of New York system – 93,000 dormitory beds and I recall the heated debates over whether freshman should be allowed to live off-campus, whether "visiting hours" should be abolished, and whether residence halls should go "coed."

In the end, of course, the answer was affirmative to all three! Looking back, I'm convinced that creating a more *open* campus, was absolutely right. Students are adults, not children. Most know how to balance freedom and responsibility in their daily lives. And no one imagines returning to the days when young women were locked in. And when deans of students were viewed as "parents on the prowl."

Still, there's a feeling on many campuses that something is not right. Today's undergraduates increasingly are isolated from adults. And many come to college with pathologies, born of confusion and neglect. During our study we found that two-thirds of all college presidents rate alcohol abuse and drugs a serious problem. Date rape is increasing. And two-thirds of the presidents at large research universities say theft and vandalism is a growing problem – which often is alcohol related.

The harsh truth is that young people growing up in America today are fed a steady diet of ethical ambiguity, at best, and decadence at worst. And no community can thrive in a climate where values are ambiguous and where conduct is chaotic. Campus regulations are essential. Further, there is evidence that students themselves would welcome a climate where standards are established.

Several years ago, we surveyed 5,000 undergraduates. About half said they support a code of conduct on the campus. And a slightly higher percentage said that known

drug offenders should be suspended. That's a dramatic turnaround since our last survey in 1976.

Therefore, we conclude that all colleges should have a clear code of conduct, developed by the community at large, to guide both academic and nonacademic matters, and we also urge that campus regulations be widely disseminated and consistently enforced.

I know that this is precisely what many of you already have been doing. Not only are regulations being tightened, but 90 percent of the nation's colleges and universities have alcohol education and prevention programs; more than 70 percent have special task forces on substance abuse. Almost everywhere we found seminars on crime prevention. And student personnel professionals are bringing not only physical and social services to the campus, but moral leadership as well.

If higher education expects to exercise a moral force in society, it must take place in a moral context. In the days ahead – instead of asking what *courses* we want our students to complete, we should be asking what *values* we want them to embrace.

V. A CARING COMMUNITY

This brings me to principle number five. We say in the new Carnegie Report that a college or university is a *caring* community, a place where the well-being of every member is sensitively supported, and where service to others is encouraged.

Colleges and universities should be purposeful, and just, and disciplined, and open. But the key to community – the glue that holds it all together – is the way people relate to one another. Does someone really care?

At first blush, the term "caring" seems soft, almost sentimental. And yet, as human beings we have an absolute need for social bonding, from the first to the last moments of our lives. Professor Mary Clark at San Diego State University puts the matter this way: "Social embeddedness," she says, "is the essence of our nature." We need each other.

Today's students cherish their independence. They're pleased that *in-loco-parentis* has finally been abolished. But undergraduates like the rest of us, still want guidance. They want to

belong to something larger than themselves. One student captured this "ambivalence" when she said, we don't want the university to be involved in our lives, but we would like someone to be concerned occasionally about our lives, and at least make freshmen feel that they belong.

Yet during our study of undergraduates several years ago, we found that about 50 percent said they "feel like a number in a book." About 40 percent did not feel a sense of community on campus, and about two-thirds of today's students say they have no professor who is interested in their personal lives.

I'm suggesting that a community of learning is a caring place, and this spirit must be reflected not just in brochures, but in every office, and in every classroom.

Indeed, one of the surprises of our study was "the spirit of community" we found among students at *two-year* institutions. Many of these older people were on campus just a few hours every week. But they told us that the classroom was a kind of oasis in their lives; they made friends with other older students; they felt accepted, and college "office hours" were arranged to meet *their* needs – not to serve "the system."

To put it simply, building community in higher education relates, not to the length of time students spend on campus, but to the *quality* of the relationships they experience while they're there.

Finally, a *caring* community is a place where students engage in service so they can see a connection between what they learn and how they live. Frankly, I'm worried that this nation is becoming separated across the generations. Babies are in nurseries. Three-year olds are in day care centers. Children are in school. Adults are in the workplace. Retirees are in villages all alone.

I'd like to see all college students serve in day care centers, help older people, and tutor disadvantaged kids in schools to relate their learning to the realities of life, so that students could make connections not only interculturally, but intergenerationally as well.

Rheinhold Niebuhr once wrote: "Man cannot behold except he be committed. He cannot find himself without finding a center beyond himself."

I'm convinced that young people of this country are ready to be inspired by a larger vision. In the end, the goal of education must be, not just competence, but caring.

VI. A CELEBRATIVE COMMUNITY

Finally, we conclude by saying that a college or university – at its best – is a *celebrative* community, one in which the heritage of the institution is remembered, and where rituals affirming both tradition and change are widely shared.

In the award-winning Broadway play, "Fiddler on the Roof," the peasant dairyman – who raised five daughters, with considerable help from scriptural quotations, many of which he himself invented – says that the things that make life tolerable to the hard working Jewish family are the old laws, the old customs, and the feasts that are handed down from one generation to another. Without these – the dairyman declares – life would be as shaky as a Fiddler on the Roof.

So it is with college. While scholars conduct research, and while students study on their own, a community of learning must be held together by something more than a common grievance over parking.

Let's have freshman convocations in which students are introduced to the heritage of the college in a richer, fuller sense. Let's celebrate the buildings and special landmarks on the campus. Let's recall the founders and the funny anecdotes. Let's celebrate the school's academic reputation, and honor the achievements of faculty and students. And, of course, there are commencements, which should be something more than boilerplate speeches on a sultry afternoon.

But a celebrative community not only recalls the past, it anticipates the future. Colleges should highlight the racial and ethnic groups on campus. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, for example, should be honored, and days also should be set aside to feature Hispanic, Asian, and Native American cultures. And foreign students should be celebrated, too.

I'm suggesting that while colleges affirm the sacredness of the individual, they also – through ritual and tradition – should celebrate *community* as well.

Lewis Thomas wrote that if this century does not slip forever through our fingers with almost all promises unfulfilled, it will be because learning will have directed us away from our "splintered dumbness" and helped us focus on our common goals.

This is what a celebrative community is all about.

CONCLUSION

Here, then, is my conclusion.

To strengthen the quality of student life we don't need a new set of regulations. Rather, what we need is a larger vision by which to guide the nation.

We say that a college or university at its best is:

- a *purposeful* community,
- an *honest* community,
- a *disciplined* community,
- a *just* community,
- a *caring* community,
- and a *celebrative* community.

We suggest that these six principles be adopted as a "campus compact" and be used to measure all actions on the campus – from fraternities to trustees.

And it is our hope that by strengthening community on campus, colleges and universities might become an inspiration to the nation and to a world that is desperately searching for ways to put the pieces back together.

Again, I applaud those of you assembled in this room who have – throughout the years sustained this spirit of community and served the nation's students, not only intellectually, but socially, and spiritually as well.

Notes added by
All About Mentoring

[1] Campus Life: In Search of Community. Remarks by Ernest L. Boyer, President, The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. National Association of Student Personnel Administrators. March 14, 1990. The Ernest L. Boyer Center Archives, Messiah College, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

[2] Robert H. Atwell was president of the American Council on Education (ACE) from 1984-1996 and executive vice president from 1978-1984.

[3] These hearings resulted in the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1990. More information can be found at http://clerycenter.org/policy-resources/the-clery-act/.

[4] See *Campus Life: In Search of Community. A Special Report* at http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED320492.pdf.

"The investment of $500 billion in education outside the academy, the rise of corporate universities, and the expanded interest in prior learning assessment are all pointing to the emergence of an ecosystem for validating learning that encompasses and supersedes the academy."

– Louis Soares, "Post–traditional Learners and the Transformation of Postsecondary Education: A Manifesto for College Leaders"
American Council on Education, 2013, p. 11

Remembering Joyce McKnight

SUNY Empire State College Colleagues

Joyce McKnight, our much loved and respected colleague in Community and Human Services, died on March 12, 2017. Joyce first served SUNY Empire State College from 1989-1995, and returned in 2003 after some years with her husband, Hugh, as a grassroots community organizer in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. In 2007, she was honored with the college's Altes Prize for Exemplary Community Service. As these comments gathered from colleagues attest, Joyce was deeply dedicated to her students, to her community, and to her family. Her book (written with her daughter, Joanna McKnight Plummer), Community Organizing: Theory and Practice *(Pearson, 2015), reflects the ideas and values of a life devoted to service. Poignantly, the words from Margaret Mead that open the preface of that volume sum up Joyce's own indefatigable faith: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has" (p. xiv). Her incredible spirit of "neighborly affection" has meant so much to so many at ESC, and well beyond.*

Thanks to many colleagues who generously contributed to this small effort to remember Joyce. Their statements have been edited for All About Mentoring.

Sheila Marie Aird
International Education

A dedicated, kindhearted soul.

Jackie Bishop
SUNY Empire Online

One word that immediately comes to mind when I think about Joyce is "gracious." When I came to ESC, she was one of the Center for Distance Learning (CDL) faculty that I could turn to, and she always took the time to share her wisdom and knowledge – about ESC, about ESC students and just generally about "things." She was willing to share her experience about what worked to engage students and how she had managed to assist students in their success during their academic careers. Another word that comes to mind

with regard to Joyce is "passion." Her whole being was concerned with assisting others and helping them to be better people. I am better as a person having known and communicated with Joyce during her ESC career.

Carolyn Buscemi
SUNY Empire Online

Joyce McKnight was the consummate educator and mentor. She believed wholeheartedly in the philosophy that higher education should be available to everyone who wished to attain it. She believed that the world could be a better place through educational access. Joyce often spoke of the importance of understanding that not all learning takes place in a classroom. We frequently spoke about how one's life experiences often yield lessons that have great impacts on the student's learning and on the student's understanding of academic concepts. So Joyce believed that it was necessary for students to have an opportunity to demonstrate nontraditional ways of acquiring academic information without judgment. I found her to be fair, compassionate and determined to promote a growth mindset in everyone she met and interacted with. Joyce McKnight made me a better educator, mentor and person. She helped me to understand the importance of students owning their self-defined accomplishments and truly believed in the adage "guide on the side" when it came to education. I miss her greatly but take comfort in knowing the lessons that she taught me continue to be passed down to our students.

Menoukha Robin Case
SUNY Empire Online

Joyce and I were the same age – actually, I'm a few months older – but I always looked to her as a trusted Elder regarding all things ESC, and as an inspiring fellow traveler on the road toward social justice.

Joyce McKnight

Bidhan Chandra
SUNY Empire Online

I am personally very saddened by Joyce McKnight's sudden passing away last March. I had had a long association with her as we came to know each other in 1989 when both of us were serving in what was then the Niagara Frontier Regional Center. In all these years, Joyce always struck me as a very kindhearted and trustworthy person. She was active in the college community and productively contributed to help build and sustain a collegial and warm work environment. She was a true believer and practitioner in multiculturalism. She was one of very few faculty colleagues who never forgot to recognize major religious holidays of local and foreign-born colleagues and to send greetings, which reminded people around us of the importance of showing love and respect to culturally-diverse colleagues.

Joyce was an inspiration to anyone interested in voluntary community service. The Altes Prize for Exemplary Community Service awarded to her in 2007 became an inspiration for me. When I myself was awarded that prize in 2016, Joyce came to attend the function despite her not-so-good health. Such was her commitment to providing support and

encouragement to her colleagues. Joyce's premature passing has left a void in our college community that will be difficult to fill for a long time. Joyce has gone away from our eyes but she will always live in our hearts.

Donna Gaines
Old Westbury

Joyce was a warrior for light and a fired-up, hands-on educator and scholar. We shared the joy of faith, a passion for social justice and abundant community. She radiated light and such generosity of spirit; I will miss her smiling face and her wise, dancing eyes.

Himanee Gupta-Carlson
SUNY Empire Online

I met Joyce on my second day of work at Empire State College. I believe it was at the end of a monthly CDL center meeting. She came up to me and said she had heard that I was interested in social justice. And she said, "I think we're going to become very good friends." Over the years that passed since that day in April in 2010, I think we did become good friends. But we fought. We argued and disagreed over everything. We fought about race. We argued about religion. We disagreed on the impact of class. We even debated the merits of open learning. But one of the things that was great about that fighting was that I could say the most obnoxious, heated things to Joyce and she would never get upset. She would just smile and argue back. And that was very healthy. We need to have spaces where we can have knock-down, drag-down arguments.

Joyce's work was community organizing; that's what I do, too, somewhat. That's part of what we fought about, but that's part of what I learned from her, which was how to do that kind of work at the base. It really is about sitting around and drinking coffee, and talking and telling stories, and debating and carousing, and sometimes fighting. As I think about my life now, there are maybe only one or two other people besides Joyce with whom I can do this. But that's how she was.

Betty Hurley
SUNY Empire Online

Joyce McKnight was a model of the ESC mentor. She came to us in the Center for Distance Learning after also serving as a mentor in western New York. More than once, she spoke eloquently about her vision of mentoring at Empire State College. The degree programs of her mentees demonstrated how she empowered her mentees to build on their work experience to develop a degree program that met their personal goals and was also academically sound. I miss our conversations about all kinds of topics.

Debra Kram-Fernandez
Manhattan

I will always remember my first or second Community and Human Services area of study meeting. Joyce had shared some of her insights during our discussion and clearly she was seasoned, knowledgeable and passionate about serving our students. We walked from 2 Union to the hotel together. As we walked and talked, I was taken with her warmth, generosity and her ability to communicate genuine interest and respect for my newbie contributions to our conversations. Based on how hopeful I felt about my own new journey, I can only imagine how blessed her students were to be assigned a mentor whose passion was only topped by her ability to listen with compassion and support. We will always remember Joyce!

Leslie Lamb
SUNY Empire Online

Joyce was one of a kind for sure in that she truly cared about others around her. It is such a great loss to all of us that she has left this earth. She made all of us want to be better people as we wanted to emulate her and be as selfless as she was.

Linda Lawrence
Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation

I met Joyce when she first arrived at Empire State College to work in our Center for Distance Learning program as area coordinator and faculty mentor of online courses in Community and Human Services. She mentored students, collaborated with peers

and offered her expertise and wisdom in adult education, community organizing and online social networking. Joyce was a special voice in the college's culture. She spoke from the heart and with compassion and great integrity. She valued the spirit and philosophy of Empire State College's mission and sought to ensure student success at each opportunity in front of her. One of the things that struck me about Joyce was that she was a listener. She listened to many voices and perspectives before sharing her own. And even when she shared her own ideas, they were informed and based on the many ideas of her colleagues, bringing together a sense of what was good and true in those voices, and considering the greater good as educators serving our student community. Joyce embraced life as an educator, and she embraced life as a friend, loving wife, mother and colleague. Joyce had a big heart and wanted to share with all whom she came in contact. Everyone you meet has an opportunity to leave a sustained mark on your life. Joyce did just that. She left a sustained mark on the way I view aspects of the world, and I am so grateful for that. Joyce's soul and spirit will forever remain a part of my journey in both my personal and professional life.

Joanne Levine
SUNY Empire Online

The office that belonged to Joyce is only a few doors down from mine. The cardboard boxes filled with her personal belongings, books and papers are long gone and another faculty member is in there now. Yet, I automatically look through the long glass window pane near the door still expecting to see her inside. Often, she would be in front of her computer, headset on, surrounded by open books and piles of papers. I would catch a glimpse of the pictures of her beloved grandchildren as I continued down the hall. When she wasn't so occupied, we would talk about our area of online human services courses – and our children. We shared not only our work but our lives.

Thomas P. Mackey
SUNY Empire Online

Joyce S. McKnight was the first mentor I met at the college. When I interviewed for the associate dean position at the Center for Distance Learning, Joyce was there as a

member of the search committee. We had a chance to chat before the formal part of the day, and during that initial conversation, I learned about Joyce's role as mentor and area coordinator, and her life with her husband, Hugh, at Lake Luzerne. From the start, it was obvious to me that Joyce's commitment to her mentees, her colleagues, her family, and the adjunct faculty she worked with was clear and enthusiastic. I was impressed by her description of the intersection of her many roles, and the ways that work-life, time-place, personal-professional and actual-virtual all seemed to flow together through her experience as a dedicated faculty mentor and lifelong learner.

Over time, I appreciated all of my interactions with Joyce. I always valued her thoughtful contributions to our center meetings, and her participation in our international education celebrations and Saratoga Reads events. Joyce made significant contributions to the entire college by overseeing one of the largest clusters of online courses she developed in Community and Human Services. She was a true innovator, always thinking about ways to build community and to connect through technology, especially with online learning, and was one of the first members of a centerwide committee we established to explore open educational resources (OERs).

It was an honor for me to know Joyce and to play a part in establishing the Joyce S. McKnight OER Academy through funding we received from SUNY to support the development of high-enrolled general education courses. This year's inaugural team of OER fellows will honor Joyce by developing courses with mostly OER content, supporting future learners in the pursuit of an open and caring educational journey that Joyce made possible for so many.

Thalia MacMillan
SUNY Empire Online

The first time that I met Joyce I knew I would like her. I heard her laughing and smiling from across the room. She radiated a joy when she was talking about working with students in her Community Organizing course and about her new book. I could tell that she had a fierce dedication to our students that was something to hold as a benchmark for new and continuing mentors. She truly cared about

people – students and colleagues alike. To me, she tried to create a sense of community that we all need to aspire to.

Lear Matthews
Manhattan

Joyce McKnight was an admired colleague in Community and Human Services. She was a true ambassador of the Empire State College approach to higher education. Joyce articulated the principles, practices and transformations of the institution, consistently and passionately. For her, the epicenter of effective human service intervention was the "community," a concept and approach that was brilliantly presented in her book. Among the topics she broached with me when we met at All College over the years was the state of the immigrant Guyanese East Indian community in Schenectady. From there, the conversation spiraled into other areas of the contemporary immigrant experience. I always walked away learning something new.

Anastasia Pratt
Plattsburgh

I was blessed to have worked with Joyce on several committees and task forces at ESC. Her warm smile and careful consideration of our students' needs were always welcomed.

Janelle Riccio
SUNY Empire Online

I am grateful and honored to be part of the ESC community through the opportunity given to me by Joyce McKnight. Her warmhearted way of connecting with students, along with her love for community, were truly inspirational. When looked to for mentoring, Joyce's patient and genuine spirit toward ESC students shone through every time.

Rhianna C. Rogers
Cheektowaga

Joyce was one of the most supportive faculty that I have worked with since coming to ESC in 2010. She cared about her colleagues and always made people feel welcome. We worked closely together in Interdisciplinary Studies projects, and I was always impressed with her eagerness to support creative work and learn from others. She will be greatly missed.

Nazik Roufaiel
SUNY Empire Online

I knew Joyce as a kind colleague who cared about students – their support, their education and their well-being at the college. I always was impressed with her community service and by her demeanor in any place I met her, including the YMCA, where she was always cheerful, loving and smiling. She was a true treasure that is hard to find!

Julie Shaw
SUNY Empire Online

Joyce Sheldon McKnight, or "Dr. J," as she was called by students, was hard to ignore and even harder to silence. She was feisty (my favorite word for her), creative, caring and passionate about her beliefs. The tenor and tone of CDL meetings was influenced by her energy and her ethics. She was a very special person in our midst – a real presence, not only personally, but on behalf of justice and community. I will sadly miss her but also will happily remember her.

Mary K. Sweeney
School of Nursing
and Allied Health

Joyce and I had several conversations over the years about community and human services. She was always willing to offer me support in my mentoring role. Our last conversation was at one of the last graduations held in Saratoga Springs. We sat on the stage together, she told me about her illness, and we shared a few laughs as we watched the excitement of the families when students received their degrees. Joyce's encouragement helped me to embrace the human services field, since my background was in nursing. She was always so passionate about helping others. I am so glad I got to know her. I shall miss her.

Nadine Wedderburn
Schenectady

I am remembering Joyce as a colleague who was very generous to me with her knowledge and expertise of how to succeed as an ESC mentor in the area of social policy/community and human services. I had the privilege of working with her in redesigning an online course a couple of years ago, and noted immediately how, by the intensity of the

course, she wanted to be sure that all the topics included were supplemented and rounded out with a variety of engaging activities and resources. You could tell she wanted to give students all she knew about the content. I learned so much in the process. Generosity is what comes to mind when I remember Dr. Joyce McKnight.

Margaret Anne Williams
SUNY Empire Online

Joyce was a wonderful colleague and mentor to me. Her legacy will live on in all of the people/students that she helped in her life. She was truly a joy.

"In a successful 21st century, the literature to be written must point to a bottom-up entrepreneurship, in which, postsecondary education leaders transformed institutional, instructional, credentialing, and financing models based on the learning needs of post-traditional learners. These new forms will produce more learning for students, rewrite public policy, and create an era of post-traditional learning aligned with a knowledge society and innovation economy."

– Louis Soares, "Post-traditional Learners and the Transformation of Postsecondary Education: A Manifesto for College Leaders"
American Council on Education, 2013, p. 16

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, #52, will be available in the summer of 2018. Please submit all materials by April 15, 2018.

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