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Introduction

In some ways the articles in Issue 17 of the *Inquirer* may seem familiar, as if you are in conversation with colleagues as you wait for the College Council to begin, or you're grabbing a cup of coffee at the Peace and Love Café with an office mate and another department member who teach the same introductory course, or walking to the A train with someone who attended a workshop with you the year before, but now whom you rarely see. In this way, the conversations are recognizable—how we teach, what troubles our students face, how we assess their needs and what they are learning, and what else we bring to the table. Sometimes these often-more immediate needs of teaching overshadow the *what elses* that are so important to our powers as teachers, scholars of teaching, and scholars. So we hope to include both sides of our teaching brains here. The offerings here are also new and demanding, as our authors add insight, humor, experience and research to the discourse of teaching, assessing, advising and mentoring our students, engaging with our fellow teachers and administrators, and reinventing ourselves as we progress as faculty in a community college, faculty teaching demanding and amazing students. We are also pleased that Volume 17, which begins the *Inquirer's* sixteenth year of publication, contains the writing of faculty just starting out at BMCC, as well as those who have been part of this conversation for a while, and offers both individual and collaborative work.

We open with an article that allows us to honor the upcoming tenth anniversary of the World Trade Center tragedy, at the same time encouraging us to expand our imaginative powers of teaching. In "Cultivating Ground Zero as a Site of Sociological Inquiry," Rose Kim of Social Sciences and Human Services points to Ground Zero as an expanded "text" that can add to students' concepts of the tools and terms of sociology. Then we offer two articles that address assessment. In "Getting Assessment Right," Mary Sepp, from Developmental Skills, examines the problems in assessment presented by the CUNY ACT writing test, used to place entering students in their appropriate English class (and to exit the developmental writing class). While as of October 2010 the ACT test will be a thing of the past, replaced by the CUNY-created CAAW, Sepp's exploration remains highly relevant to how we assess student writing. Three members of the Library Assessment Committee, Phyllis Niles, Susan Thomas, and Linda Wadas offer a short discussion of their assessment process, "Establishing Meaningful Library Instruction Assessment," pointing to new approaches in assessment that could include library and teaching faculty working together, in ways to fuel a stronger information literacy among out students. Golda Solomon of the English Department contributes two poems that explore the difficulties of our students' lives, one arising from a weekend classroom at the "end of line subway," the other honoring a student who has disappeared.

Then we present three articles related to ongoing college initiatives and workshops. In her essay "Circling the Square," Aimee Record of the English Department writes of her experience teaching a developmental English class (Eng 088) as part of the CUE program (Coordinating Undergraduate Education), link-

ing her students with academic advisors to help situate them in a college setting. Brahmadeo Dewprash takes insights gained in Writing across the Curriculum workshops (WAC) "to discern the underlying causes for the difficulties [his] students … have in writing organic reaction mechanisms." His article, assessing students in his organic chemistry classes, "Difficulties—the Seeds of Understanding," should make all faculty think of preconceived logic and assumptions—often misguided—which our students bring to each new learning situation, and how it is incumbent upon us to understand and unpack these assumptions. And Deborah Greenwood of Social Sciences and Human Services brings to bear her new understanding from a CPE workshop into her human services courses, linking her discipline's practices with the analysis and graph requirements of the CPE. This is a model approach that faculty from all disciplines can draw upon as we work together to prepare students as stronger writers and analytic thinkers.

Three related articles address important aspects of counseling. Jennifer Pastor, of Social Sciences and Human Services, presents a compelling article about a growing portion of our students: "Why BMCC War Veterans Don't Want to Talk about the War." Rose Russo-Gleicher, also of Social Sciences and Human Services, offers advice founded on compassion, in "Community College Students and their Attendance: Caring Strategies." One additional contribution here by Danna Ethan (Health Education) and Erica J. Seidel (Student Life) is an overview of their recent study of our faculty, "Handling Students in Emotional Distress: BMCC Faculty's Experiences and Perceived Role in Responding."

Alex D'erizans (Social Sciences and Human Services) and Regina Galasso (Modern Languages), the current co-chairs of the Teaching and Learning Center's ad-hoc globalization committee, raise the level of our awareness of, and commitment to teaching global issues with "Forging Global Citizenship at BMCC: A Concrete Plan of Action." This timely article announces plans for the upcoming academic year.

And finally, five essays, like the first essay of this issue, speak to our commitment to the discourses of teaching and innovation in teaching. The articles up to this point also describe and call for innovations, but the pieces that follow address more focused matters of teaching and inquiry. We hope they spark others to share, to validate and/or question and reinvent their own teaching practices. Holly Messitt of the English Department shows how her students, in performing *As You Like It* at the Nuyorican Poetry Café, had to come up with viable readings of Shakespeare's play. Their grappling made Messitt rethink how she too read the play—clearly a productive problem for an engaging/engaged teacher. Shirley Zagora, of Business Management, offers a playful study of the terrain of her classes in "The *Chi* of a Management Professor." Elizabeth Berlinger (English) asks her composition students to construct museums of their own writing lives, with very positive results, in "Collecting the Self: Creating a Literary Identity," modeled on a similar museum by the poet Gary Soto. The essay by Manya Steinkoler (English) may be the most playful, the most critical, and the most alarming at the same time. In "Disconnecting the "i" from the Pod: How Psychoanalysis Has Changed University Discourse," Steinkoler reads the iPod, Kubrick's film *2001*, and *The Odyssey* along with cultural/ psychoanalytic discussions of our cultural attach-

ments. Finding that our students' sense of self may be taken over by the demands of popular culture, she and her students work to have "something to say," in her developmental writing class, and to put themselves "in charge" as writers and as people. We close the issue with "The Visual-Mobile-Urban Everyday," in which Deborah Gambs (Social Sciences and Human Services) writes about her students' awareness of their urban environment through taking cell phone pictures. She thus enables her students in Introduction to Sociology to see that "the environs of BMCC are a space for public discourse...A site of civil society that is increasingly mourned, feared lost, whose existence is debated." At the same time, she is encouraging them to use a common social practice as part of their expanding intellectual growth at BMCC.

We hope this experience allows you not only to see yourself through the lenses of Issue 17's writers, but encourages you as well to pick up the pen to record and analyze your own teaching and pedagogy.

–The Editors
Page Delano
Elizabeth Wissinger (Acting Editor)

Cultivating Ground Zero as a Site of Sociological Inquiry

Rose M. Kim
Social Sciences and Human Services

Writing sociology is a complex, creative act. The sociologist must decide how to construct and define a social phenomenon. When, why and how did it occur? What are its essential details? Who are the key actors, the key groups, and the larger social and historical forces? What have been the consequences? And of course, what personal connections do I, a social scientist, have to the subject of my study? No answer should be simple or self-evident.

In my 200-level, writing intensive Urban Sociology class, I try to provoke these questions by having students write an original research paper on Ground Zero, the site of the former World Trade Center that was attacked on September 11, 2001, an event also known as 9/11. Developed through a series of related writing assignments, the paper seeks to build a critical awareness of this significant event in their personal lives, the city's life, and in the larger U.S. and global culture.

Indeed it is difficult to name a more significant site in recent U.S. history, perhaps even recent world history. At the World Trade Center that day, more than 2,750 people were killed, and thousands more were seriously injured. It terrified and culturally traumatized the city of New York, and the nation at large (Alexander 2004), eventually leading to the war in Afghanistan, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, and the curtailment of civil liberties with new laws such as the Patriot Act.

Furthermore, the event is unique for unfolding on live television, thus making it a "media-event" (Clough 2000). No doubt most of us watched live, or saw on videotape afterwards, the images of the two burning towers finally collapsing into rubble. Thus, we all somehow directly experienced the traumatic event. The event is a site of great scholarly investigation, generating hundreds of books and articles in its wake; it continues to be referenced in films, novels, poems, and other cultural works.

BMCC especially should lay claim to the event because it impacted us so directly. Just a few blocks away, the attack affected the thousands of BMCC students and staff on campus that day, and led to the eventual closure of Fiterman Hall, a 15-story office building formerly at 30 West Broadway, after it was snowed by the debris from the collapse of the adjacent 7 World Trade Center.

Fiterman, donated by Miles and Shirley Fiterman in 1993, had been the largest single gift to a community college in U.S. history in its time. The loss of Fiterman reduced instructional space by one-third and lead to the portable classrooms on West Street; it is why overcrowding rates currently reach nearly 200 percent on the Chambers Street main campus. [Recently construction broke ground at the site for a new building to be completed atop the former site in 2012.]

In the weeks following 9/11, the main campus at Chambers Street was reconfigured to create additional classrooms, as well as to house a command center for emergency service agencies, including the Port Authority, the New York Fire Department, the U.S. Army emergency medical units, FEMA and the Red Cross. The attack led campus security to develop new protocols and procedures, including evacuation plans and upgrades to protect against chemical and biological contamination, according to school officials.

Today many BMCC students deal or have dealt directly with the aftermath of 9/11. Muslim and Arab American students and their family members have suffered racial profiling (Cainkar 2009). Veterans returning from wars in Afghanistan are now pursuing college degrees on the new GI bill (www.gibill.va.gov). Some students were emergency first responders, or had a parent or relative who was, directly experiencing the chaos of the day. I encourage all these students to collect oral histories, as well as to record their own experiences. I invite students to consider their investigation of the site as a potentially long-term project that they can develop when they attend a senior college or even graduate school.

Before further discussing this assignment, let me provide a brief overview of my Urban Sociology course, which seeks to cultivate a multidisciplinary perspective of the city and to provide an introduction to the field of urban sociology. The class begins with classical sociological theoretical writings by Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Georg Simmel; then considers the historical evolution of cities around the world and in the U.S., especially in New York City.

After this theoretical-historical consideration of the city, the class is introduced to the study of Urban Sociology developed at the University of Chicago in the 1930s, as well as the New Urban Sociologists of the 1970s. The class concludes with two recent sociological works. Ruth Wilson Gilmore's *The Golden Gulag* (2007), which studies the rise of the prison industry in California, Mitchell Duneier's *Sidewalk* (2000), an ethnography of sidewalk vendors in New York City in the 1990s; and Arundati Roy's *Power Politics* (2002), a critique of globalization and the World Trade Organization are among the readings I've assigned.

To complement this general survey of the social theory, history and sociology of the city, the class cultivates "Ground Zero" as a site of sociological inquiry and original research. The students are assigned a variety of readings on the World Trade Center and 9/11, as well as shown documentary films, to provide multiple, varied accounts of the event and to develop their critical thinking skills (Brookfield 1987).

Students are assigned to write a 6-to-8 page final paper, researching some aspect of the event. The paper is developed through a series of "scaffolded" assignments that culminate in a final paper. The idea of "scaffolding" the paper—i.e., building in stages or drafts through a series of related, short writing assignments—is an idea that developed from my participation in a *Writing Across the Curriculum* (WAC) workshop. The strategy is to cultivate a complex, critical understanding of a paper topic by structuring and pacing the work, so students have time to edit, rewrite and develop their paper ideas.

There are four short writing assignments. The first is to write a history of the World Trade Center and September 11th. I stress that it is up to them how they

wish to frame and construct the narrative. To help define a history, I say that it should include the following information: (1) discuss the origins; tell the who, what, where, when, and why of the World Trade Center's beginnings; (2) mention key events in the life of the buildings; what groups or conflicts have been significant in its existence, why and how; (3) discuss the present state of the WTC site; what groups have power or are influencing the site's reconstruction; (4) discuss the site's future plans.

It is interesting how the students' assignments echo each others' and vary. Almost everyone writes that 50,000 people worked there on a typical work day and that the building was so vast it had its own zip code. Only two have ever mentioned the number of workers who died during the building's construction. Nearly everyone calls it an icon of the city skyline. Few speak of the business owners and residents who opposed the building, and challenged its construction to no avail before the U.S. Supreme Court.

The second assignment is to produce original field notes from "Ground Zero." I schedule a day when the entire class visits the site together. We go to (1) the information booth at the intersection of West Broadway and Vesey Street; and (2) the 9/11 Memorial Preview Center at 20 Vesey Street which opened in Fall 2009.

Students often find the field research to be very interesting. Of the information booth, one student wrote:

> I observed three distinct groups of people at the site: tourists, construction workers, and New Yorkers/Commuters. The group I most identified with were the New Yorkers because they seemed oblivious or maybe even unimpressed and uninterested in what was going on at the site…I identified with them because I had myself ignored Ground Zero, even though I had been attending school down the street for two years. I was surprised how much I learned about the site…I actually enjoyed walking around the site and speaking to different people. I was fascinated the entire time, which shocked me. Unexpectedly, I left the site with the feeling that Ground Zero is really a cemetery, and that it is disrespectful to be on that land.

Of the 9/11 Memorial Preview Center, one student commented:

> (T)here seemed to be a Disney-fication of the site and also subsequently the disaster. This perspective is easily supported by the fact that there is mass marketing of Ground Zero as a tourist destination, all areas commemorating the event also have large amounts of souvenir shops attached… I think this is only half the story, the half that describes capitalist commodification and making spectacle of 9/11 as a profoundly retreatist endeavor to cover up the trauma of the event. The other half of creating this Wall Street Disney fantasyland is that of restaging the event constantly in this fantasy space by showing pictures of utter devastation. This constant confrontation, and even fascination with the devastation makes the rebuilding imperative, that rebuilding confirms physically and ideologically that no matter what happens,

the system that creates these ideal spaces will always be around. Half the fun of Disney is the "scary" rides which show us that the super ego father figures that create these ideal spaces, and thus define value inside them, are both the sources of ultimate safety and ultimate fear.

The third assignment is to identify a research topic or question they wish to investigate; the fourth assignment is to identify and annotate a scholarly journal article related to their topic. After being dissatisfied with the amount of research that students were doing on their own, I arranged a class visit to the campus library: a librarian presents a brief lecture on how to use the online database and students spend the rest of the class time to begin searching for a relevant journal article.

The fifth, final assignment requires students to weave together the earlier assignments into a coherent paper, including their own personal experience/ memory of the event (this part is worth 20 percent of the paper's final grade).

Good writing is the result of editing and revising, and I repeat this truth constantly in class. I edit the students' papers, but I also encourage students to read aloud their words "to hear" and edit their own writing. I stress the importance of "developing a voice" as a writer in their academic pursuit, but also in life.

The grading rubric I have developed for this assignment tries to reflect a concern for writing. Forty percent of the grade is based on the paper's writing and organization; another 40 percent, on research and originality; and the final 20 percent, on personal input about the event. In this way, I try to emphasize the importance of good writing and original research, as well as the need to express one's own thoughts and experiences. Students can earn extra credit for presenting their papers to the class. Some read their papers from beginning to end, while others give a Power Point presentation.

Over the semesters they have written many interesting papers. Here are a few of the interesting theses developed by the students:

- A student compared and contrasted the treatment of Ground Zero in New York City with the Oklahoma Federal Building in Oklahoma City, OK, and concluded that commercial interests made investors redevelop the NYC site into a commercial center, while the absence of such interests led to the development of the Oklahoma Federal Building into a memorial. He wrote, "Is Ground Zero a place of mourning, a place of business, or is it both? I believe that the entire Ground Zero site should be a memorial for those who died on the site on September 11, 2001. Although some might argue that abandoning the site as a place of business is sort of waving a "white flag" and acknowledging the defeat to the enemy, I see it as an act of homage and respect to the many firefighters, Port Authority Police, countless civilians, and workers that lost their lives as a result of two massive towers crumbling to a heap."

- A student considered how skyscrapers were a capitalist symbol of political power, economic wealth and status in the 20th century, and questioned the wisdom of building new towers at Ground Zero: "I do not expect business moguls to think about human life and remember that outside of the economic

profits that they are seeking by building these skyscrapers that there are real people with families, partners and children whose lives are being put at risk. I often wonder if this is even a concern for any of these people after seeing the impact that 9/11 had on the world. Not only did countless people lose their lives but this event was used as a catalyst to a war that has claimed more lives. I struggle to understand how one does not recognize these connections and linkages."

- A student discussed the rise in hate crimes against Arab and Muslims following 9/11, and theorized about its impact on their collective identity: "As a result of constant humiliation, denigration, and marginalization, most Arabs and Muslims have developed a transnational range of identities. They don't know anymore where they belong. The new generation has always known America as its country but the recent events have forced them to hide their religious faith by changing names or the way they dress, in fear of attacks. Some were comfortable in their own skin as being Arab-Americans, and some found refuge in religion, therefore became more religious."

Creating and developing this lesson has been a learning experience for me. The scaffolding of assignments is demanding for professors, requiring them to read and comment on students' writings, but my experience is that the process is worth it because it produces a higher quality of papers overall.

Research suggests that we become better writers through actively revising our work (Bean 2001). The process of having students write a lengthy research paper through a series of scaffolded assignments is one way to help students develop and revise their work over a period of time. This approach can be very effective since many students lack exposure or a familiarity with how to write a research paper, and, too often, many will wait for the night before a paper is due to even begin writing, if left to their own devices.

I hope to further develop the "Ground Zero" final paper assignment in my Urban Sociology class. One plan is to construct a blog that will archive and publish the students' original research; my intention is to develop it into a valuable research site for other scholars.

Through this article, I hope to encourage other faculty members to consider how they might incorporate Ground Zero/ 9/11 into their curriculum. It is an extraordinary opportunity to have a site of such socio-historical importance so nearby, and the need to develop diverse, creative analyses of what happened on September 11th is great. The significance of this event is immediate to so many of our students and us, but also important to all those who live in the U.S., as well as in nations constrained by U.S. foreign policies.

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Getting Assessment Right

Mary Sepp
Developmental Skills

CUNY has been using the ACT Writing Test as its writing assessment instrument since 2001. The test is used initially for placement in either a college-level composition class or a developmental writing class. If the student does not obtain a passing score and is placed in an ESL or English (for native speakers) remedial class, the test is also used as an exit from remediation.

The CUNY-ACT Writing Test consists of two writing prompts on social and/or educational issues, and the student is given an hour to write an essay on one of them. The essays are then graded by two certified readers. Criteria include taking a clear position, developing several points to support that position and presenting those points with appropriate vocabulary and a clear pattern of organization, and competence in the use of the structures of standard written English. If students score at least a 7 on a 12-point scale, they pass. A score of 6 or less means the students have to take, or in many cases, retake a remedial course before taking the exam again.

With an average passing rate near the 50% mark at BMCC, many of our students find themselves in the position of repeating ESL095 or ENG095. And for probably a multitude of reasons, students who repeat these classes seem to have a harder time passing the ACT than students taking it for the first time. This starts a frustrating cycle for students, and perhaps creates an equally frustrating problem for instructors. Furthermore, there is no simple way to define what constitutes the difference between marginal papers above and below the line of competent academic writing. Since there is no real feedback on the exams apart from the grade itself, it unfortunately becomes a bit of a guessing game for both students and instructors. How do instructors help students prepare for the test without knowing what they did wrong to begin with?

It was this frustration that prompted me to ponder solutions or at least improvements to the situation. Having taught ESL095 for a number of years, I began to wonder if the problem was with the students or with the assessment process itself.

Could it be the test design? No doubt some of the exam prompts are culturally inaccessible; that is to say, in some cases, the student would need to have knowledge of the local culture or social structure in order to construct an appropriate response to the question—a difficult or impossible task for many ESL students since some of them may have only recently arrived in this country.

Or perhaps the problem is the assessment method. A certified reader myself, I often feared that holistic scoring was too subjective. Everyone receives the same training and uses the same rubric, but impressions may still vary and readers may get tired. Students' handwriting might even be a factor.

Changing either the testing instrument or the assessment method would seem a step in the right direction. But changing a college-wide test would ob-

viously require college-wide action. The most productive approach for an instructor was to figure out how to work with the existing system to help students improve their writing skills and better prepare them for the test. What seemed to be missing was some kind of objective or statistical measure of student writing. Perhaps a statistical approach would reveal something that the holistic approach did not, or perhaps it wouldn't. In any case, I decided to test this theory.

My research, which was funded by the CUNY Office of Undergraduate Education, was designed as a corpus study, comparing passing and non-passing writing samples. One hundred ACT exams written by BMCC ESL students comprised the corpus of 50 passing and 50 non-passing essays. The fifty non-passing essays all had a score of 6, while the passing samples had a score of 7 or 8. A set of linguistic features was extracted from each corpus and analyzed statistically in order to identify which features if any contributed to the outcome of the exams. Essays were measured for overall length, paragraphing, vocabulary size, word length, spelling error rates, pronoun-noun ratio, and handling of complex structures. The hypothesis was that there would be a salient difference between the passing and non-passing essays for one or more of those features.

The results of the study suggested that there are subtle but consistent differences between passing and non-passing essays in terms of length, and a more significant difference in terms of vocabulary size and command of syntax. The data as a whole indicated that length, vocabulary, and syntax all contributed to the outcome of these exams. A regression model based on a subset of the corpus consisting of essays with a score of 6 or 8 further attested to this finding.

Based on correlation coefficients, which were calculated to approximate the relationship between individual features and essay scores, competence in the use of complex structures and a varied vocabulary appeared to be the strongest indicators of whether a student is deemed ready for college writing. However, the regression model, which took into account the combined contribution of features, pointed to another key contributor: essay length. While the correlation between length features and essay scores was statistically weak based on the sample set used for this study, the regression model indicated that length indeed played a role in the outcome of the exams. In fact, the number of words per essay combined with vocabulary size contributed most to the optimal regression model, a six-feature model (see table below) that accounted for approximately 31% of the variance in scores.

6-FEATURE MODEL SUMMARY					
Regression Statistics					
Multiple R	0.627				
R Square	0.394				
Adjusted R Square	**0.305**				
Standard Error	0.421				
Observations	48				
ANOVA					
	df	*SS*	*MS*	*F*	***Significance F***
Regression	6	18.896	3.149	4.437	**0.002**
Residual	41	29.104	0.710		
Total	47	48			

6-feature regression model—Words Per Essay, Vocabulary Size, IF-clause errors, BY-ing errors, Long Word Tokens, and Spelling Error Rate

While the results may have been unremarkable in a statistical sense, it was nevertheless somewhat encouraging to know that these results did not contradict those obtained through holistic scoring. That is to say, most positive features (e.g., vocabulary size, essay length, number of long words) showed slightly higher numbers for passing essays than for non-passing essays, and negative features (e.g., error rates) conversely were higher for non-passing essays, and that is precisely what one would hope. Moreover, it suggests that these subtle differences were somehow perceived by readers, and that holistic scoring is indeed not the culprit.

Just as I was concluding the data collection stage of my study, it was announced that a new test, the *CUNY Aligned Assessment of Writing*, would be introduced in the fall of 2010 to replace the CUNY-ACT Writing Test. Though I had long hoped for a new testing instrument, the timing diminished the excitement for my study somewhat. Still, the change is a welcome one. This test has a new and improved test design with a much wider range of topics and expanded task requirements, including summarizing the writing prompt. Students will also be allowed more time—90 minutes rather than 60—to complete the test. Perhaps most important of all, students will receive feedback. As a result, preparation for exams should be more straightforward for both students and instructors. In addition, the new test design lends itself to a much richer course design at the ESL/ENG 095 level.[1]

Creating assessment tools is a tricky business, and despite all the planning and piloting that goes on before implementing a standardized test, perfection may never be achieved. However, if the new test proves to be a more effective assessment instrument than the current one, it will be a step in the right direction.

[1] For some of the conversation that went into the shift taking place in October 2010, from the ACT to the CAAW, see the Report of the Task Force on Writing Assessment <http://oira.cuny.edu:7778/portal/page/portal/oira/OIRA_HOME/Writing%20Task%20Force%20Final%20Report.pdf>
–The Editors

Establishing Meaningful Library Instruction Assessment

Phyllis Niles, Susan Thomas, and Linda Wadas
Library

The BMCC Library Assessment Steering Committee has been working since 2009 to determine learning objectives for library instruction (sometimes called bibliographic instruction) and to determine ways to assess the success of our teaching. At this point, the library assesses library instruction primarily with quizzes. Students take the same quiz before and after instruction. Quizzes are scored and analyzed to see if classes, as a whole, improve. In examining the effectiveness of this practice, the Committee identified the need for a standardized curriculum built around learning objectives. Thus, **the first goal of the Assessment Steering Committee was to formulate Learning Objectives**. Based on Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Standards Two and Three[1], the committee identified and ordered essential research skills that would be covered by Learning Objectives.

To make our work truly meaningful, the Committee determined a broad spectrum of Learning Objectives organized under Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Skills. Students who learn the entire spectrum could be called Information Literate. We recognize, however, that most students will learn only the lower skills of the spectrum, due to the short time allotted for library instruction. We also surmise that students in more advanced classes will probably do better learning more advanced objectives, like evaluating information sources. The formulation of Learning Objectives had an immediate effect on the Committee members' library instruction. Even before the set of Objectives was fully formed, we saw that the flexible framework allowed us to cover specific skills and address individual class needs. Now that the Objectives have been shared with all of the librarians, all librarians' teaching will benefit from the established Learning Objectives.

The second goal of the committee is to determine which assessment techniques are most appropriate to the special circumstances of library instruction. Assessment will help determine if BMCC students are able to successfully navigate the library's web site, achieving the most basic information literacy skills, in a "one shot" library instruction session. (Follow-up to our fifty-minute sessions happens only when motivated students come to the reference desk—or when

[1] From Standard Two:
How to "select the most appropriate investigative methods or information retrieval systems for accessing the needed information."
How to "[construct and implement] effectively-designed search strategies.
How to "[retrieve] information online or in person using a variety of methods.
How to "[refine] the search strategy if necessary."
From Standard Three:
How to "[articulate and apply] initial criteria for evaluating both the information and its sources."

they chat or email online.[2]) Then there is the question of whether or not advanced classes should be taught more sophisticated library research skills; can we assume students in advanced classes already know how to do basic research in the BMCC Library? Given that library instruction may be different, for example, focusing on advanced search techniques or on a particular database, determining assessment techniques for 200- and 300- level classes is very important.

In general, our teaching faculty colleagues schedule library instruction so that students have the skills and tools necessary to complete their research assignments. Librarians and teaching faculty communicate in order to establish clear goals for library instruction, but we don't necessarily think the exact same way about success: Librarians tend to measure the success of library instruction in certain ways: did the students learn, for example, how to determine specific search terms to use when searching for books or journal articles? Are they able to search for and successfully locate a full-text journal article? Teaching faculty may measure success differently: Did the student successfully complete the assignment? Did the student choose appropriate sources? Did the student create an error free Works Cited page?

The committee asserts that librarians need to determine how to assess the success of students from the points-of-view of both the librarians and the teaching faculty. Library instruction should not occur in a vacuum. That is why in addition to the current assessment measure, *pre-* and *post-tests* covering just the most basic library skills, the committee is working to create alternative, creative assessment tools. For example, librarians could work with teaching faculty to evaluate not only the correctness of a Works Cited page but also the quality of the works listed there. The tool in this case would be a *working conference* between the library faculty and the teaching faculty, utilizing a rubric. Another assessment tool could be a *library assignment,* created by the library and teaching faculty, a discrete assignment that would get students started on their research and would improve their results. Such an assignment was created a few years ago during a pilot project with members of the Speech department and could be revisited.

The Library is committed to having every student graduate from BMCC information literate. We believe that current assessment shows and will continue to show that students are achieving only the basic competencies or lower skills, such as navigating the library website and using CLICS (interlibrary loan within CUNY), but not achieving real information literacy, which includes competencies and skills in using controlled vocabulary, evaluating content, synthesizing material,[3] and thinking critically. Because only so much can be accomplished in fifty minutes, a credit-bearing course attached to Speech 100 or English 201 is one possible solution. Alternative pedagogy might also be usefully employed. Active learning, embedded librarians, Internet-based instruction and student portfolios are all possibilities to be explored.

[2] Sometimes teaching faculty bring their classes back to the Library for a follow-up instruction session, but most faculty cannot devote that much classroom time to library instruction.

[3] When possible, librarians teach students how to refine and develop their topics, but generally speaking librarians leave this to the individual faculty members who also instruct students in how to define their information needs and how to effectively synthesize and use information in the creation of new knowledge.

Appendix

Basic research skills

Outcome: Students will be able to successfully navigate the library's web site.
Assessment tool: Librarians will observe students during the classroom sessions

Intermediate

Outcome: Students will be able to perform fundamental research activities.
Assessment tool: Students will be given a library assignment.

Advanced

Outcome: Students will use critical thinking skills.
Assessment tool: Librarians and classroom faculty will collaborate to design assignments and evaluate student work.

Analysis of the Library Pre- and Post-Test Assessment: Fall 2008

The Library assessment committee decided to use a Pre and Post test to measure what students had learned during a 50 minute class. 216 students completed the Pre test, and 268 students completed the Post test, due to late arrivals.

The post- test shows an improvement. The number of students scoring 100% jumped from 12 to 61, and the number scoring 80% from 34 to 83. The number of respondents is somewhat skewed; nonetheless there was measured improvement.

The questions follow:

1. CUNY+ is where you go to find:
   - newspaper articles
   - information on the Internet
   - the call numbers for books in the library
   - information about the library hours

2. A successful search strategy is to:
   - take your friend's suggestion
   - type a whole question
   - type in precise terms
   - walk around the library
   - check the Internet

3. To log on for off campus access to BMCC library databases you need to know:
   - your social security number
   - your professor's name
   - your library ID number
   - your BMCC email username and password

4. The best way to find a journal, newspaper or magazine article is to:
   - select a subject database
   - search the Internet
   - search CUNY+
   - browse print periodicals

5. To get help with research you can:
   - go to the reference desk
   - email a librarian
   - chat online with a librarian
   - all of the above

Two Poems

Golda Solomon
English

Weekend College
(after Martin Espada's *"En La Calle San Sebastian"*)

I push and pull my collapsible black cart, like 'meals on wheels.' The buffed linoleum has ruts. I walked similar hallways and like my students, I knew too much about life, nothing about college

in a classroom, end of line subway

Jamal, a transfer from a four-year college, his athletic scholarship partied away, takes on Lazy Miss M. She is consistently unprepared, and lets me know she is a blessing to me

in a classroom, end of line subway

Two fathers—one seventeen years old, the other twenty-two cares for his asthmatic son, hospitalized twice since the semester began. He tells me he is just a father—don't say a good one.

Yo comprendo

in a classroom, end of line subway

One student from Brooklyn lives on Linden Blvd. two apartment houses away from where Dr. S. removed my tonsils in his home- hospital. I remember walking that same block as a 7 year old. We are the first girls in our families to make it past 12th grade and 'sisters' by borough

in a classroom, end of line subway

Twenty-eight names on the roster, fourteen are in steady attendance. Drop-ins, drop-outs, like drive-bys

in a classroom, end of line subway

Stacey sports turquoise and lavender acrylic braided in her cornrows. Three hours on her hair and thirty minutes on her assignments. I weave her undisciplined intelligence

in a classroom, end of line subway

We begin at 9AM. Five are on time. They make a star next to their attendance. I give bonuses for what other professors take for granted. I am mentor, cajoler, sergeant-at-arms, a keeper of the secrets of how to enter this elite Club Academia

in a classroom, end of line subway

Pants worn low on slender hip guys, hands shake most. Public Speaking is frightening. Assignments, links and bridges to quilted lives and collages of cultures. Attitude and vernacular must be left at the door. I suppress my urge to collect ringing cell phones as I once did pocket knives and a handgun

in a classroom, end of line subway

Pablo wears a 2nd grade 'getting over grin,' frustrates by being unfashionably late. I reach a point of no return negotiation. His grade will be just above failure but may complete the assignments

in a classroom, end of line subway

The college cafeteria, a corner store, a Bronx bodega. Lukewarm coffee wears a Starbucks uniform. I was a cashier at Sam and Hymie's, Campus Sugar Bowl. My student days, part time job, I now see as a luxury. Now full time workweek and weekend classes for students who juggle responsibilities and schedules

in a classroom, end of line subway

A one-eyed Albanian refuses to wear an eye patch, lets us see too much. Rodney, in his gospel trained voice quotes his grandmother, "no matter what anyone tells you, Jesus is the baddest"

in a classroom, end of line subway

Gladys must apply for a new position at Macy's, unemployed after an eight-year tenure of security—title demolished, down sized, gone. She polishes her interview techniques and is aggressively optimistic

in a classroom, end of line subway

A seventeen year old mother called by the babysitter to rush home. Her husband will not babysit. She does not return emails from classmates

in a classroom, end of line subway

While I pronounce consonants for Lydia determined to have her speech match her mind, my copy of Junot Diaz' *Drown*, paperweight for midterm exams, goes missing

in a classroom, end of line subway

Fifteen Saturdays are sacrificed. Who is the sacrificial lamb?

in a classroom, end of line subway

Read All About It

Indira is missing
I want to write about it
Use matter of fact everyday words that
will give her life meaning
linger like her scent
fresh and corporate
Tell it like it is language
How do you write about a student you knew
in a college classroom for 2 months
3 hours less 10 minutes a week
shared a subway ride on the #2
or was it the #3 Uptown
Indira is missing
Her face ink print rendered on
the cover of the Daily News
Stared at
Not a very flattering likeness
The newspaper recycled or thrown away
Discarded
An act of violence and
Indira is missing
The headline read 'Loving and Fighting'
She's in the picture with her fiancé
The picture cheapens her looks
stereotypes her
strips away the elegance she possessed
Just another Dominican couple in the Bronx
"You know the type"
he had a prison record
she had a disabled child
I can't write about physical abuse
first hand

Circling the Square

Aimee Record
English

During the first two weeks of class, in the first ten minutes of each meeting, I wrote character, plot, point of view, style and tone so that the students might learn and internalize the language that literature uses for analysis. I listed first person, flat and round, and climax below the appropriate element the words belonged to. The first papers came home with me in my overstuffed bag, and I noticed the academic words were absent from the paragraphs; in fact, by the second paper the words were haphazardly thrown into sentences without contextualization of class materials, at least for the most part. I contemplated my insanity, and theirs, for a week. Was I trying to square the circle? The teacher and the student can function like two neighborhoods in a community. The community is circular, a social idea of give and take, connecting. Neighborhoods are connecting too, but are bound by the parameters that define physical space, distinction of the road, and building. Language is the give and take, the circle. The academic words are boundaries, squares that define parameter of the neighborhood, and I question why this is so when it is part of language. A word is a word is a word.

I did what any teacher does at this point. Refer back to my syllabus. Drama came next on my syllabus as part of introducing our students to different genres of literature, and the classroom needed more community, less neighborhood. I grouped the students in 3's and 5's and asked them to rewrite the two plays we had read in class. The plays were to be rewritten changing any element of literature we had learned except for plot, (surprise endings were allowed). The class formed little communities and the language between them came naturally. I saw them metaphorically drink coffee on their porches. I heard laughter. Even more, they asked me questions. *Can we change the gender of the characters? Can we use real people in the media to help give background information to our rewrite? If we change the characters, can we use dialect? Won't that change style and tone, setting?* The class saw the interconnectedness of the elements as they started to change them and question whether changing them would work in the end performances they were being graded on. The language of Academia is a neighborhood that many of our BMCC students have only seen from a distance but have not dared trespass. If they have, often crossing the line has made them feel other, incapable of managing the cultural history of its inhabitants, the literature and analysis itself. When allowing them into the creation of the literature, the ground level of inhabitant, they begin to understand the neighborhoods, elemental structure and definition, built around the circular community of thought underlying it all. If all this information is not meant to connect us, then what are we doing but creating boundaries that stop discovery.

The community within our college has strengthened due to the Cue Project. In fact, it is the project that has helped me to define the college community. This is a project which was set up as a collaboration between an advisor who usually

runs a Freshmen Year Experience Workshop, and the professors who are teaching a course called Intensive Writing—designed to precede our remedial class.

I was assigned to this project when it was my first semester as a fulltime faculty member and when I would have said yes to bathroom cleanup, but I have done a lot of cross discipline work and because this was cross discipline—all remedial classes from every department were involved—this actually made me salivate. In the meantime—there were no offices in the English Department open due to an expanding department that allowed me fulltime status and a lack of physical space to accommodate that growth, so I was placed in a satellite English office that was smack dab in the middle of the Academic Transfer Office. My door was literally two doors down from Allana Burke, my assigned advisor. I can't say that she trusted my enthusiasm at first. It was this distrust I had felt from the teachers in the New York Public Schools when the school board sent me in as contract labor to help implement literacy assignments that met the standards. It was distrust for crossing neighborhoods. The other. I had a similar distrust for crossing the boundaries of neighborhoods when I first started interdisciplinary work and when I entered college. In fact, I believe that initial distrust healthy to form appropriate and effective communication between neighborhoods and within communities. I had been other my whole life. The other—which is the position many of BMCC's students find themselves in because of socio-economics, race, sexual orientation and first-generation college student status.

In fact, I realize how short lived the role of other is in many circumstances. Once a society is indoctrinated in a language, for example text language, it changes shape and forms community based on this common form of connection. Based on this argument, the students could form a connection to the Academic community based on learning such language as the elements. In order to get them to learn this language I find myself teaching them through the creation of art, a process of putting together the elements, balancing proportions, revising for aesthetics. This gets them to move toward their ownership of academic language, organically find the connected nature of putting things together in a form and to form. Once my 201 students found a use for the language that served their own communities, they willingly started to use the words.

Also true to form, the advisors in the Academic Advising Department offered me a community that I willingly joined. I learned the language of advising, and the ins and outs of the neighborhoods that existed outside the English Department. I always say hello, in fact sometimes I just scream Allana's name down the hall in a familiar, *Hey Girl* kind of way or a *tell you something now* way. The advisors have served as a wealth of knowledge to me, not just with advising information but with opening up connections to some of the college's other neighborhoods. Because of my close proximity with the advising department and its members, including their support and encouragement, I trained to be a CPE workshop administrator which has been helpful to me across the board.

But, a community is set up not just out of need—that could be dysfunctional, a monopoly. A community is where the members invite each other in. Neighborhoods exist. Anyone can move into a neighborhood if they can pay the price to live there. We have sufficient bulletins and staff available to the people

who can currently afford our college. We receive numerous e-mails informing the staff about the process of being active and successful in our college. For some reason, being invited works differently. Effectiveness is the goal and e-mail is less effective than the contact a conversation serves.

What does that mean for the academic community?

It is incredibly easy to form a life around the college where you teach. Being a new full timer, converting from adjunct status at BMCC, I watched the outside new hires come into the school without knowledge of the campus layout, the name of the nice copy room guy, the existence of a North site first floor—the one that looks like the set of the perfect pointless killing—which by the way is where BMCC workers fetch their first set of office keys. Figuring out how to achieve tenure may be secondary for the newly hired professor for some time.

The community of academia, the college, is divided into neighborhoods of sorts. We have the neighborhood of academic affairs, transfer and advising, registrar which borders little bursar—even suburban or gated communities within the community—the English Department, Social Sciences, Modern Languages—Math?!, financial aid, scholarship office, grant writing—and ohhhh—the administration offices located in the deluxe apartments in the sky. For the new hire to breech the boundaries of their cozy cubby offices, if they do indeed manage the key to enter their office—or for them to breech the boundaries of the new hire run around—which is part of the initiation to see if they soften or harden under pressure—at least it would seem to me—would be as difficult as it would be for the remedial student to test out on the first day of classes—a 2% chance if any. So, the students, the new hires, shyly go into their offices, their classes, and are placed on some such committee, group work. Maybe it is the Sunshine Welcoming Committee—by themselves or they are paired with a lifer (a tenured professor that has seen it all) who doesn't believe welcoming *academic*. Oftentimes I see new faculty or first semester students crying in the safety of their own hands and praying to not see the Dean or professor they impressed just months ago. They start off impressing with sheer enthusiasm. Now, due to the spontaneous rage they feel from being the other, they have lowered self-esteem and exhaustion that only tail chasing (not the good kind) can invoke. At this point they become uncommunicative and they hide from the neighborhoods and only wish for the community into which they can be invited.

This is our college community; it is chock full of neighborhoods that serve to alienate all of us from the purpose of connection. The ones of us that are paid and the ones who finds a way to pay us—look for a way to work toward connection when the college is serving its larger purpose.

We work for the money bearer, the people who find a way to pay us. Many of our students scrimp and borrow for tuition or are dependent on financial aid. They are the inner city students who chance our *Community* College at BMCC, who *join* our community college in hopes of breaking through the glass ceilings, or narrow unscalable prison walls that allow them to see the streak of blue above—an image I teach students in 101, thank you W.E. B. DuBois. They come from pre-existing communities and enter into the same ones we have entered—as students or as professors. To examine the lack of communication—and col-

laboration between our school's neighborhoods is not a stretch even when we have faculty ID that serves as a magic wand to enter with a respectful hello.

And yet, you misunderstand if you think I don't see the value in struggle. The value of having to be let in under conditions set by the weight of embossed paper. I see the value of exchange and exchange is always based on conditions.

What changed for me in being a part of the CUE project was that the academic community I had been exposed to briefly in my new hire orientation became one in which the neighbor's defined (defined based on function) boundaries started to skew. I had one on one interaction with people from the neighborhoods. Invitations into the community they had worked hard to create were open to me. This extended to the classroom. Nicole Leash from the Disabilities Office came and talked to my class. She extended a personal invitation to my students to visit the office. The way she talked to them made them open to discussing their struggles, their panic, their unexplained past failure to transgress the walls academia had made between who they were and who they wanted to be. I could have not done this on my own. To get the students to visit the neighborhoods in our Academic Community had felt like a useless practice of handing out flyers. For the professor to suggest that the students balance academics with physical fitness seems superficial somehow. I *don't have time*, a practical response. With the help of Allana coming in and discussing time management skills and giving the students a list of free activities set up for their success, the process of community becomes a reality. Allana and I talk about our own struggles with balancing time. The students set to encouraging me to workout, and *So I'll see you at the gym today?* became the response. In this way the act of attending college becomes a place where the process of learning is not only accessible but the invitation is extended to every neighborhood of this college.

My students' writings are strengthened through this process in several ways. From the games the CUE project has implemented to the information that serves as practical amenities related knowledge, their brains, as well as my own, are becoming flexible. The mind itself has neighborhoods and if we are lucky in our education, we find a way to get the neighborhoods to form communities and cross the physical boundaries of our collected data to form interdisciplinary connections fluidly and with invitation to freely do this. While playing Taboo in one of our collaborative sessions, Allana and I were taken back by the explosion of competition with word association the students engaged in. The communities of teams served as a way to push them into making the connections I had been trying to get them make all semester—being specific, fighting for meaning, contemplating the rules while finding to make things work. The confidence this builds in the students is invaluable.

My brain sees the Vitruvian Man, the image of each person in the circle, in the square. We contemplate the proportions of self within the community, within the neighborhood. It is the academic community that is the perfect place to find ourselves inside the circle and the square.

Difficulties—The Seeds of Understanding

Brahmadeo Dewprashad
Science

We often pride ourselves that we can recognize the concepts/topics that students find difficult, particularly after having taught a course several times. The dedicated educators in us compel us to very carefully explain these topics, often several times, and only move on to a new topic after we have been assured by nodding heads that students have indeed understood the concepts taught. Yet, we are often disappointed when we find out from grading exam papers that students did poorly on questions assessing their understanding of those concepts. We look for reasons to explain this and seek assurances from students that they did in fact understand the concepts. Often times, they indicate that they did, but that this was not reflected in the exam either because they were nervous, are poor "test-takers," did not get to study enough due to family or job demands or other very familiar reasons. Being compassionate and caring individuals, we recognize that our students battle very challenging circumstances daily and that there is often truth to such statements. As such, we may feel somewhat guilty and take a second look at the exam to ascertain that it was indeed "fair." We might even consider "curving" the grades such that students' aspirations are not dragged down by poor grades. We console ourselves that next semester it will better, and we resolve to spend even more time explaining those "difficult" concepts. Yet, the story repeats itself in the next semester. After several semesters of trying, we are tempted to resign ourselves to the belief that many students find some concepts "difficult" and thus, make the best of it and move on. However, trying to find the underlying causes as to why students find particular topics/concepts difficult might be a worthwhile pursuit.

Students' "difficulties" can often be traced to their earlier beliefs and understandings. Many students are not constructing appropriate understandings of fundamental concepts at the very beginning of their studies. This affects their understanding of subsequent concepts (Nakhleh, 1992). Such observations are consistent with the cognitive model of learning (Bodner et al., 2001; Chi et al., 1994). This model presupposes that students come to the classroom with a range of prior knowledge and beliefs, some of which are incomplete and even inaccurate. It is through this prism that they view new concepts presented to them. As such, many difficulties that students have arise from their attempts to build new knowledge from a platform of knowledge which is either incomplete or even false. As such, overcoming such difficulties requires understanding the reason(s) underlying the difficulties. However, understanding students' reasoning cannot be easily discerned from exams, homework and class discussions which tend to focus on students' knowledge and applications of concepts taught in a current course.

I have been attempting to discern the underlying causes for the difficulties students in my organic chemistry classes have in writing organic reaction

mechanisms. The latter is an underlying theme in undergraduate organic chemistry—courses which have a nationwide reputation as "killers" (Friesen, 2008; Mullins, 2008). Students participating in the study are provided with a diagnostic worksheet pertaining to each mechanism being studied. The worksheet asks students to complete a reaction scheme and to write a detailed stepwise mechanism to explain the products proposed. For the steps that they feel confident about, they are asked to indicate with a "√", and for the steps that they are not confident about, to indicate with a "?" In addition, students are asked to explain why they have chosen the "√" or "?" Also, students are asked to identify specific difficulties they have in writing the mechanism.

This is an adaptation of a reflective practice used successfully by Salavatori in a composition course (2000). It is envisaged that such writing assignments will not only identify students' misconceptions, but will provide deeper insights about their thinking about specific concepts. Students are also provided with a companion diagnostic sheet which was designed to find out their understanding of specific aspects of the same mechanism. This diagnostic sheet has a mechanism problem for which I propose four different solutions. Students are asked to indicate for each of the solutions if they think that it is correct, and to explain the reasoning underlying their choice. These sheets are reviewed, misconceptions corrected and returned to students who are then provided with an opportunity to correct the misconceptions they had and to resubmit for review. Grades are not awarded for this exercise such that students are not penalized for bringing to light incomplete knowledge/misconceptions they have.

The findings of this study were not only interesting but very educational. I have found that many students had difficulties with the same concepts. On closer examination of the explanations they provided of their difficulties, it became clear that in many cases, their "incorrect" solutions were but logical extensions of their understanding of concepts that they had covered in prerequisite courses and/or of their experiences. For example, in writing mechanisms, arrows are used to show the movement of electrons (which have negative charges). An atom which has lost its electron/s is designated with a "$^{+}$", meaning that it has no electrons to give. As such, an arrow cannot be used to show movement of electrons from an atom that is designated with a "$^{+}$" such as "H^{+}". Nevertheless, students very commonly used arrows to show movement of electrons from "H^{+}". For them, donating electron/s from an "H^{+}" seems logical, as very early in Mathematics they are taught that one can donate from a number with a positive value but not from one with a negative value. For example, if you have \$10 it is + \$10, it is real money and you can give it to someone. However, if have -\$10, then you have less than \$0 and cannot donate any money, but can only accept. As such it seems logical to students that an "H^{+}" would donate electrons and not receive, and that is what they tend to do instinctively. Another very common incorrect practice that I notice is that students move the electrons in the wrong direction. A molecule is made up of atoms which are joined by bonds resulting from shared electrons. Often, one atom pulls more on the shared electrons, and as such, more of the shared electrons are in its grasp. From this perspective, when students use arrows to show movement of electrons, they show the elec-

trons flowing from the atom which has more of the shared electron in its grasp. This seems logical—electrons should flow from where they are concentrated to where they are not. This seems fair and consistent with their observations of things around us. However, the opposite occurs. The atoms that have more of the shared electron in their grasp take even more electrons. As such, more electrons move towards them. Arrows should be drawn showing electrons moving towards the electron-rich atoms, somewhat akin to "the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer."

I have found a long list of similar misconceptions that stem from logical extensions of students' previous incomplete knowledge. Understanding the basis for such students' misconceptions has helped me create new analogies that students can use to rectify misconceptions. For example, an "H^+" can be equated with a hole; one cannot move it but can only fill it and dig a new hole. In addition, when teaching these "difficult" concepts/topics, I now alert students to the likely misconceptions and their likely origin. This seems to have benefited students.

I suspect that in all disciplines, students have similar difficulties that arise, not from a lack of effort, but from previous incomplete knowledge/misconceptions. I feel it would benefit instructors and students if such incomplete knowledge/ misconceptions were uncovered and rectified very early in a course. Difficulties can be the seeds of understanding.

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Integrating Critical Skills into Human Services Courses—Efforts from the CUE-CPE Faculty Development Initiative

Debra Greenwood
Social Sciences and Human Services

Introduction

The CUE-CPE Faculty Development Initiative took place on the BMCC campus in 2007-2008, during my first year of full-time teaching. The series of workshops informed faculty about the CUNY Proficiency Exam (CPE) and invited them to "participate in a faculty development project designed to strengthen their efforts to infuse critical reading, writing, thinking, and communication skills into their courses" (from the invitation flyer). The format of the initiative involved training workshops scheduled during the fall semester alongside syllabus development, and the course was to be taught in the spring semester. A final follow-up evaluation workshop was scheduled for the end of the spring semester.

The workshops discussed Tasks I (analytical reading and writing) and II (analyzing and integrating material from graphs and text) of the CPE in detail, and specifically what skills should be employed by students to pass the exam. Utilizing the cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy, we learned the importance of moving our students from the lower process levels of knowledge and comprehension, into the higher process levels of application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Specific skills include summarizing, paraphrasing, comparing, contrasting, explaining, prioritizing, and illustrating (Anderson, 2001; Bissell & Lemons, 2006). These higher process skills are needed both for the CPE and beyond graduation. The workshops also discussed the development of rubrics (standardized assessment tools) that can be used for grading written work that encompasses those skills (Bissell & Lemons, 2006; Blumberg, 2009; Dlugos, 2003).

The same critical thinking and writing skills are vital for students in the field of social work (Gibbons & Gray, 2004; Oglensky, 2008). While instinctively already beginning to develop assignments that encouraged students to practice those skills, I found that this series of workshops could help a new faculty member like me integrate the skills into courses in a more functional way. My goals in attending the workshop series were threefold: first, to better integrate those critical skills into Human Services courses; second, to inform students about the CPE; third, to help students understand how the skills that are vital to them as future social workers are the same skills that will assist them in successfully passing the CPE.

Incorporating Skills into a Course

The workshop series required that participants select one course in which to develop at least one assignment that would incorporate some of the essential skills. HUM 411, Social Welfare Policies and Programs, was an ideal course for a first

attempt. HUM 411 has one prerequisite—POL 100—so students cannot take the course in their first semester. Some students choose to take the course early in their coursework, while others wait until their last semester; therefore, the typical enrollment is a mix of newer students and more experienced ones. A small number (two or three) have already taken the CPE, and a few more will take it in the same semester as they are enrolled in the course. The majority, though, are either close to having completed enough credits to take the CPE, or are early enough in their coursework that they aren't even thinking about the CPE yet—basically, a typical enrollment for many BMCC courses.

Among the assignments already being developed for this course prior to the CPE workshops was one assignment that called for summarizing viewpoints and discussing personal opinions. During the workshops, that assignment was further developed to include the elements of comparing and contrasting, as well as synthesizing course concepts with additional readings and class discussions. Students began by selecting one of four readings—or debates—that had been pre-selected based on course content. The readings came from Karger, Midgely, Kindle & Brown (2007), *Controversial Issues in Social Policy*. Each reading presents a particular social welfare policy or program issue and provides both a pro and con argument within the article. The four topics were: 1) Should Social Security be privatized? 2) Does America need national health insurance? 3) Should social services be privatized? and 4) Has welfare reform worked? The students selected the topic of most interest to them and read both arguments in the debate; they were strongly encouraged to read the text in full at least twice. The assignment was scaffolded (sequencing a number of assignments, or parts within one assignment, so that the assignment gradually increases in complexity) so that each step built on the last (Cho, Schunn & Wilson, 2006; Palinscar, 1986). The students first summarized each viewpoint, then identified one key point and compared and/or contrasted the opinions on that point, synthesized the article with at least one other source of information (from text, videos, or class discussions) and demonstrated how they were related, and then shared their own personal thoughts and experiences.

The first submission was an ungraded draft (although they did earn points for turning it in); once feedback was provided, they submitted a final graded paper. The paper was required to be typed and free from grammar and punctuation errors; students were encouraged to turn in a draft by a specific date, and to utilize my feedback on the draft for their final paper. The grading rubric (which the students are provided with at the beginning of the semester) awarded equal points to each of the following: summarization, key point comparison/contrast, application of additional course concept, personal opinion (students are never graded on content of personal opinion, but on how well it is presented given what they have read), and writing quality.

The assignment was introduced to the students by discussing the skills needed for the CPE exam and drawing a connection between the skills for the CPE and those required in the field of Social work. A few students in the course who had already taken and passed the CPE verbally supported the discussion, which may have helped the class as a whole to initially remain open-minded. In fact,

both as the assignment was being introduced, and after the assignment had been completed, students were vocal in a positive manner. "Where were you when I was taking the test?" said two students. "I could have used this." "I knew after doing this paper that I'd be OK with the CPE," said one student. She did pass the CPE, and on the first attempt. In fact, she said she had spoken with a staff person as she finished the exam and told the staff person that she knew she had passed because of the work she had done in this course.

Infusing Critical Skills throughout HUM Courses

I have continued to make changes to HUM 411, both based on the CPE workshop and student feedback. There have been minor modifications to another written assignment that incorporates the skills of summarization, comparing, contrasting, and application of course concepts. Changes also included introducing a couple of in-class small group activities involving graphs, charts, or tables containing social welfare data. The students are provided with a visual chart and a list of questions regarding the information presented in the chart. As a group, they must read the chart and successfully respond to the questions. This helps them to read data that is typically presented in that format in the field of social work, and also helps them with a skill that is necessary for Task II of the CPE

In addition, based on constructive feedback from those students, I began to see the importance of incorporating those skills in my other courses: HUM 101 Introduction to Social Work and Human Services, HUM 201 Direct Practice Skills, and HUM 301/401 Field Experience I/II. By encountering these skills as early as HUM 101 (usually taken in the first semester), students would be better prepared both for the expectations of the CPE and the profession. Incidentally, typically only a few students in my sections of HUM 101 have even heard of the CPE, and those that have are not particularly familiar with its contents.

Now, most of the formal written assignments in all my courses contain at least some elements of those skills: summarization, comparing/contrasting, applying course concepts to a new written (or video) medium, and supporting their personal opinions based on their readings (or viewings). The skills themselves are transferrable to all the courses in the Human Services program, and—as they begin to see in their field experiences—to the profession at large. There are also many available charts, graphs, and tables with appropriate social welfare related material to study in small groups or review during larger class discussion as a supplement to texts.

For example, in HUM 101, one of the written assignments is an essay that compares and contrasts an additional reading, *The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years,* to content (addressing discrimination, racism, ageism, higher education, poverty) in several chapters of the text. Hum 201 (writing intensive) involves a reflection paper in which students apply concepts from five chapters of the text to the movie *Nell* (dir. Michael Apted, 1994). They also compare and contrast the two professionals who engage in work with a client and critique the efforts of both. An essay paper, also in HUM 201, requires the students to read *One Child,* a non-fiction book by Tory Hayden, to identify specific direct social work skills that are presented in the textbook, and then to critique that professional's inter-

vention skills. All of these written assignments also require the students to briefly summarize the book or movie they have read or watched. The assignments are all scaffolded in distinct steps that build on the previous step, and the essay papers are first submitted as ungraded drafts that receive feedback prior to the final graded version.

Final Thoughts

This particular workshop series was one of the best (most informative and helpful) I have attended so far, on a par with the Writing Across the Curriculum workshop series. Incidentally, the two sets of workshops complemented each other nicely for a new teacher who was able to take them in consecutive academic years.

The two arguments most often verbalized that are critical of integrating these skills into courses are that it teaches to the test, and that it requires more time from the faculty. Regarding the first concern, clearly there is no teaching to a test in the assignments developed for these courses. These are vital skills that our students (all students, not just Human Services students) need in order to survive in college and in the world beyond. Additionally, the skills are integrated into the content of a particular course, not the content of a CUNY exit exam. Wouldn't we be doing our students a disservice if we did not incorporate some assignments that will help them recognize and begin to develop these skills before they leave BMCC?

One cannot make light of the second concern. Integrating these skills into assignments does take more time, both in developing the assignments and grading them. And yes, with the teaching load—especially at community colleges—this is a challenge. But the use of grading rubrics helps minimize reading time quite a bit, and students so far in all my courses seem to appreciate the rubrics, and the references to how the skills will help specifically with the CPE. There is also some positive reception to future student studies and professional use of the skills once they are in the field, although that understandably becomes secondary in students' minds when they are faced with the imminent CPE.

The bottom line for me is the old saying: *so far so good*. Having seen positive results in all my courses, continuing to refine how these skills are presented to students remains a priority.

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Why BMCC War Veterans Don't Want to Talk about the War

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Introduction

As an academic institution, BMCC's goal is to enable a diverse group of students to reach their highest academic potential, prepare for admission to senior colleges, and/or prepare for the workforce. One group that is currently very small but is expected to grow rapidly across the CUNY system is our war veterans, particularly those returning from wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, or the Persian Gulf. To prepare for this new generation of veterans who will become a part of our campus, it is important that we understand their unique needs. This article calls for thinking more carefully about a small, but growing group of students that might otherwise be invisible to us, and who ironically, might actually prefer it that way.

In full disclosure, I should inform the reader that I am motivated to write about student veterans because I am the mother of a war veteran, who served in the U.S. Marine Corp in Iraq. Subsequently, I chose to work closely with veterans on this campus as a faculty advisor to their club from 2007 through 2009 (the Organization for Student Veterans - Professor Ronald Clare now serves as their advisor). In my conversations with faculty and staff, some have asked how they can become more supportive of veterans or, at the very least, sensitive to a veteran's presence in their classrooms. Professors who present academic content that may relate to issues of war (history, political science), or adjustment coming back from war (psychology, human services, sociology), or critical thinking activities that may bring up the experiences of war (writing, literature, etc.), have wondered whether or not the content they were presenting could disturb students who have returned from war or military experiences that were war-related. How might a veteran react to discussions about government policies about the war, leadership within the war zone, or others' opinions about the war, and so on? Furthermore, what if the veteran is not comfortable with these discussions, or is dealing with post-war stress or adjustment issues that could trigger a cascade of vulnerabilities or discomforts within the veteran student? And finally, what if these disturbances have a negative impact on the ability of the veteran student to feel welcome in the classroom, to learn effectively, or to adjust successfully to his or her new role as a college student?

Those of us who have pondered these questions often do so with some frustration and a sense of groping in the dark for answers. The reason for the frustration is that students who are veterans may not be very forthcoming with the answers. Veterans have been trained to withstand many physical and mental hardships, and have endured unbelievable amounts of stress during their deployments in the war zone. Mental toughness is the hallmark of a military veteran, and civilian questions about their adjustment to college life would not rate as

an issue worthy of attention. As one veteran explained, "the classroom is not a combat situation." As another veteran explained, "veterans are not special; we don't want to be treated differently." However, once a veteran is able to open up and trust you, they will tell how difficult adjusting to civilian life can be, upon first returning home from war. As they explain it, there is a sense of displacement and unreality; a sense of not belonging. One student said, "I was trying to come back to life…trying to be like everyone else at BMCC, but I was a different person…kind of disconnected from civilians. It was tough." In general, veterans feel that it is impossible to talk about the war, or describe their experiences to civilians because of their belief that civilians do not have the ability or knowledge to understand the contextual realities of their experience. As one veteran student explained:

"It's like trying to tell someone what it feels like to be on a rollercoaster when they have never been on one themselves. It can't be explained. They just have to experience it for themselves."

The veteran's capacity to adjust to civilian society may proceed more smoothly for the veteran if they believe that others have the capacity to understand them. One American OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom) veteran described his recent discussion with an Israeli veteran living in New York City, saying that,

"In Israel, the Israeli citizens understand their veterans better because so many civilians have actually served in the military…that makes the veteran feel better…feel more at home."

The American veteran opined that fewer Israeli veterans experience Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) than American veterans as a result of feeling more integrated into and supported by their society. Given that argument, let us assume that an ability to discuss an essential part of your personal experience and history, without fear of judgment or reprisals, will enable a person to feel more accepted, more whole, and more integrated in their identity as a human being. Likewise, let us assume that pressure to hide an essential part of who you were, or who you are, can have negative effects on your ability to thrive and grow as a whole person.

If we, as an institution or as a society can help our returning veterans to integrate their past military identity with new emerging civilian identities we will all probably benefit. Case in point, the treatment and post-war adjustment of World War II veterans versus Vietnam Veterans was vastly different in outcomes. While American society benefited from the success of World War II veterans, years later, American society was negatively impacted by the adjustment difficulties of many Vietnam veterans. In this era, American society as a whole has become much more aware of the need to "support our troops." Yet, there is a growing recognition that yellow ribbons on automobile bumpers are insufficient to address the social, emotional, and physical needs of veterans who are now returning home. News stories of veterans are now focusing on their suicide rates, their homicidal tendencies, their divorces, and their rates of hospitalizations for post-traumatic stress and mental illness. This points to a fundamental problem: American society is not doing enough to "support our troops." According to a recent survey by the Rand Corporation, over 300,000 veterans are suffering from some

form of PTSD, and this has put enormous burdens on veterans' hospitals across the United States, which have been unable to meet the treatment demands of those in need. Furthermore, many professionals in the field acknowledge that the true number of veterans who are suffering and in need of treatment is unknown because many avoid seeking professional treatment. To get some personal relief, many will turn to alcohol or drugs to self medicate.

Currently, the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs are attempting to meet the needs of this new generation of OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom - Iraq) and OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan) veterans in more creative ways. For example, at Fort Hood in Texas, the Army is implementing a new pre-deployment resilience training program that is designed to impart psychological coping skills, knowledge and behavioral strategies to soldiers before they deploy to theaters of war. This action is being taken to reduce the impact of post-adjustment stress when soldiers return home from war. However, some question the thinking behind this strategy, which assumes that if you build up the moral character of the person before the war, they will be better able to cope with the psychological wounds of war after they return home. For example, Dr. Jonathan Shay, a neuroscientist who works with the Veterans Administration, baldly rejects that idea. In a television interview that aired on Religion and Ethics Weekly on May 28, 2010 (a PBS production) he stated: "…that idea has a great pedigree, and I'm afraid it's complete crap. It is simply wrong. Moral injury causes good character to become deformed… It alters it. It makes you bitter. It makes you cynical. It makes you filled with hatred." Dr. Shay was talking about the effects of combat, of the trauma of having your moral compass altered by the actions you may have had to engage in to survive in the war zone.

While it is true that all veterans have been altered in some fundamental way by their experiences of war, many will be able to move on and rebuild their lives in a healthy and productive manner, although it may take a lot more time than many originally thought. I have been privileged to meet many of those veterans here at BMCC who are striving to move forward and reclaim their lives as civilians. As one former graduate of BMCC explained, "You have to decide to be strong and leave the war behind you. I had to learn to take one step at a time… do one paper at a time, one class at a time, one semester at a time. I didn't learn that in the military…I learned it by myself. "

So, what should professors at BMCC consider as we contemplate how best to serve those students who have served their country, and who may be at risk for adjustment issues, as they attempt to reshape their lives as civilians?

Theoretical Issues from a Psychological Perspective

Most OIF/OEF veterans are young adults who are in the midst of forming their personal and social identities: their self-understanding of who they are, who they want to become, and who or what they are capable of becoming. In fact, developmental psychologists now tend to agree that identity development is a life-long process that undergoes constant reorganization throughout the different stages of life, from young adulthood through old age (Cote, 2006; Kroger, 2007; Marcia & Carpendale,2004; Phinney, 2008). Thus, the young veteran who has worn the

armor of military identity is now very much aware that he or she can shed that armor for a new set of civilian clothing, however uncomfortable it may be at first. By walking through the doors of BMCC, they are exercising a conscious choice to leave one identity behind and try on another. One veteran described it as culture shock, adding that "the biggest issue is getting back to the classroom." However, at this point the veteran is willing to take a risk and explore this new environment, and in some ways, they have advantages over their younger and less experienced classmates. According to William Damon (2008), a scholar of human moral development, throughout the lifespan the youth of today are "directionless." However, the past experience of a military veteran precludes them from Damon's description of "directionless" youth. By definition, the veteran has already dedicated themselves to a serious activity, by becoming a soldier, sailor, marine, or other military person. More importantly, they have fulfilled their mission and put their lives at risk to do so. That is as serious as it gets. Thus, the veteran who has decided to return to college brings a number of strengths. As one veteran explained, "the military trains you to have self-discipline and self-control. They teach you to pay attention and to respect who is in charge….in the classroom, that person is the professor."

Yet there are challenges too. Another veteran explained how difficult it was to be surrounded by kids who were just coming out of high school, but how supportive the environment was at BMCC because of other student veterans he was able to talk to, and professors that he was able to connect with. Other veteran students may not be so flexible. Young veterans who had social adjustment issues before joining the military may find themselves re-experiencing some of those issues again during their readjustment period after returning home from war. According to Padin-Rivera (2009), all returning veterans experience post-war adjustment stress, and the average length of time they might require to fully develop a new civilian identity is one to two years.

Practical Issues from an Academic Perspective

Within the classroom, veterans appreciate professors who maintain a neutral stance when discussing topics that relate to the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. This approach helps the veteran to stay calm. As one veteran explained, "when certain keywords are used in a discussion, the adrenaline kicks in…it gets our attention." Veterans prefer professors who provide clear leadership and create "safe" classrooms. This is because it will take pressure off of the veteran to "assess the environment and maintain situational awareness." Veterans are trained to be on alert at all times in the event of an emergency. Veterans who are confident in the professor's leadership can feel more comfortable adopting a student-mode because they can relax knowing the "leader" is in charge. When the professor does not appear to be in charge, the veteran may experience more annoyance with the immature behavior of civilian students. Faculty need to know what supports are available for those who are having difficulty with academic tasks (i.e., Office of Disabilities, tutoring, or the Counseling Center) as well as adjustment difficulties. Mr. Eric Glaude, MSW, is the Veterans Counselor within the Counseling Department who comes with many years of experience working with veterans in

the greater New York area. Ms. Olga Padua is the Assistant Registrar and Certifying Official who helps veterans get the educational benefits they are entitled to through the military. In addition, the Organization for Student Veterans (OSV) is a student club on the BMCC campus that offers an opportunity for veterans to network with other veterans. In addition, the OSV routinely maintains relationships with veterans clubs on other CUNY campuses, especially those campuses where some of our former BMCC veteran students have transferred, and become leaders. Interestingly, some of these student leaders have developed strong ties to national organizations, such as Student Veterans of America, that have been created to meet the needs of this new generation of veterans.

Conclusion

Military veterans prefer not to talk about the war with civilians, but they will talk about their war experiences with other veterans who have served in theater. They will also respond to sincere efforts by faculty members who have some connection to military life, directly through their own military service, or indirectly through the military service of a family member. To the extent that BMCC can provide supportive communities for students who are veterans so that they have opportunities to communicate about their past experiences, their current challenges, and their attempts to build new identities, it is likely that we will succeed in assisting their own efforts to re-create themselves through activities, friendships, and new learning opportunities. As military veterans feel "at home," and re-build their civilian identities, they will gradually leave the war behind them and forge ahead with their new lives. However, they will always have a special connection with their fellow veterans, and perhaps, that is the way that it should be.

Talking to Community College Students about Their Attendance: Caring Strategies Using Empathy, Hope, Choice, Self-disclosure, and Resources

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The literature shows a contrast between student enrollment and retention at community colleges. On one hand, enrollment is increasing (Beaky, 2009; Fitzpatrick, 2009; "University Universal" 2009), particularly at CUNY colleges (Beaky, 2009; Gonen, 2009; Santora, 2009). In Fall, 2009, CUNY community colleges had a 9% increase in student enrollment and closed enrollment early (Goodnough, 2009; Foderano, 2009). At BMCC, enrollment grew from 16,000 to 22,000 students over the last ten years (Santora, 2009).

However, college retention and graduation rates are low (Beaky, 2009; Edelman, 2009; Leonhardt, 2009); 28% of students graduate after six years at CUNY's community colleges (Beaky, 2009). BMCC is the "lowest performing" CUNY community college graduating only 0.5 % of first-time freshman who enrolled two years earlier (Edelman, 2009). Rose (2009) reports that among young women of color at BMCC, there is one sophomore for every five freshmen. At BMCC, Dr. Lisa Rose reported to the *Clarion* that 80% of students between 18 to 24 are freshmen but only 20% are sophomores (Tarleton, 2010).

These retention and graduation statistics are shocking! What happens during a student's first year of college that makes so many students leave? The literature shows that there are many possibilities. Community college students support themselves and/or families (Edelman, 2009); have financial problems and stress (Lewin, 2009); are the first in their family to attend college (Foderano, 2009); many students are homeless (Banks, 2009); 51% are immigrants, speak many languages, don't develop relationships at school, and have family and work responsibilities (Santora, 2009).

At BMCC, I am teaching a required a second semester counseling skills course in the Human Services program. Now in my fourth semester here, I have been struggling with student attendance issues. Informal discussions with colleagues have not revealed consensus about what to do. While CUNY sets a policy for a maximum number of allowed hours of absences, we don't receive guidance for dealing with absenteeism or resources to deal with the personal problems that students may reveal. This raises many questions for me:

How closely does a professor need to pay attention to attendance issues in adult learners? What types of attendance patterns need to be addressed? Should adult students be left on their own to face the consequences of poor attendance? Consequences of poor attendance can be low grades, a low GPA, academic probation, not being able to get accepted into a four-year college, and termination from a job. What can I do, as professor, even in any small way, to increase

student retention and graduation rates, even for just one student?

Lewin (2009) points out the need for professors to notice when a student is "struggling" and/or missing a lot of classes and to "reach out" to the student (Lewin, 2009). Lewin (2009) and Zaitsev (2008) suggest that professors need to take an active role in "caring" for students. Arras (2008) talks about practicing "tough love" that includes respect for students and caring deeply about students. Blank, Jacobson, and Pearson (2009) write that teachers are in a unique position to help students and are aware that unresolved personal problems will impact learning.

I strongly agree that professors do need to take notice of absenteeism among adult students, especially if teaching freshman students. Attending class regularly is necessary for students to succeed in my class, other classes, at internships, and at their future jobs. How is a professor to address attendance discussions with students in a way that demonstrates caring and concern?

This article aims to develop strategies for discussing attendance issues with community college students and resources for addressing some of the problems those students might reveal.

According to available data, the majority of CUNY professors are part-time status (Bowen, 2009; Clark, 2008; "Education on the Cheap," 2009). CUNY employed 7,047 full-timers and 8,794 part-timers in Spring, 2009 (Bowen, 2009). Therefore, I believe that this article will be helpful to a large audience of readers that are new adjunct faculty.

Procedures. Several procedures done at the beginning of the semester will help to prepare you for contacting a student, if needed. On the first day of class, I give out a copy of the college academic calendar, review the syllabus, go over a list of questions related to the syllabus (a syllabus quiz), and make sure to get a list of student e-mail addresses and cell phone or home telephone numbers. The syllabus contains a calendar of dates for all class meetings, exams, papers, and college closings, and I do stick to the syllabus. On the second day of class, I continue to collect contact information from students who were not present on the first day of class; such absences in general might be a sign of an ambivalent student. It is a good idea to ask students from time to time if any of their contact information has changed. Very often, for example, students change service providers when cell phone contracts end. I also assign a short writing assignment, with no research, of two to three pages that is due shortly after the semester begins.

The syllabus indicates that students should only be absent for reasons, as indicated below. Students need to show documentation regarding their absences when they return to class, except for a death in the family. I also accept absences for a religious holiday. A student's excused absences may exceed three, but I take into account the student's grade on the exam. A high grade, that indicates to me that he/she has taken the time and effort to do the reading, get the class notes, learn the material, and understands it. An "excused absence" is due to:

a court/legal issue (ex. jury duty, meeting with a Parole officer, having to testify in court, incarcerated), an appointment for public benefits/entitlements (food stamps, public assistance) that could not be scheduled at any other time, or a severe health issue. What is a severe health issue? A severe health issue is being contagious, with pink eye or flu, in the emergency room, hospitalized, or have a medical condition requiring an immediate medical appointment that could not be scheduled at any other day/time.

Red flags about attendance. Early on, I learn all student names, note attendance problems, and speak with a student privately before or after class, by letter, by telephone, or by e-mail, depending upon the circumstances. I may ask a student to stay a few minutes after class. "X, could you please stay a minute after class, there is something that I need to talk to you about." In a discussion with the student, I demonstrate concern that he/she is missing too much time from class, that the tests are primarily based on class notes, and I ask what is happening that is keeping him/her from attending class. There are seven situations when I contact students:

1. absent the first day of class, attends, and then is absent again very soon.
2. absent for two consecutive classes.
3. absent three times (the maximum) very early on in the semester.
4. absent once or twice and has not turned in the first, short written assignment usually due around the third class.
5. absent after a school holiday or school break/vacation.
6. absent three times at any point in the semester.
7. absent from an exam.

Confidentiality and tips on writing letters. Confidentiality is an important value for social workers (NASW, 2009). A letter, I think, it is a good way to maintain confidentiality as well as to connect student actions to consequences. Sometimes, I cannot reach a student by phone because either they changed their cell phone number and forgot to tell me, or I cannot read their handwriting. I type the student a note listing the dates they were absent, and the letter indicates that they need to call me or make an appointment to see me to discuss their attendance. I give the letter to the student on the next day that they attend class. Even though attendance is mentioned on the syllabus, students might forget that attendance counts, and also they might not remember how many absences they've had from this particular class. In the letter, I indicate:

"I write letters because I am concerned about my students and want them to succeed. I am concerned about your attendance. Class notes and participation are an important part of the class. The exams are highly based on class notes and worksheets done in class. The course policy allows X # of absences. You've been absent on (list dates with and without excuse notes). You've used X number of absences already. Attendance and class participation are X% of final course grade. The last day to drop a class without a

grade is X. Please contact me by phone, e-mail, or see me before or after class to discuss your situation…."

Confidentiality and finding a private location to talk to students. It is a challenge to find a private space for a brief conversation with a student. The empty classroom, before or after class, is the best place for me to talk with a student. I may hang a sign asking students to wait outside a minute. The adjunct office in the Social Science Dept. serves 100 plus adjuncts, so someone else is always present in the room and that makes students feel uncomfortable. Several times, I was reading a newspaper when a professor came in the adjunct room with a student, so I thought it was proper to leave and give them privacy. When several professors were in the room using the computers, they have not left the room when I appeared with a student. I've also heard that full-time faculty that share offices also face this problem. Several times I was lucky to have the classroom empty before my class; I arrived early to set up the chairs in a circle and for questions or conferences. In semesters when the classes using the same room are spaced too closely together (less than 10 minutes apart), I've used an empty table, sofa, or bench in the student lounge areas as a last resort and I had to speak with students in a whisper voice.

Issues that relate to student attendance. The literature indicates that mental health problems among college students are on the rise, especially problems with depression, eating disorders, and other types of mental illness (Mental health, p. 3). However, only 8.5% of college students have used college-counseling centers (Whitford, 2009). It is my experience that students have reported to me that they have many personal and family issues that keep them from attending school, and have brought in documentation in this regard.

Eventually, I find the right time and place to ask a student the question of: "What's keeping you from attending class?" I found that some of the problems that impact the attendance of my students are: Lack of childcare or after-school programs, immigration, breakup of relationships, being a crime victim, having a partner or sibling or spouse recently involved with the legal system, having a partner or sibling or spouse who uses drugs, dealing with possible domestic violence issues, dealing with an unexpected pregnancy, dealing with the loss of a family member or friend, "coming out" about gay/lesbian issues, homelessness, financial problems involving a sudden loss of a job or entitlements being cut, conflicts between work and school schedules, time management, career confusion, having a special needs child, and more.

I explain that although I am a licensed social worker, I am here in the role of teacher or educator, and express my concern. I am always prepared with the brochure from the BMCC counseling center and an extra copy of a list of hotlines and resources to give to the student.

"I am concerned about your attendance. You need to get help about this because it is keeping you out of class. BMCC has free and confidential counseling at the counseling center so you can get help with the issue, be able to attend class, and succeed at college."

Convey empathy. I listen very closely to what the student and I are discussing about attendance. I try to put myself into the student's shoes to convey empathy, which is the understanding and feeling for someone's situation (Keefe, 1976). In talking to a student by telephone who has been absent due to a death in the family, I might say:

> "I'm sorry to hear that your Aunt passed away. Please return to class as soon as possible. BMCC has free and confidential counseling at the counseling center. Would you like to talk to a counselor about this? "

For a student who reports having been absent because of work and school stress:

> "Yes, you have a lot of responsibility. It is hard to work and go to school, but it is interfering with school. BMCC has free and confidential counseling. Would like to talk to a counselor at the BMCC counseling center about this?"

Convey hope. Hope is defined as a social worker's ability to convey interest, belief, and confidence in a client's ability to take constructive action to improve their present and future and it plays an important part in a client's motivation to change (Smaldino, 1975). Early in the semester, students need to know that they can try to increase their attendance and try to pass the class. To convey hope, a professor can say:

> "I am hopeful that you can pass this class, if you try very hard. You can catch up with what you missed by making a study group with another student and attending every day for the rest of the semester. I have seen other students in your situation, catch up and still be able to do well in the class."

Offer choices/self-determination. Social workers adhere to the value of client self-determination (NASW, 2009). I try to get students to obtain free and confidential counseling at the BMCC Counseling Center, by giving them a brochure or by making a referral. However, students don't have the time to go to the Center because of work and family responsibilities, scheduling conflicts, and/or confidentiality concerns, so I also give students information about other organizations. Some students prefer to call an anonymous hotline. I plan to offer extra credit to students that obtain counseling at the BMCC Counseling Center. When I started offering extra credit for advisement in Fall, 2009, all but one student complied.

Self-disclosure. When a social worker shares relevant personal information, it helps develop the worker-client relationship by increasing rapport and trust (Bradmiller, 1978). Ask yourself how sharing information will be helpful to the student. Think back to a time when you were in school. Did a teacher ever help you? A small bit of self-disclosure helps students connect with me as a human being and to see that I am not perfect. If a student is having a hard time balancing work and school responsibilities, I might let a student know that I also worked part-time while I attended college. If a student talks about the demands of fam-

ily and school, I might let a student know that I work part-time because I am the parent of a special needs child.

Combining empathy, self-disclosure, and hope. In the process of talking to students, I model social work concepts (empathy, self-disclosure) and social work ethics (confidentiality, client self-determination). With my human services majors, I help students understand that if they are to become effective helpers, they need to ask for and receive help when their personal problems impact success at school. Sometimes students don't want to discuss their absences. A student might say: "I'm fine…Everything is OK… I'll be back in class…" If a student expresses concern or embarrassment about talking to a professor, I convey a combination of empathy, self-disclosure, and hope, which usually encourages the student to talk. For example:

> "It's hard to talk about this. You can change, if you try very hard. You would never know that I was once very shy. A professor helped me. She used to call me and mail letters to my home in the old days before there were cell phones and e-mail. I graduated. I got interested in teaching and I made it to the other side of the desk. Whoever imagined that one day that I would become a professor?"

Resources. There are many NYC resources that can help students to address personal problems getting in the way of college attendance. Faculty who are not social workers, including those who live outside New York City, might not know about these resources or have the time to do research. Many toll-free hotlines can serve students, and many organizations provide free or low-cost services. This resource information could be added to the adjunct faculty handbook in the future. Several of the websites that are likely to be most useful to students are below:

One useful resource that can help students with a wide variety of mental health problems is 1-800-LIFE-NET (1-800-543-3638), which is a 24 hour crisis hotline that also locates drug treatment and mental health services by your zip code. A website to screen for eligibility for more than 30 types of city, state and human services programs (ex. Medicaid, food stamps, day care, welfare, employment, housing) is: http://www.nyc.gov/accessnyc Information about more than 1,000 types of federal entitlements/benefits is at: http://www.govbenefits.gov Assistance with legal issues (such as finding a low-cost lawyer for criminal cases, entitlements, housing, or immigration), is: http://www.lawhelp.org/NY. If a student is looking for services for children with special needs, go to: http://www.resourcesnyc.org. Due to space limits of this article, a long list of resources can be obtained directly from the author via e-mail: RoseDSW@aol.com.

Results of these strategies. Although, I want to identify as many "at risk" students as possible as early as possible during the semester, I realize that not every student can be saved. Unfortunately, several students did not respond to my efforts and failed the course during each of my first two semesters at BMCC. In the two most recent semesters, Fall 2009 and Spring 2010, all of my students passed. Several students have thanked me for noticing absences, caring, and calling, and were able to pass the class. I save their kind notes and letters.

In Spring, 2010, I contacted several students about attendance. Due to space limitations, I will discuss one student as an example. I had a student in the following situation: absent once early in the semester, a low grade on the first exam, and two consecutive absences. In my first phone call to the student about having two consecutive absences, the student said: "I'm fine now…I'll be back in class." However, the student did not return to class. A second phone call was necessary because the student now had three consecutive absences, and our discussion led to a referral to the BMCC Counseling Center.

In the final paper for the course, this student reflected upon the experience of our attendance discussion, and these were definitely the most positive comments that I've ever received from a student with whom I discussed attendance issues and referred for counseling. The student was able to make a connection between the various roles and skills used by a social worker, as discussed in class, and the referral for counseling. The student saw the referral as a sign of caring and opportunity. The student indicated a strong interest in pursuing a career in social work. Moreover, the student's class participation and grades increased in the last month of the semester so that the student was not only able to pass the course, but earned a good grade. The results were better than I expected. The best reward for me was to see the good outcome and knowing that I made a difference.

Conclusion. In this paper, I argued that professors should pay attention to student attendance patterns and do something on a small scale to help increase the student retention rate, even if this effort results in saving just one student. I also provided several sample dialogues about how a professor might demonstrate caring and concern to a student exhibiting attendance problems. A significant obstacle to implementation is a large class size that all too frequently happens (Tarleton, 2010; Bowen, 2009; Lawler, 2002), and a lack of private space to meet with students. Also, BMCC might institute a free, confidential hotline for students who are unable to come into the counseling center. When professors show that they care about students and have resources to help them, college retention and graduation rates might increase.

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Handling Students in Emotional Distress: BMCC Faculty's Experiences and Perceived Role in Responding

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It seems that more than ever, our faculty is faced with student needs that extend beyond the educational realm. As educators, we are faced with situations where students disclose personal crises and stressors that often hinder their academic success. Students who are struggling with emotional difficulties reach out for help and express their distress in numerous ways in a classroom setting, including absence, lateness, acting out in class, and expressing their distress by e-mail, writing assignments, or face-to-face conversations. Having just one emotionally distressed student in a class can disrupt the balance and flow of teaching and learning. Students' personal disclosures may or may not have a direct impact on their academic performance, therefore clouding the expectations of how a faculty member should respond. Little recognition is given to these kinds of interactions, as they may not fall within the perceived role of an educator; they are typically thought of as personal counseling issues. Yet teaching faculty spend time and energy dealing with these issues in the context of how they impact learning.

In an effort to gain a deeper understanding of how faculty members at the Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) perceive their role in handling these potentially stressful situations, we decided to speak directly to faculty dealing with these issues today. Over the course of three weeks in the spring 2010 semester, we held focus groups to give voice to faculty who, as educators at BMCC, have encountered students in emotional distress. Perceptions and experiences were explored to begin to understand the depth and breadth of the problems with which faculty are faced. We discussed how these situations are currently handled and heard many innovative ideas that may be of use to faculty in the future. Presently, there is a gap in the research, focusing more on self-disclosures of a non-crisis nature, such as sexual orientation, or the response of faculty and staff who are charged with responding to students in crisis, such as school counselors. We are hopeful that the findings of this study will provide valuable information to help college administrators better conceptualize the emotional issues students and faculty are dealing with together and increase competence in this area.

As faculty members who are both in the class teaching and working in the Counseling Center, we see different sides of the same issue. Once we began to discuss the topic, the study seemed to be a natural extension in learning more about how faculty are dealing with these students and what additional support

and resources may be needed to better handle these situations. It is our hope that the findings of this study will help assess need in this area and provide direction to college administrators in possibly (1) increasing faculty awareness of existing resources that support students' well-being at BMCC; (2) resource development for faculty and staff to increase competence in responding to distressed students; (3) increasing college-wide awareness and education about various mental health issues and their impact on learning; and (4) offering additional resources for the classroom and clinical and prevention services. This summer, we will be trained to use NVivo 8, a software tool used for qualitative data analysis, and look forward to sharing our results in a future *Inquirer* article.

We are tremendously thankful to all who participated and found a collective desire from our focus group participants to share stories and suggestions. We offered a $20 Barnes & Noble gift card as an incentive to attend and to express that we value our colleagues' time and input. We discovered that participating faculty expressed their appreciation for a forum to safely discuss their experiences and hear how others are dealing with these challenging students.

Forging Global Citizenship at BMCC: A Concrete Plan of Action

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In July 1947, amidst the chaos of a war-ravaged continent, a small group of energetic scholars from the United States and Europe convened for the first Salzburg Global Seminar session in Austria, laying the groundwork for one of the most energetic centers of global intellectual exchange in the heart of Europe. Overcoming seemingly impossible odds, they established a vibrant crossroads of ideas from throughout the world, grappling with the promises and perils of global change. Last summer, we were honored to be a part of the most recent cohort of BMCC faculty and administrators fortunate enough to travel to Salzburg and join this dynamic and important conversation.

Meeting with a diverse group of educators and scientists, as well as leading officials of major international organizations, we wrestled with the myriad of political, economic, social, and cultural implications of an increasingly interconnected world. We struggled with the very real obstacles of cultivating genuine identities of global citizenship, not only on the local, national, regional, and international levels, but on our own campuses as well. Such probing questions led us to scrutinize the very term globalization. This single word symbolizes some of the most optimistic and fervent dreams for a more harmonious, non-exploitative, and cosmopolitan world, while at the same time, embodying some of the most extreme and draconian measures to insure a more sustainable long-term global balance of population and resources. Throughout one exciting week of speakers, discussions, and small group sessions, we challenged our assumptions, took nothing at face value, and aimed to approach the issue of globalization with a humble, curious, and open mind.

In certain respects, the issue of globalization is certainly nothing new. Indeed, some scholars have already detected an early form of economic and cultural global exchange during the Hellenistic Age (323-30 B.C.), when Greek culture, language, thought, and way of life extended as far as India, interacting in an often intimate and dynamic way with the more venerable older cultures of the Near East (Cohen, 2000).

Indeed, the very idea of a cosmopolitan culture (from Greek *cosmopolis*, meaning "world city") emerged within this era. Some observers have argued for the development of globalizing trends even earlier (Frank, 1998).

More recently, commentators have noted the ways in which the French and Industrial Revolutions fostered notions of globalization through the myriad of ambitious projects of imperial expansion and colonial domination throughout the late nineteenth century (Conklin, 2000). The emergence of a wide array of

novel global actors throughout the twentieth century, such as multinational corporations as well as international organizations like the United Nations, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank), and the International Monetary Fund, continue to propel the often-heated conversations concerning the benefits and drawbacks of globalization to the fore. Currently, scientific and technological innovations, global interdependence, cross-cultural encounters, and changes in the balance of economic and political power are all developments dramatically reshaping the world (Friedman, 2007).

Globalization is not just some passing phenomenon or fad, but rather, a definitive world system profoundly shaping the twenty-first century. Right here in the U.S., leading politicians, educators, and business elites repeatedly point out that individual Americans "will be challenged to engage in unprecedented ways with the global community, collaboratively and competitively" ("College Learning," 2008, p. 2).

The world in which today's citizens, young and old, will have to grapple with the multiplicity of choices before them, make their voices heard, stake out claims, and ultimately compose productive lives is one of disruption rather than certainty, of interdependence rather than insularity ("College Learning"). More than ever, people must "make themselves secure within the dangerous zones of a constantly changing world" (Berman, 1981, p.5).

For years, The City University of New York has sought to sustain the energy and efforts of the individuals they have sent to participate in the Salzburg Global Seminar. However, recent budget cuts are compelling some campuses, such as BMCC, to cease participation in the program, at least for the moment. Although such conditions threaten to stifle continuing dialogue and meaningful activity concerning the issues and challenges of globalization, we are confident that the BMCC academic community can overcome this obstacle, and perhaps even develop a more vigorous debate about issues surrounding globalization at the College. In the words that follow, we discuss a proposal to construct a site of vigorous engagement with the implications of globalization. In sharing the ideas, we extend a warm invitation to our colleagues to energetically contribute their voices to a conversation aiming to harness "random acts of globalization"[1] in order to establish a firm foundation for a sustainable dialogue concerning globalization.

To a certain extent, our goal certainly builds upon meaningful action that past Salzburg Fellows have undertaken in order to promote dialogue about globalization within our academic community. Most recently, such efforts have included the installation of an Ad-hoc Committee on Globalization at the Teaching Learning Center and the celebration of the first Globalization Day at the College in March. At this event, students, faculty, and administrators discussed pre-circulated texts in groups, made presentations, and participated in a question-and-answer session with the keynote speaker, Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, a green policy advisor and author. There were lively conversations based on the reading selections, from journalist and columnist Thomas L. Friedman's *The World is Flat*

[1] Derived from our conversations at Salzburg, the term speaks to the many well-intentioned, yet often uncoordinated, efforts on the part of academic communities to address global issues.

3.0: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century (2007) and economist Joseph E. Stiglitz's *Making Globalization Work* (2007). The event was a success due to the participation of vital stakeholders across the college community who are already quite interested in the state of our world.

In order to sustain the conversation throughout the university for years to come, however, more needs to be done. In conjunction with former Salzburg Fellows and other members of the academic community, we envision the establishment of a year-long workshop entitled "A Global Café," enabling CUNY faculty, administrators, and students to disseminate information about other cultures, foster awareness of the world as an integrated system of hope and danger, and promote commitment to action in order to secure a livable and sustainable world. By gathering past Salzburg Fellows for reflection and dialogue, as well as encouraging the academic community to join the conversation, "A Global Café" will serve to animate all participants to view current issues, confront present challenges, and better our world as humane, astute, and confident cosmopolitan citizens.

The workshop will comprise four main sessions, two in the fall and two in the spring. (1) The first set of meetings will take the form of a seminar, in which participants will stake out arguments concerning a series of pre-circulated readings dealing with a wide variety of global issues. (2) The second group of sessions will explore the ways in which visual artists grapple with the challenges of living within a global terrain of flux. (3) The third set of meetings will entail a series of lectures by multiple speakers invited by the workshop to address a particular dimension of globalization, followed by conversation. (4) Finally, the fourth series of meetings will entail short presentations of workshop participants in which they outline particular plans of action for fostering the conversation concerning globalization in a variety of contexts across the university community.

Our goal is to bring together BMCC faculty (20 in all) as well as students (10 in all) from throughout CUNY. Such a group is diverse enough in order to allow for a multiplicity of life experiences and viewpoints, while sufficiently delineated in order to ensure for a viable and meaningful discussion among participants. Past Salzburg Fellows will serve as liaisons in order to advertise the workshop on their campuses.

"A Global Café" will serve multiple objectives. First, the workshop will sustain as well as ignite interest in globalization beyond the planned sessions. It will motivate administrators to establish their campuses as sites of global dialogue through international exchanges, conferences, and seminars, and procure funding for events promoting conversations concerning global citizenship. It will invigorate Faculty to revise their current curricula, compose novel and exciting courses imbued with a global outlook, and challenge their students through Honors projects to plunge into a particular aspect of a course of deep interest to them within a more global and comparative framework. Faculty will infuse a global perspective into academic advising as they assist students in determining short and long-term goals concerning their course selections and future career goals, as well as help guide student-run organizations and activities across campus. Faculty participants will disseminate their experiences and reflections to fellow academics and administrators through submitted work to special editions of

published campus journals, such as the *Inquirer* at BMCC. Last, but certainly not least, the workshop will excite students to spread the word about the dangers and hopes of globalization through formal channels, such as Student Government and extracurricular activities and clubs, as well as through the informal social networks of friends and family.

Recently, BMCC was one of three recipients of a 2010 Senator Paul Simon Spotlight Award, given to institutions implementing specific innovative international programs or initiatives. Two former Salzburg fellows, Michael Giammarella and Steven Belluscio, played pivotal roles in drafting and submitting the nomination. This accolade not only loudly acknowledges the energized efforts that BMCC has already undertaken to move beyond its walls to confront headlong the challenges and hopes of globalization, but also encourages our academic community to continue envisioning our campus as a site promoting sustained engagement with the wider world.[2]

Currently, our college has indeed taken an economic hit, but it has also received an energetic push to cultivate and fortify global awareness. Such changes will compel us to develop a more resourceful and smarter way of keeping alive the spirit of Salzburg. By forging academic communities across CUNY as dynamic and vital sites addressing political, social, cultural, and economic concerns, at the local, national, and global level, "A Global Café" will enable us to achieve this goal.

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[2] There have been a few other steps taken to get to this moment, including a forum in December 2005 "Multicultural/Global, What's the Difference?" for the Fall Faculty Development Day; an offering of global curriculum pulled together by Professor Steven Belluscio, published by the college in 2007 as the *Global Pedagogy Handbook*; and a reading group, with floating membership, dedicated to global texts. For the past two semesters, the reading group has been meeting monthly at the TLC, chaired by Professor Kay Conway (although this group morphs from time to time into a 'multicultural' reading group). The most recent book the group discussed was *The Reluctant Fundamentalist,* by Mohsin Hamid (2007), facilitated by Professor Mohammad Soleymani –The Editors.

Merry Mischief: Performing Shakespeare at the Nuyorican Poetry Café

Holly Messitt
English

As You Like It. Whenever I teach this particular play to my Shakespeare students, I inevitably get the question, "What does the title mean?" Certainly the title is not as straightforward as, say, *Taming of the Shrew*—we all get that one, right? Or *The Merchant of Venice*. But it is perhaps not as vague as *Twelfth Night*, or *What You Will* where the reader has to do a little digging to see the connection between the title and the play. *As You Like It* ends in four weddings for four very different couples: one relationship has been tested, one is love-at-first-sight, one is lustful, and the other is by default. It's love, as you like it. At least that has always been an answer I've thrown out when students wonder about the title of this play.

During its production of the play at BAM this winter, the Bridge Project emphasized the ways that the characters grow into themselves and define the direction of their lives. Director Sam Mendes and the actors show that all the characters go to the forest of Arden and find their calling: Duke Fredrick gives up his claim to the dukedom, Jaques decides to stay in the forest to study with the same religious man Duke Fredrick found, Duke Senior gets his dukedom back, and the happy couples return to court to infuse it with their youthful energy and new-found knowledge: as you like it.

I discovered yet another take when I set nine BMCC students on the play this semester. I am a literary critic—not an actor, not a director—so deciding to stage a full Shakespearian play at the Nuyorican Poetry Café was an event for me. The idea grew out of an assignment that I had been using with students over the past couple of semesters. While completing WAC training, I decided that the last assignment for my Shakespeare students would be scaffolded to involve students in making directorial decisions for a five-minute scene from one of the plays we read during the semester. Their last essay would be a reading of the play that tested their decisions against other performances and critical readings of the play. Finally, they performed their scenes at the Nuyorican. Last semester, Miguel Algarin, founder of the Nuyorican and a Shakespeare professor at Rutgers for thirty years, attended the performance of the students' scenes and asked me to put something larger together. "Clean them up," he said. "Put them in costumes, and we'll show people what community college students can do."

It was a challenge that I decided to take on. I chose to do a staged-reading of *As You Like It* because I have found the play accessible to students and because I was confident that having read the play numerous times, I had a good understanding of the nuances in the text. It seemed straight-forward enough: my job would be to get my understanding of the play across to the students so that they could find the characters in their bodies and perhaps come to a deeper understanding of the play and Shakespeare at the same time. In a way, I was right– that was my job. But never having staged a play before, I realize now that I didn't trust, perhaps had no idea about, the process. The play took on a life of its own. It morphed before my eyes as my students thought about their characters and came up with their own readings. The play became as they liked it, and I was impressed and inspired by the depth and originality of their readings.

I'll use the actor playing Orlando, Christopher Laporte, to begin with. I was worried when I asked him in mid-April (performance was May 1 & 2) how he understood Orlando, what story he had given him. He didn't have a clear idea. We talked a bit and decided that his Orlando was a little bit dark, a little bit off. Orlando begins the play angry because his brother Oliver "keeps [him] rustically at home, or, to speak more properly, stays [him] at home unkept" (I.i.7-8). Orlando challenges the Duke's wrestler, Charles, and wins. He also meets and is charmed by Rosalind. When he gets home, however, he learns from the servant Adam that Oliver means to kill him. Adam saves Orlando's life by giving him his entire life's savings and running with him into the forest, but, as we played it, Adam dies soon after reaching the forest.

By Act III when Orlando hangs "[his] verse, in witness of [his] love" (III.ii. 1), Rosalind is all that Orlando has. We concluded that he might be a little off-kilter because of all he had lost. Kristina Acheampong, who played Adam, noted, "I did not realize how emotional their scenes together are [Adam and Orlando's]. Now I can really see why Orlando might have gone a little crazy after Adam's death." I was surprised that we were reading a dark Orlando, but it seemed to fit. We decided that Rosalind is right when she evaluates Orlando and decides that he is "rather point-device in [his] accoutrements, as loving [himself] than seeming the lover of any other" (III.ii.389-390). I had more often read this section as Rosalind's out-witting Orlando, but in our reading, with Orlando hanging by a thread, she had reason to be suspicious of the strength of his love for her.

By the end of our rehearsals, my students had taken the reading even farther. They began reading in a love triangle between Rosalind, Orlando, and Celia. There are many readings of the play that declare the love triangle is a result of Celia's love for Rosalind, but my students began asking questions about the first encounter Orlando has with Rosalind and Celia. At court, Celia has more power than Rosalind does. Celia is first to speak to Orlando, but Rosalind trumps

her when she gives Orlando the necklace. As Michael explains the situation as he read it, "When Orlando is introduced to both of them [Celia and Rosalind] before his wrestling match, it is evident that they are both attracted to him and he to them. After the wrestling match, both Rosalind and Celia come to congratulate him and Rosalind decides to one up Celia by putting her necklace around Orlando's neck." My students thought that perhaps Orlando was confused about his feelings for Rosalind and Celia. Orlando favors Rosalind because Rosalind was more forward about giving herself to him, and he likes that. With that reading in place, the students played up an in-the-background flirtation between Celia and Orlando.

In explaining why Celia would engage in this triangle, Toyin Oladiran, decided to play Celia as a flirt. Toyin noted that "Celia is interested in men yet does not want to marry anyone any time soon" and explained the scene where Rosalind gives Orlando the necklace thus: "Unlike Rosalind who graciously offers Orlando one of her last sentimental possessions, because Celia is somewhat licentious, she tells Orlando that if he keeps his promises in love, his 'mistress shall be happy.'" She found evidence in the play to suggest that Celia had a sexual relationship with Touchstone, and even suggested a possible sexual encounter between Celia and Orlando: "In the third act, when Celia walks on stage reading one of the poems that Orlando had written, we learn that Celia had seen Orlando at a moment when no one else was there." Toyin was able to pull all this information together to complement Christopher's reading, complementing the love triangle situation and used that to explain why Celia tries to dissuade Rosalind from loving Orlando, declaring, "certainly, there is no truth in him" (III. iv. 20). And so she suddenly turns on Rosalind in Act III, declaring, "We must have your doublet and hose plucked/above your head and show the world what the bird/hath done to her own nest" (IV.i. 215-217).

Perhaps the most visible character in this play is Rosalind. If Christopher and Toyin's reading was to work, it had to fit with Rosalind's character. Bryn Miller decided that once an attraction between Celia and Orlando was acknowledged, it made her think about Rosalind's stability. Bryn had recently seen a production of *Measure for Measure* directed by Arin Arbus that emphasized the Duke's madness. She explained that she was interested in exploring "the pathos of seemingly light-hearted characters who might be classified as merely mischief-makers" and decided to explore this pathos in Rosalind. Instead of being the one who keeps her wits about her as she plays with others, the one playing a "harmless, silly prank," for Bryn, Rosalind became the one who might be forcing the connection with Orlando. Once Orlando sees Rosalind in the Forest of Arden, he might have some second thoughts about his attraction to her, since, as Bryn explained, "I

would venture to say that Rosalind has some issues: with gender, with trust, and with desire." This love triangle is different from anything I have imagined within the play, and I was terribly excited to see my students taking risks with the text.

I have myself at times been uncomfortable with traditional readings that skip through the pastoral fields without fully considering the complicated situations we are presented with. Gabriel Garcia, who took on the roles of Le Beau, Sir Oliver Martext, and William, also grappled with similar complexities. His contribution to our reading was to point out that in the forest, Touchstone is no longer the fool. Instead, the fools are Sir Oliver Martext and William, both of whom Touchstone outwits. The nature of the fool is certainly one of the themes of the play: Jaques, for example, wants to become a fool so that he can tell people what he thinks. In Act I, Touchstone muses, "The more pity that fools may not speak wisely what wise men do foolishly." Celia responds, "By my troth, thou sayest true. For, since the little wit that fools have was silenced, the little foolery that wise men have makes a great show." Next line: "Here comes Monsieur Le Beau" (I.ii.85-90).

I realized that we had given the same actor the parts of the wise men shown to be fools. Simple, straightforward, trying to do their job, but outwitted each time by Touchstone. The treatment is similar to, though not as sinister as, the treatment of Malvolio in *Twelfth Night*. The only one in the forest who can compete with and even outwit Touchstone is Corin with his simple philosophy: "I know the more one sickens, the worse at ease he is, and that he that wants money, means, and content is without three good friends; that the property of rain is to wet, and fire to burn; that good pasture makes fat sheep; and that a great cause of the night is lack of the sun; that he that hath learned no wit by nature nor art may complain of good breeding or comes of a very dull kindred" (III.ii.23-31). In his thinking about Malvolio's captivity in Twelfth Night, my honors student Michael Hunecke (who played Oliver in this production) wrote, "[Malvolio] has punished himself and though our sympathies are somewhat warranted, by entertaining them we miss out on the catharsis of casting off this stubborn weight of constrictive mental demarcation." Through Le Beau, Sir Oliver Martext, and William in this text, we experience something similar. These roles are much smaller than Malvolio's but, as Gabriel found, we might sympathize with their upright morality, which stands no chance against the antics of our main characters. If we can let go and enjoy the antics, however, we might find, as Michael did with Malvolio, that "vanity and righteousness perish, and the effect is somehow as liberating as it is perplexing." Michael's observation fits as well in working out the Orlando-Rosalind-Celia love triangle as well as it does the presence of Le Beau, William, and Sir Oliver Martext. Kristina, who also played Audrey, called Audrey another "fool of the forest," but Audrey's end is different from the other forest fools: She marries Touchstone after he convinces her that he truly loves her. In that moment, Kristina noted, Audrey (like Adam—Kristina's other character) becomes vulnerable. For all the characters, the end is uplifting in that they have, as Michael pointed out, given up their vanity and righteousness, their control and their manipulation, to find renewal—as they like it.

I saw great confidence in the students after the play. I feel grateful to them for

their dedication and their creativity, which created a tremendous energy among us all. For my part, I want to find ways to work in more time with the plays we cover in class. These non-traditional readings and insights that the students made came from spending time with the texts. Even my own reading of the play, which had become fairly stable after teaching it many times, has become completely destabilized and increased my desire to teach the play—though I never want to lose completely the sound of my students' voices as these characters. Perhaps next semester will be a semester of asking alternative questions of other texts. Perhaps we'll explore these "light-hearted characters and mischief makers" more closely to see what we can find.

References

Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It,* Folger Shakespeare Library Edition.

Michael Hunecke's passages cited here come from his honors thesis, "The Ritual of Dreaming, the Exorcism of Malvolio or Lucid Bill, the Dispossessor." The other students' comments come from an in-class formal writing assignment, reflecting on the process of staging *As You Like It*. The students all proudly gave permission for me to cite their work, and I thank them immensely. Photographs by Nogga Schwartz.

The "Chi" of a Management Professor

Shirley Zaragoza
Business Management

As a professor of management, I have long committed to share with students the importance of pushing oneself to the highest level, learning to take pride in the development of their skills and to be aware of their surroundings as they offer both threats and opportunities. Finding the "Chi" in one's path is to find the energy and core from which one builds his/her foundation. A solid foundation is the strength and platform from which stems the greater accomplishments that follow. I am proud that for the twenty-five years that I have taught at BMCC, I have been able to share these very fundamental principles of my martial arts background through my teaching of business management.

Where does being a Black Belt in martial arts meet the role of being a professor of business management? This was a question that I focused on as I slowly worked my way back to my martial arts discipline. I first received my "Black Belt" after some continuous years of endurance and dedication to the martial arts discipline of Kyokushin Karate, but when I found out I was pregnant with my first child, I put off the intense workouts and martial arts fighting in order to focus on work and being a new parent. This departure from the commitment of five days a week of martial arts was never to be met to its original intensity; the role of being a mother of three children took precedence. Slowly, as my children gained their roles of independence, I was able to start back to rediscover my passion for the martial arts, but this time, it was through another martial arts form—kickboxing. After a moderate routine of acclimating back into a fairly rigorous level of workouts, I discovered that the "Black Belt" I earned carried more significance in my older years—a realization I came to because I shared it with two women that I had met in my new classes, who made me see the basic principles it taught me also informed my teaching.

Over a few months of taking kick-boxing classes every Tuesday and Thursday morning, I noticed a pattern of a group of middle aged women, like me, attending the classes on a regular basis. After getting to know these women personally, I discovered that a few of us shared more than an interest in kick-boxing and keeping fit; we had our black belts, were married more than twenty years and had grown adult children. The commonality of these three accomplishments spoke to me about how there was a metaphor that we shared—we carry our "black belts for life."

Despite our different ages, Angela in her 40's, Pam in her 60's and me in my 50's, none of us were scared to give each class our all, and it wasn't unusual that our endurance and fortitude would outshine some of the younger students. A typical kick-boxing class would carry an hour regimen of aerobic exercises that would include running, push-ups, bag kicks and punches. This was not an aerobics class for the faint hearted.

This commitment grew in part from the benefits our practice conferred. The

disciplined sport and art form taught one to conduct oneself well under stress and to find higher levels of stamina, qualities both Pam and Angela wanted to confer on their children. First attracted to the martial arts through their children as a way to encourage recreation, discipline and self-confidence, these two mothers ended up becoming participants and competitors in the sport themselves. For Pam, it started 20 years ago when there were few women in the sport. Pam practiced Tae Kwon Do under the mentoring of Chuck Norris and his school. This discipline of martial arts included the practice of breaking boards. Pam admits that Tae Kwon Do held all the elements of "awe and excitement" that she would have for sports as a young "tom boy." Despite being in a male dominant environment, Pam felt comfortable asserting herself both physically and mentally; she understood the enduring commitment martial arts required. In the eight years Pam practiced Tae Kwon Do, she felt the emphasis of the sport was to sharpen one's mind to be alert, to learn to heighten one's sense of awareness and to avoid unnecessary risk.

Without interviewing Angela and Pam at the same time, their statements about the allure of martial arts were quite synchronous; the black belt was about putting forth psychological strength and having the courage to believe in oneself. The "black belt" was about taking pride in representing yourself with the sense of making a difference and seeing something through to its completion.

Here's a list of significant statements that these women shared about their martial arts experience and what it taught them:

- Do something—Do it well
  This statement in management refers to the need that individuals need to acknowledge that they are being assessed for their work and actions from the onset of the work relationship, so it is necessary to take responsibility for their work ethic from the start.

- Have the commitment to follow through
  This statement refers to how individuals need to realize and take accountability of following through to the end of their task or project. Workers or employees are being assessed for their day to day effectiveness but are also measured for their ability to produce with results, in essence their ability to finish and follow through to the completion of the task.

- Dedication to oneself with an affirmation that shines the "desire to be"
  This statement aligns with the student's need to recognize how their motivation and positive attitude towards succeeding is a crucial part of success in management.

- Wear an "achieve it" mindset
  Not every objective comes with a beginning that is easy and without complications, therefore it is important that every person position themselves with a mindset that can see themselves through the preliminary obstacles and hurdles that can come with more difficult challenges.

- Keep reinstating the phrases—I did it/ I can do it!
  This statement focuses on how there needs to be an element of push and self-motivation that is fundamental to successful management.

- Honor commitment and dedication
  Business management and martial arts carries a great respect for loyalty and focus. Characteristically, people who share these traits tend to understand the importance of commitment and dedication.

- Fight the nervous and anxious feelings with courage
  Undoubtedly, there will be times of feeling a sense of insecurity and doubt; under these circumstances, it is essential to fight those feelings with courage and confidence.

- The "Black Belt" comes with dignity and is a "bona fide place"—one that speaks to the "serenity of the arts."
  During the worst and most challenging times in management, there may be elements of questioning one's integrity and sense of ethics. In management, it is important that individuals understand and pre-evaluate their personal stance on dignity and pride.

- We limit ourselves—if we are open, there will be no limitations
  Be careful that you don't sell yourself short; very often people underestimate and short change themselves by giving up or taking the short cut to their goals, only to realize that it was their own sense of limitations that delivered a lower level of accomplishment.

I realized that these martial arts principles that we shared as "Black Belts" were the very principles that I have integrated into my teaching. As you can see, there are many parallels that are shared between the teaching and adoption of martial arts as there are with communicating the discipline of business management.

Collecting the Self: Creating a Literary Identity

Elizabeth Berlinger
English

It is the first week of English 101 in the spring semester. Winter is still evident in the branches of the trees around the school, in the heavy coats that students are reluctant to remove, and in the cold notebooks drawn from backpacks that the wind has penetrated. The students are new to each other and to me as they continue the process of becoming writers.

There will be many writing projects to take on this semester, but before we get started, I hand out a description of a project that the contemporary Chicano author Gary Soto has undertaken: a "Literary Museum" of his own writing life. Soto is a teacher and author of stories, essays, and poems that track his struggle from a poor childhood in a Mexican immigrant family to a successful education, career and personal life. He has planned a small museum, set to open in Fall 2010, that will house artifacts from his writing life. This eclectic project will be located in Fresno City College, where he was a student in his undergraduate days. In his museum, Soto has included an intriguing collection of objects, including his electric typewriters, letters sent to him from other writers, a chair and table where he once composed his work, his baptismal gown, a four-inch cactus given to him by his grandmother, and many other evocative, personal objects. My class reads Soto's description of the museum on his website (www.garysoto.com) and his words are inspiring, grounding in the classroom:

> At age 56, I realize that my energy to gas up my car and visit schools to speak to young people is beginning to wane. Still, I'm a cheerleader for reading, which I see as the only possible avenue to intellectual growth, not to mention the great pleasure that reading offers. My readers, both younger and older, may pick up a book of mine and read it from cover to cover, and I find this devotion to a literary life very moving. It is so moving, in fact, that I want to take it one step further. My next project will be the creation of a small museum that will provide a glimpse into my life as a writer.

Soto speaks of being linked to writers before him who have writer's houses of their own for their fans: Louisa May Alcott, William Faulkner, Walt Whitman. "I make no comparison," he writes, "yet I am linked to these writers, and the writers even before them."

Whether or not my students are familiar with Soto (they soon will read his work), the idea of a literary museum is curious. "He's not really famous, so why is there a museum about him?" some people say, or "He's making a museum about *himself*?" These are great questions. Soto is a well-known writer, but what he is expressing, by concretizing it for the world through objects, is certain confidence about his literary identity. This is fascinating for my students to observe and con-

template. So many writers (both famous and not) are, in their own ways, private, while so many others, especially through the web, share aspects of themselves that are deeply personal. Not often, however, do living writers get to present tangible objects that reveal their creative experiences. This self-reflexive act is both concrete and poetic, connecting the verbal and visual.

This is a jumping-off point for an activity that I hope will help students materialize their literary identities. Perhaps for the first time, in concrete ways, they, too, can motivate their writing experiences by connecting them to tangible items such as pens, books, or photographs, people or places that evoke a vivid sense of self. After we discuss Soto's project, I ask my students to create their own lists of literary museum objects. As self-reflexive curators, what would they include in their museums? Using Soto's list as a model, I encourage students to attach images of the objects they choose to the lists that they turn in.

The following week, my students come with their lists. Some have been printed in quiet Times New Roman font, and others are formatted in script, with photographs; one is even collaged on poster board. Some are clearly related to the writing process (pencils, erasers, letters); others are connected in subtler ways (lamps, iPods, cows). Some of the literary museum objects turn out to be abstract, but we talk about how they can still be represented in tangible form through text and photographs in their hypothetical museums. The variety is delightful and moving. We lay the lists on the long tables that we are fortunate to have in our classroom; I hope this display will facilitate discussion. We walk around and look at the lists together, quietly. The items are so creative and so personal. Through this process, the objects that my students have placed in their museums really do begin to tell stories.

I sense, and I think the students feel, that they have bared themselves to a degree, and have shared their personal histories. Even more important for our purpose, by connecting writing to things as disparate as a desk, a poster on a bedroom wall, a car, or a senior prom, they have explored the idea of thinking of their own writing lives as existing in the first place.

I repeat the exercise in another 101 class, and this time, I ask if anyone would like to volunteer to read his or her list aloud. Several students stand up and read very candid, often very funny, lists. This act of reading the lists aloud early in the semester gives my students the chance to make personal connections in the classroom and to be able to speak of themselves with the help of a prop, the lists. Often, speaking of themselves in the beginning of a semester is difficult for students, but in this case, a list, as Soto has demonstrated on his website, serves to facilitate the sharing of thoughts.

For the next part of our project, I assign a narrative essay, the first essay of the semester, which asks students to pick one object from their museum list that they feel particularly strongly about and to write its background story, the history of the object. We then read Gary Soto's essay "The Jacket," a tale of the author's struggle with a garment he loathed wearing as a boy, yet that he felt obliged to wear because of his family's poverty and his sense of obligation to his mother. I decide to hand the essay out only after my students have written their literary museum lists and picked their special item out because I do not want them to

be too influenced by Soto's particular style, mood, or tone until after they have generated their own ideas. "The Jacket" serves as a wonderful model for students to spin a history out of a simple, ordinary object. After they have gotten to know Soto through the description of his museum and have done their own version of a literary museum list, reading him almost feels familiar. My students then write their own object essays. We go on to talk about narrative essays, the first chapter in our semester, and try a wide variety of pre-writing activities to generate new ideas. The essay topic links naturally to lessons on both narrative and descriptive writing (the following chapter), and we will take the essays through first to final drafts over the next several weeks.

Many questions arise as I assign this project. Does it matter if students connect with a literary or writing past in their efforts to define and inscribe their literary present and future? How can this exercise be linked to writing that is not explicitly literary? Because of its acknowledgment and affirmation of students' identities as writers, the literary museum project seems to hold potential for many kinds of academic writing, nonfiction and journalism. Linking memory to current expression is a powerful tool. Hopefully, it opens up the pathways for students to follow toward a writing future. At the end of the semester, I will ask students to pick five items that they will add to their museums for the future. We will go around the room and listen to them, and when students move on, I hope they will carry a memory of their museums with them.

Gary Soto's Literary Museum: http://www.garysoto.com/museum.html

Disconnecting the "i" from the Pod: How Psychoanalysis has Changed University Discourse

Manya Steinkoler
English

Dave Bowman: Hello, HAL. Do you read me, HAL?
HAL: Affirmative, Dave. I read you.
Dave Bowman: Open the pod bay doors, HAL.
HAL: I'm sorry, Dave. I'm afraid I can't do that.
Dave Bowman: What's the problem?
HAL: I think you know what the problem is just as well as I do.
Dave Bowman: What are you talking about, HAL?
HAL: This mission is too important for me to allow you to jeopardize it.
Dave Bowman: I don't know what you're talking about, HAL.
HAL: I know that you and Frank were planning to disconnect me, and I'm afraid that's something I cannot allow to happen.
Dave Bowman: Where the hell'd you get that idea, HAL?
HAL: Dave, although you took very thorough precautions in the pod against my hearing you, I could see your lips move.
Dave Bowman: Alright, HAL. I'll go in through the emergency airlock.
HAL: Without your space helmet, Dave, you're going to find that rather difficult.
Dave Bowman: HAL, I won't argue with you anymore. Open the doors.
HAL: Dave, this conversation can serve no purpose anymore. Goodbye.

When looking up the origin of the name iPod on the Internet, I discovered disputed paternity claims for the thin, fun-to-hold portable media player. Emerging from Apple's "digital hub category" of personal devices, the iPod was introduced in October *2001*, a conspicuous release date since the little guy was named with Kubrick's *2001, A Space Odyssey,* in mind. Vincent Chieco, a freelance copywriter, took one look at the new object with its circular eye in the middle, and immediately thought of Bowman's command—"Open the pod door, Hal"—said when trying to exit the spaceship, Hal, in the Eva pod. If you take a look at the Eva pod, or even at Hal's disconcerting "eye," you will note that the iPod shares several design elements, traits obviously inherited from its eponymous ancestors.

Little could Hal and Eva—little could Kubrick—have imagined in 1968 that they would be the ancestors of Steve Job's baby that would "put 1000 songs in your pocket." This new *"lichette de la jouissance"* has allowed all of us, like Bowman, to say: "My God! It's full of stars!" as we wax joyous over this pocket-sized wonder that can hold within it the greatest hits in the universe. A psychotic with the "Lacanian object" in his pocket could never have this much fun!

Significantly, in the correct spelling of the gadget's name, the "i" is lower-

cased and the P of pod directly adjacent to it, capitalized. The name iPod is often on the "popular misspelled wordlist" since people keep wanting to insert a hyphen or capitalize the 'I' by mistake. There is no poinçon, no hyphen, no colon; you just have to remember—the 'i' is small case and the P capitalized. There is no question who or what is in charge here.

"This conversation can serve no purpose anymore. Goodbye."

In the first quarter of 2008, 28 million iPods were sold. The most popular personal entertainment device has given its name to "the iPod generation," now part of English vernacular.

"What's in a name?"

Lacan's *lathouses*, those little objects he names with a neologism that partakes of "Lethe," of death and forgetting, that solicit enjoyment and provoke depression, have a symbolic history—a history we should attend to since awareness of it can potentially *shuffle*—(to indulge in a user-friendly word)—the object out of its mindless installment in our pockets.

In Kubrick's film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, in sync with the title's Homeric allusion, Dave Bowman is a stand-in for Odysseus. "Bowman" is a reference to Odysseus' ability to man his bow, a heroic feat that allows for his final recognition by his wife, his son, and the suitors—a feat that only he can do, that only he is capable of accomplishing. Hal, the murderous Frankenstein-like computer, sees the astronauts with his one organ that is something like ours—his single eye, an uncanny post-modern Cyclops. Hal is Bowman's antagonist; he is a life-threatening impediment to his journey since both the computer and the human being see the mission as their own and will engage in a fight to the death. Hal is at once the ship itself and the all-seeing gaze inside the ship, a Benthamite Panopticon that sees everyone and everything, even reading lips. In Homer's epic, the tale of Odysseus and the Cyclops is about what it meant to be civilized and uncivilized in the ancient world, a story that underlines the cunning of Odysseus who pretended to be "nobody" so that he could ensure that one day he could be "somebody." In Homer's epic, the reader waits in suspense for Odysseus to arrive at Ithaca and finally reveal his identity, to finally become Odysseus, i.e., to take up his symbolic place as husband and father. Ideological or prescriptive as narrative is, nevertheless, the poet shows that to take up one's paternal place in a family is heroic, and one where one risks death. Kubrick's *Odyssey* asks us to think about identity in a futuristic, technological world that often deprives us of it. Here Hal functions as the monster that impedes Bowman on his mission. Kubrick's Hal is both the ship and the all-seeing eye inside the ship. Bowman can only be free and survive if he successfully disconnects Hal and ejects himself from him.

Did Apple think of this when they named their personal entertainment pocket-sized system?

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault discusses the Panopticon as the part of the penal apparatus that creates *docile bodies*—bodies that function in the industrial age, bodies that function in the classroom—bodies that <u>are seen</u> constantly—bodies for whom the mechanisms of power and surveillance have become internal to modern subjectivity.

Today the "i" is dwarfed by the Pod, by the vegetative jouissance that is demanded of it by the corporation, by the "normalizing eye" that sees it, studies it, evaluates and understands how it gets off so as to continue the flow of profits. Here the eye is underscored as an organ of *jouissance*—as the gaze. Like the Cyclops, the eye of the corporation watches us, commanding us to enjoy, and enjoys us insofar as we are its literal bread and butter—just as Odysseus' men served the Cyclops as food.

In Seminar 17, Lacan tells us that *jouissance* is on the order of an invasion. Yet many people don't feel the invasion today since they live in it, with it, constantly connected to it. This semester I have 53 remedial students. They are mostly African-American and Hispanic and from poor families. Out of this number, 42 have iPods; six have the iTouch; 53 have cell phones, all of them "top of the line."

Our Brave New World replete with its "weapons of mass distraction" has had a myriad of effects—and despite or perhaps because of this state-of-the-art connectivity with these technologies of communication—the impediments to student access to language and speech is stupefying. Given an experimental project to go without their music and cell phones for a day and keep a diary of how they felt, few succeeded and all reported feeling "depressed." In addition, the language of technology has affected all areas of life. Students commonly refer to sex as "hooking up" or "connecting"; sexuality itself has taken on the language of the computers; once again, the Pod is in charge. This is not a jouissance related to the signifier, but one commanded by the object.

Why should we care?

Both Homer and Kubrick's odysseys are moral tales that teach us what it means to be human.

The Cyclops is a bad host; he eats his visitors. Odysseus blinds him.

Hal murders the astronauts. Bowman must disconnect him to be able to explore the monolith.

Separating the "I" from vegetative *jouissance* provided by the Pod—reversing the place of the capital letter in the first person pronoun—most of us would think of such work as akin to the work of psychoanalysis itself—a post-modern *"wo es war soll ich werden"* (where id was, ego shall be). Yet the pod is different from the *es*—even if the German verb is homophonic with the verb to *eat*, and the pod is a vegetable. Unlike the "*es*," the gadget *is not the same as the* "objet a" *that emerges in a subject's fantasy*, but a *ready-made*, complete with the ready-made jouissance: the pod was not "created" by the subject but came to be in a place in which the social order itself was complicit and encouraging of an enjoyment that would ensure astronomic profits. The subject didn't invent the Pod and it certainly wasn't marketed with the subject's independence in mind.

Without the hyphen, dwarfed by the Pod, we have lost the anxiety that such a take-over or "merger" by or with the vegetable portends. Americans recall the Pod as the cocoon-like "coffins" in the 1956 Cold War horror film *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. The distinguishing feature of the "vegetative bodies," "humanoid" doubles "grown" inside of pods whenever one fell asleep, was that they had no lines or marks on the skin. The pod-double was more like a human lettuce or

celery stick. Indeed, in the 1951 film *The Thing from Outer Space*, the alien "other" was a large, Soviet-styled carrot. While Lacan imagines the plant in a kind of pure state of jouissance in Seminar 17: "It is perhaps painful to be a plant," in the case of these films, the plant matter or cellulose, a close cousin to the celluloid nature of our new visual enjoyment through film, is indeed a metonymy of it. In the 50's we were afraid of the monster—and we didn't see the monstrosity of our own enjoyment, of our own gaze, of our cinematic addiction. Invasion of the Body Snatchers and the alien movies of the 50's, however, organized paranoiac anxiety along nationalistic lines. In the midst of the Cold War, the US could imagine that the antagonist was the Soviet Union, a terrible force of sameness that bulldozed religious, sexual and cultural difference, the very difference that liberal democracy—"the good guys"—welcomed and celebrated.

While we may not have seen that we were buying a story about the evil other in terms of national narratives, Hollywood executives certainly did.

How ironic that the US would find that very bulldozing sameness at the core of its own claims to diversity! In a kind of production line Hegelian machine-like efficiency, capitalism will thrive on otherness, transforming it into value and equalizing differences. The claims to diversity so familiar in our liberal democracies sound exactly the same. Now the "permitted," virtually required 1000 songs in one's pocket foster subservience to the multi-national corporation instead of to the communist other. We are reduced to the culture of the pod—to the culture of enjoyment. Suddenly the word culture itself carries a strangely biological intonation, as we "grow" in the Petri dish of Agamben's bare life.

It has been remarked over and over again how ours is an era of enjoyment. Todd McGowan calls it an "enjoyment explosion;" for Neil Postman we are "amusing ourselves to death." As Zizek, Zupancik, MacCannell, Salecl, McGowan and others have pointed out, our social duty is to "enjoy as much as possible," the very opposite of the notion of social duty once entailed. This is not a subtle message but an explicit command. Faced with the terrorist attacks, New Yorkers were told by the city's mayor to "go shopping." Shopping was how we would best practice our civic duty. In London after the bus bombings, the British were induced by the Prime Minister to do the same. To shop was their patriotic duty. To show that we were subjects—to show our national duty as citizens—we had to shop. Citizenship had become synonymous with consumption. To do our civic duty was to become anaesthetized.

The references to Foucault and the implementation of security are apt since we are talking about the internalization of the cultural super ego. Thus the iPod underlines the "i" as already part of the pod. While this is obviously a "metaphor" and the way social power works, it is also becoming uncannily and increasingly real. John Kampfner tells us in his new book, *Freedom for Sale: Why the World Is Trading Democracy for Security,* that the average Londoner is photographed on the average of 200 times a day by cameras all over the city. The tube is no better than the pod.

The triumph of such ideology affects our most seemingly private and pleasurable activities—indeed, it directs and produces them. Note for example the astronomic boom that the practice of yoga has seen in the US. In the immensely

popular New York yoga class, one is supposed to "feel good," "to practice kindness," to chant in response a variety of Hindu prayers and mantras no one understands, and is the recipient of a tyrannical and incessant discourse about the importance of the "non-ego." One must practice "Ahimsa—non-violence," one is told, while one stands with chest lifted and shoulders forced back in *tadasana*, mountain pose. While stemming from a wish for moral goodness—a wish to love ourselves, our neighbor, and all creatures great and small—posited against the social command to enjoy, yoga might seem to be a welcome ascesis against the modern culture of excess. And yet…

This entire discourse of loving our fellow man and caring for the other, the celebration of Yin energy, has been exploited and exposed by Bikram Chodhury, the billionaire guru to the rich and famous whose yoga studios are more attended than any others in American history. Bikram has founded the first truly "global yoga." His sequence of 26 postures in a 110 degree room for 90 minutes shows that he understands that people don't want Ahimsa-non-violence, non-ego, vegetarianism or anything of the sort—they want—more than anything else, to suffer, to punish themselves, to submit to taskmasters and to be punished.

Famous for his love of material goods, Bikram-the-yogi wears 60,000 dollar diamond Piaget watches and is known for his sexual liaisons with his staff of teachers. He has started the Bikram Olympics where people compete at his challenging form of Hatha yoga. A former car salesman, Bikram Chodhury certainly understands his customer. People want to pay cash not for a new car but to suffer with their clunker. On a snowy day or in the midst of a sweltering heat wave, his classes are filled like rush hour subways, as people aggressively muscle into their place on line. Bikram has understood that the people who want to critique the ego are without a doubt the best market for his painful and exhausting brand of yoga—the only brand of yoga, mind you, where the practitioner is *continually entreated to look in the mirror*. Bikram well understood that the anti-ego animus or "ego-restraint" is the *envers* or the underside of the self-punishing that results from the wish to indulge and augment such an ego, and, from this insight alone, he has made millions. Further, Bikram has understood that Americans suffer from having to be individuals; his yoga is thus performed the same way and at the same time in synchronicity with everyone in the room. It is "mass yoga." Known among its practitioners jokingly as Nazi or fascist yoga, Bikram has understood that intense strenuous physical suffering is both a punishment for enjoyment and the triumph of enjoyment itself.

The yoga reference is but another way we must transform our bodies rather than engage in meaningful political social or even sexual activity. What do we have a body for nowadays anyway, except to be seen or to be used as fodder for the profit motives of the corporate Other? And as the status quo becomes more unassailable, more and more impossible, forever out of the reach of the common man, we are entreated to spend all of our time trying to belong to it. So we take the Bikram challenge—Not everyone can do Bikram twice a day. Not everyone has the stamina. Not everyone has the time…

Seminar 17: *L'Envers de la Psychanalyse* took place the very same year that Kubrick's film appeared. In his seminar, Lacan asked us to think of discourse as

a social tie. I emphasize the word tie rather than "connection." A discourse requires a disconnection from the object; it requires a lack that isn't filled.

For Lacan, the Symbolic Order makes a bond of lack, allowing for the social to emerge to begin with. The signifier is not the iPod but the monolith, a bar dividing the subject between language and *jouissance*. In Seminar 17, as Juliet MacCannell has so elegantly pointed out, we *are* precisely in the way *we don't enjoy*.

University Discourse: S2/S1 – a/$

Lately, Lacan's idea of the University Discourse has been seen as partner to the Capitalist Discourse. In such an understanding, it is a hegemonic discourse of modernity that demonstrates capitalism's infinite ability to integrate excess. After all, the University can gobble up anything, even and especially what is antithetical to it. Nowadays, you can take a graduate course on pornography, water, shopping malls, situation comedies, even on the history of shit. Even Lacan's seminars have become a subject of obsessive "knowledge production" where citing page numbers is far more important than a bungled act or a slip of the tongue.

This conception of the Discourse of the University is certainly correct when it comes to "accumulation" of knowledge. But there are many changes in the modern University not accounted for by such an understanding. Psychoanalysis has changed what goes on in the University—so has the necessity of "educating" the kinds of students we meet with today in the University, college and community college classroom.

Thousands of New York high school graduates are reading and writing on an 8th grade level. Far too many have failed college level placement exams to the public university, and since the 80's, the task of remediation has fallen more and more to the community college system.

For the past three years I have been teaching remedial English to challenged and often challenging students. Their difficulties with reading and writing, with language in general—even when their native language is not English—are considerable. While I prepare them for re-taking the college entrance essay-writing exam, my "pedagogical" role—at least how I think about it—is certainly not one that sees the University Discourse as the partner for post-modern Capitalism. Rather the discursive atmosphere in the classroom functions as a way to instantiate the power of the signifier. First, I am there to model and institute a desire, to show a wanting that neither I nor they quite understand but which makes them interested and engaged in reading, writing, discussion and even mastery. I go back and forth between shaming and supporting them and most of all, I transmit something from "big Other" in such a way that they feel they can join. Far from a work of a beautiful soul, I am a divided, funny other who often gets annoyed at them and is not ashamed to curse if appropriate. Even cursing, I explain to my New York students, is a matter of word choice, and timing. "As you can see, we are not a bunch of brutish, uncivilized Philistines" said Tanesha to an observer who had come to watch our class. "Speak for yourself!" said Marin who likes to go by the alias, "The Albanian," from the back row—"I'm a *vulgarian* mother-fucker!" The class laughed. "Worse than vulgarian—" said Tanesha with a snubbing look at Marin, speaking above the laughter and looking primly at the

observer, "He is redundant!" and they burst out in laughter once again.

Many people charged with tasks that don't bring them into the classroom often claim that such students have not felt they can succeed and that we as teachers with our "passion to teach" should make them feel that "yes they can," encouraging and nurturing them, mentoring them towards "academic success." All over the college, students see the words "success" painted on the walls and the brochures. When I tell students that the whole idea of success is a scam that produces failure and that there is nothing that will make them fail like the super-egoical phrase, "Be successful!" they are delighted and curious. Whether it is true or not is less important than the effects of "dislodging" the discourse of the Other. Even a little bit functions as a kind of hyphen, a spacing, a rolling pin that keeps the mouth of the crocodile open, his jaws at bay. It is not that these students have not been "subjectified" or have no access to some idea of the "Big Other" as some have said about them—these remedial students are the ones *most created by this Other*; they are often so depressively comfortable with the social discourse of victimhood and race that they have very little room for interest, invention, or desire. And more than the discourse, they are comfortable with their objects, their gadgets. For the past two years, students have actually asked me why I require that they take off their headphones in class.

Helping one invent a different interpellation for herself, provoking another wonder about his identity, allowing another to feel proud, shaming another, *allowing, even encouraging,* one to constitute a grammatical error as a kind of symptom that remains uncorrected by me—to teach at the remedial level is only partly about imparting information; it is much more about impressing, surprising, bewildering, delighting—by them, with them, at them. "The entrance exam is extremely stupid," they complain. "You're right," I tell them and they laugh—*they know they are right*. This is a generation made from Bush's No Child Left Behind, after all—their entire education has been geared towards test-taking as a method of "evaluating" learning. "So what are we going to do?" I ask them. By now they know the answer—"If the test is stupid, it doesn't mean I am stupid. I will reinvent the test." And they get to work rewriting the question so that it is interesting to them and they will have something to say.

The signifier's power comes from the way it limits and repels *jouissance*—and we know that it also produces it—but on a different register. The classroom can make a hyphen and a place for the first person pronoun obfuscated by the objects of enjoyment they are connected to. The University is a place where *they are free not to enjoy*.

In 2006, Apple workers in China were reported to be working over 60 hours per week— more than the legal amount of hours stipulated under Chinese law. In addition, Apple has admitted to using child labor and has been continually cited for their abuses of worker's conditions.

It seems "byting into the apple," like the original bite, has given us all more *jouissance*—but knowledge didn't come from the byte itself, but from the understanding gleaned, and the shame experienced, with regard to the law and transgression.

The Visual-Mobile-Urban Everyday—Cell Phone Pictures

Deborah Gambs
Social Sciences and Human Services

In the Introduction to Sociology courses I teach, I take the opportunity to make connections between my research interests and student learning. Though I have been interested in pedagogy since graduate school, my teaching philosophy is gradually coming to rest on the importance of finding a way to engage my scholarly interests in the classroom and to invite students to consider how sociologists consider the world. Sociology classes are typically considered to provide facile connections between course material and everyday life, but I have come to believe that there is also a benefit to students accessing the everyday life of a scholar.

One could argue this is particularly true of the visual element of the world. When I ask students to make a list of what images they encounter, it has often been a brief list. But when I ask them to list where they see these images, it quickly becomes apparent that they are simply everywhere. I would argue their list of the types of images they see is brief because they see so many, they've not noticed them. I have them list the locations they see images, so that they note the excess of visual information we regularly take in. This, I explain to them, is one reason that visual sociology is a growing subdiscipline and methodological approach to research.

Howard Becker first analyzed the similarities between the development of photography and the discipline of sociology in the 1970s. Only more recently as visual images have permeated popular culture through print media, film, television and in particular the internet, has visual studies been given serious attention outside of art history. With the enormous volume of image transmission at the turn of the 21st century, however, the interdisciplinary field of visual culture studies has grown along with visual communication, visual rhetoric and visual sociology. Visual sociology includes both the use of photographs to illustrate sociological arguments, as well as sociological analysis of already existing images.

Visual sociology may also be becoming increasingly popular because visual technologies are more accessible, portable, affordable, and personal than ever

before. The technological developments are important because today most students have at their disposal a camera that they carry with them everywhere they go; on their mobile phone, of course. Since teaching at BMCC, I have been struck by the way in which the cell phone has become a technical extension of most students' bodies. That mobile phone is always within arms' reach, often nearby in a pocket or pocket book or shoulder bag, "hidden" under the desktop in a lap, or out in full view on the desk next to notebooks, pencil cases and textbooks. My own enjoyment of mobile phones, and my own pleasure in the new possibility for having a digital camera with me at all times, provides one way of connecting with students, and engaging students in one form of visual sociology. Yet I also must intentionally share with students the critical lens I have developed and continue to develop in my training and practice as a researcher.

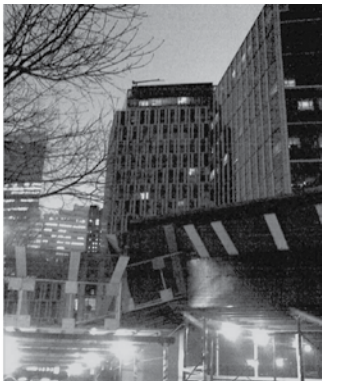
Globalization has increased the sense of mobility in our environment. The technology of the mobile phone camera intensifies that further. Photographs taken by camera phone are often taken "on the move," literally—while walking, with a brief stop to snap. They are small, highly portable, held in one hand and ubiquitous, thus they are often used to capture brief moments of the everyday. The following photographs show some of what we experience in the public spaces of the urban everyday: construction and scaffolding, signs along the street, the street itself, and parks and food carts.

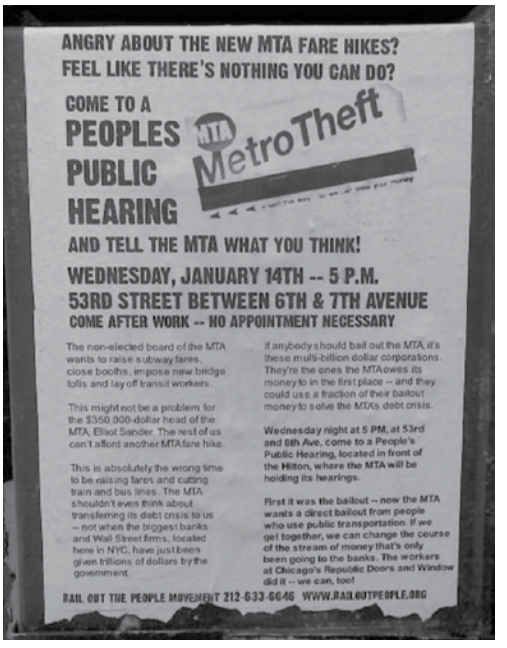
The photographs in this essay were taken as part of a larger experimental study with colleague Deirdre Conlon, of Emerson College, Boston. The paper, "Crossing Gaps, Encountering Thresholds: Texting urban images of the everyday from Boston to NYC and back" was presented at the Visuality/Materiality conference, London June 2009.

We used mobile phone cameras to photograph our walk from the subway or "T" to our workplace; we then text-messaged those photographs to one another.

We analyzed both the photos and the process of taking, sending and receiving the images. The photos included here were deemed beyond the scope of that project and were not used. They are in fact my "leftovers" of this project, taken in excess.

In an urban environment, construction is a common site. Buildings are in flux, the density and number of buildings means we are used to seeing physical structures change before our very eyes. Sometimes scaffolding is a nuisance. Sometimes it is like the pothole we see but quickly incorporate into our visual field and take minimal notice of. We walk between the metal posts, we dip into the open entrance between metal bars that divide the walkway into sections, we rest our bag on the temporary railing to dig for our keys. Sometimes, at night, lit by safety lights, scaffolding is beautiful in its foreignness and its temporary attachment to the building. As a kind of appendage to the building, it extends the structure of the building further into space.





As a public institution, BMCC is a locus for sharing information, and in this case, political information. The environs of BMCC are a space for public discourse. A site of civil society that is increasingly mourned, feared lost, whose existence is debated.

Trees and nature can be scarce in the urban environment. Notice the ways in which trees are buttressed in urban environments, protected from the public, or from litter, or how their source of water is enhanced by for instance, the tree bladder.

Two Writing Assignments

1) Visual Sociology Writing Assignments

This essay requires that you explain one theory (Marx's theory of social class), connect it together with one concept on social class from Chapter 8 of the text, and illustrate your discussion with images. You will do this by discussing an issue of social class you feel is important today.

What is one issue of social class that you feel is of concern today? (It does not have to relate to the current economic crisis, but it may.) In your essay, discuss this issue, using one of the main arguments that Marx and Engels make in "Manifesto of the Communist Party." You should pick an aspect of their argument that you feel is relevant for understanding social class. (You do not have to agree with them). Also select one concept on social class from the text. How is this concept related to or different from your discussion of Marx's argument?

Finally, using your cell phone camera, please include three photos that illustrate your essay.

2) Visual Sociology & Globalization

In the excerpt on "Globalization" reprinted from sociologist Anthony Giddens' book *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives*, Giddens offers two perspectives on globalization. He argues that there is a skeptical and radical perspective, and that the radical perspective is most correct. He then goes on to explain why the radical perspective is correct and the range of complex forces involved in globalization.

Although Giddens does not specifically discuss visual images, the transmission (spread) of images and objects is also part of globalization. Using your cell phone camera, take a photo of something that you consider to be an object/artifact of globalization. Discuss this image and/or object using Giddens' theory of globalization. Be sure to define globalization and as part of your discussion, and explain three of the different forces that Giddens argues are part of globalization.

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At the end of her essay "Bodies/Cities," Elizabeth Grosz writes that we "will no longer be disjointedly connected to random others and objects through the city's spatiotemporal layout; it will interface with the computer, forming part of an information machine …" The methods researchers use today are increasingly intertwined with external technical objects such as laptops, cell phones, cameras, camcorders, netbooks and software. The circulation of images by mobile phones add to our experience of the post-representational. In the assemblage of object-image-human-phone, objects, images and humans become partnered and embedded in transhuman living/organic networks. Humans also become a medium for information transmission and affectivity. We become senders and receivers of sensory snippets of the world, biomedia responding to chirps and beeps, not mechanically but selectively.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Inquirer is a journal devoted to teaching and learning at BMCC. We welcome manuscripts on any number of topics, among them the following:

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- the impact of syllabus or curriculum changes in the classroom
- writing or speaking across the curriculum in your classroom
- classroom-based research you've done
- balancing the curriculum issues: race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, environment
- teaching problems you've faced and resolved
- assessment and evaluation of students or of teachers
- the impact of policies on teaching and learning
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Please submit a proposal for your article (a paragraph or two on one page) to the editors by January 27, 2011.

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