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Introduction

With issue 21, the *Inquirer* begins its third decade. We think we as professors at BMCC have done a lot of things right. Likewise, we are most of the time ready to change things that aren't working—or no longer work as effectively as they once might have. We also encourage our colleagues to look critically at change—in our own syllabi, or across the college community—that does not work. There certainly have been a great many changes. Some of you are reading this from a spot in the Fiterman Building where you've managed to find a little space between classes. Some may be reading Issue 21 from a refurbished office, or some at your kitchen table, after attending to your on-line class, one of some 70 fully on-line courses offered at BMCC in fall 2014.

In new buildings and old, online and off, we continue to work with amazing students who come from all walks of life, come in all ages, from throughout New York City, and from scores of countries around the world. We faculty continue to face the tension between available resources and our needs inside and outside the classroom. Our dedication to quality, innovative and far-thinking education embedded in our commitment to community college continues, although we should not be Pollyannaish about the difficulties of this trek.

We now work with some 23,000 students (after a substantial drop in enrollment in spring 2014); in many of our classrooms the majority of students was born in another country or speaks a language other than English at home, an exciting challenge. We face less exciting challenges as well: many students feel confident in claiming, "I don't like to read," or "this is the first novel I've read," or "I hate math," or "I hate history," their intellectual capabilities weakened through years of mis-education, or warped by the anti-intellectual strains in American culture brewing since the Reagan years. But many many students come to BMCC with great sparks of curiosity, eager to learn, and willing to handle the hurdles they encounter—to pay the bills, to care for children, to pick up siblings from school, to help parents negotiate hospitals or landlords. We have, we hope, become more attentive to these needs, to the needs of our veteran students, to the demands of our students who work full time, to the gaps our ex-offenders face in coming to college. We could obviously go on, and we always hope we are triggering new ideas for articles when we point to these matters.

One of the biggest changes this past year was the retirement of Sadie Bragg, and this past year the stewardship of acting Provost Robert C. Messina, Jr., and now we welcome a new Provost and Senior Vice President, Karrin Wilks. Many people who first wrote for the *Inquirer* have retired, and we have as well faced the untimely loss of other beloved colleagues... The college has continued to hire full time faculty in the scores, most on tenure-track lines, even as departments in fall 2014 hired more adjuncts due to the unexpected registration upsurge.

There are new administrative positions, and CUNY First has revamped the way we handle grade submissions, find out who is in our classes, and merge perhaps into one university system. Pathways continues to charm us, or harm us. But we have also seen an expansion of college/ pedagogical initiatives, so that the quantitative become qualitative changes. To name some important open-

ings, there are new programs—among them in theater, in communication arts, in video arts. The college has stepped forward to work on 'greening the campus,' with a college-wide Sustainability Committee, has pursued a global initiative, to increase 'global competencies' in the classroom, and is working to improve students' quantitative literacy. Attention to the across-the-classroom practices in writing, reading, and now math reaches out across the campus through WAC, RAC, and MAC. The CETLS soil is producing numerous figs, in children's literature, in Africana studies, cross-cultural approaches to Latino/a literature, and in creative writing, to name a few, and the 'Balancing the Curriculum' workshop which faded for a few years was reborn. Conferences organized by BMCC faculty have claimed space and garnered much-merited attention—including the Modern Language Department's XVII Colloquium, "From Farm to Table: The Global Culture of Food in New York City," and the English Department's "Transitions and Transactions II," a national conference on teaching literature and creative writing in community colleges (both in spring 2014).

Colleagues address related events and concerns in this issue. We are bookending this issue, starting with something that did happen, ending with something that did not, a poem that occurs in the imagination. Co-organizers Margaret Barrow, Manya Steinkoler, and Jan Stahl discuss Transitions and Transactions II, a national conference that addressed teaching literature and creative writing in spring 2014. Next, four articles ask us to rethink how we work with our students: Deborah Giordano looks at experiential learning for freshman. Yolanda Martin tackles neighborhood research in criminal justice courses, while Meghan Fitzgerald Raimondo teases out her work with critical thinking in teaching education students, and Jason Schneiderman asks us to consider the ways in which students experience institutional incoherence, and how we might change this.

Then three articles dig more deeply into the blend between students' emotions and what they come upon in the classroom. Soniya Munshi and Rifat Salam explore the emotional experiences of students when studying racism; Sheldon Applewhite looks at the intense need for, and difficulties of addressing, the pressures of discrimination and inequality our students face. Peter Bratsis explores the importance of passion in education. The six articles that follow continue to query projects and practices spread widely through the college. Daniel DePaul, Margaret Dean, and Lina Wu share their experiences in promoting quantitative literacy in the college. Matthew Marcus and Rosario Torres-Guevara offer their Joe Doctor presentation on teaching critical thinking, Rose Gleicher offers a plan to encourage student mentoring for overly-absent students in on-line classes, and Michelle Wang writes on ePortfolios that help students prepare for job searches.

Then we shift to a metacommentary, in which Rose Kim probes the demerits of the new Pathways curriculum. In our new *Works in Progress* feature, Margaret Barrow presents an initial look at how to engage student writers. We hope our readers will see this feature as an opportunity to send us their own works in progress, something that might develop as a peer-reviewed article filled out with more research.

And finally, as we noted above, Robert Masterson's poem that exists in the realm of the imagination book ends these offerings. This issue's collection seeks

to provoke, instruct, and inspire our efforts to achieve pedagogical excellence for those who are in need of a helping hand, an ongoing task that demands courage and tenacity, which our faculty has in spades.

The editors

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On Transitions and Transactions II, Spring 2014

Margaret Barrow, Manya Steinkoker, and Jan Stahl
English

The *Inquirer* editors asked colleagues involved in the second Transitions and Transactions (T & T) conference to write briefly about this highly successful national conference held at BMCC, spring 2014. Margaret Barrow and Manya Steinkoler are the conference designers and coordinators, and Jan Stahl was on the planning committee.

The three-day conference this past spring offered almost 80 panels that addressed many topics related to the literature and creative writing pedagogies in community colleges. The keynote speaker was poet Billy Collins, former Library of Congress poet laureate, and editor of the popular *Poetry 180* (a great book to teach). Billy Collins has published eight collections of poetry, including *Question about Angels, The Art of Drowning, Picnic, Lightning, Taking Off Emily Dickinson's Clothes, Sailing Alone Around the Room: New & Selected Poems, Nine Horses,* and *The Trouble with Poetry and Other Poems*.

The other featured speakers were an active scholar of community college education, Kenneth Kroll, and poet Anne Waldman. Professor Kroll's books include *The Politics of Writing in the Two-Year College* (2001); *Contemplative Teaching and Learning* (2010); *Fostering The Liberal Arts in the Twenty-First Century Community College* (in press); and with Barry Alford, *Teaching in the Twenty-First Century Community College* (forthcoming). He blogs at teachinginthecommunitycollege.com.

Anne Waldman, an important figure in the New York School and New American Poetry movements, has published widely. Her forthcoming book from Penguin Poets is *Gossamurmur*. Waldman is the recipient of the prestigious 2013 John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Award and she is a Chancellor of The Academy of American Poets.

Collins's and Kroll's full remarks, as well as the conference's open mic event held at the nearby Poets' House can be found on BMCCs website: http://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/news/news.jsp?id=11095

–editors

Margaret Barrow
Q: What is involved in organizing such a conference at BMCC?

A: Since we start a year in advance of the conference, we first choose the topic, and then I spend time meeting with prospective sponsors and securing funding that then allows us to look at speakers. Each T & T committee member is asked to nominate a couple of dynamic speakers they think will attract participants to the college. But more importantly, we want speakers who will contribute to the pedagogical conversations taking place within community colleges.

Q: Why is the Transitions and Transactions conference important?

A: The conference essentially allows us to be a significant part of the larger conversations going on in community college teaching. In a way, it also allows us to start new conversations about teaching. Largely, the conference creates a space and place where community college faculty, particularly in English but not limited, to engage in rich conversations that have the potential to change how we think about teaching and learning. In many cases, participants who attended the conferences shared that they "went home armed with many goodies" to take back to their classroom practices.

Q: What kind of community was created during the conference itself?

A: I think faculty and students understand the need to discuss teaching and learning in more humane terms. At the conference, students who attended were privy to the challenges and passions in which teachers engage.

Q: How does it touch on our teaching at BMCC?

A: BMCC is one of the most diverse community colleges in the U.S. In many of the panels, faculty addressed ways that their teaching of literature, poetry, creative writing, was inclusive of a diverse population. The language of care such as empowering students.

Q: Was there an event, or speaker, that you thought was particularly important?

A: I thought that Billy Collins was brilliantly engaging with the faculty audience. His insights into teaching and student responsiveness to poetry enlightened many of us who've come across students who generally resist poetry.

Manya Steinkoler
Q: To what extent does having such a conversation among colleagues at other community colleges inform our own teaching, and our understanding of community college needs and culture?

A: Transitions and Transactions was invented to support a desire—a desire that

we may call "teaching" although I would propose (and many presentations at the conference concurred) that such teaching is imbricated in learning—our own as well as that of our students. One of the most exciting aspects of the conference was the strong sense of camaraderie amongst teachers—most remarkably in terms of ethics. It was inspiring and heartening to hear the thought and care that teachers give to their teaching in community colleges all over the nation. Indeed, it was so rejuvenating and invigorating to hear the work and careful thinking of others in terms of teaching strategies, curriculum planning and choices, new ideas and even "renewed" old ideas, that the packed three days seemed to wake us up rather than to tire us. The conference is a way of reminding us that teaching is a calling and renews our sense of dignity by and through others. Perhaps even on good days when we have a "great class" and see students improve—we can still forget to like ourselves. Despite teaching half the students in the nation, we are not raking in the dough, nor are we blazing trails in terms of cutting edge scholarship. What we are: we are good teachers. Seeing this quality in others and being so moved and delighted by it allows us to like and respect ourselves a bit more as well. In the hallway at the conference a professor stopped me and said, "Are you Manya Steinkoler of Margaret and Manya?" When I said yes, she said, "I just want you to know that this conference makes me proud to be a teacher at a community college." She squeezed my arm. "I never thought I would say that," she said, and smiled. "I'm—I'm... just... proud!"

Jan Stahl
I was a member of the conference planning committee for the first Transitions and Transactions conference that was held in the spring of 2012, and the conference was a huge success. So I was very eager to learn that the conference would be held again in the spring of 2014. The "Transitions and Transactions" conference is a significant event for those of us who teach at community colleges since it helps us to think about our pedagogical concerns as teachers and learners. The conference panels addressed the issues that are vital to us as community college instructors. For example, the presenters on the panel "Using Poetry and Literature to Teach English in the Community College Classroom" addressed strategies for using literature to generate creative thinking and writing in the developmental writing classrooms. Another panel was devoted to the relationships between students, teachers, and tutors, while yet another panel was devoted to techniques for helping our students in developmental and composition classes become stronger readers. Panel presenters offered practical advice. What I found most exciting about the conference was that it gave me an opportunity to meet colleagues both from within and outside CUNY. The conference created an atmosphere of community. It was refreshing to have the opportunity to hear about the strategies that other instructors at community colleges are using with success in their classrooms so that as instructors of English we can think about the ways to continue helping our students grow as thinkers, readers, and writers.

The Experiential Learning Process as It Relates to Freshmen

Deborah Giordano
Criminal Justice

> Tell me and I will forget.
> Show me and I may remember.
> Involve me and I will understand.
>   Chinese Proverb

Each semester I am astonished by the freshman students' seeming lack of interest in the courses that are required of criminal justice majors. Even students who profess their desire to be a police officer or lawyer do not seem interested or engaged in class discussion. The students tend to sit in class with a blank look on their faces while the professor struggles to elicit some reaction to the material being presented. If you are using Power Point, they will often pull out an iPhone to take a picture. However, even the picture does not help them do well when taking exams.

There does not seem to be a real connection between course work and the students' desire to work in the criminal justice field. I attribute this in part to the fact that most freshmen students have just graduated from high school and are not really prepared for the college setting, most have unrealistic expectations of what is needed to enter the field and most have watched CSI and Law and Order, shows which represent the exciting part of the criminal justice system, not the work that it takes to get to that position. For a professor, the challenge becomes how to provide opportunities to engage students intellectually, creatively, emotionally, and socially, so that they will develop a knowledge base that will help them be successful in their career as a student and later on as a professional in the workforce.

> "There is an intimate and necessary relationship between the process of actual experience and education."
>   John Dewey, 1938.

The question becomes, "how does a professor create this experience in one hour and fifteen minutes?" This takes some creativity, patience, and commitment on the part of the professor. It also takes exploring alternative teaching techniques that for some may be uncomfortable or out of the norm.

I have two goals each semester. One is to have the students walk away with an understanding of the basic foundation of criminal justice, not the fantasy depicted on television. The second is to have each student comprehend and retain the information presented in class, so that they can do well on the exams and writing assignments. I am attracted to the theories of notable educational psychologists such as John Dewey (1959-1952), Carl Rogers (1902-1987), and David Kolb (b.1939), and the groundwork they laid of learning theories that fo-

cus on "learning through experience" or "learning by doing." Inspired by these ideas, I have chosen to create an environment of experiential learning, not one of strictly cognitive or rote learning and memorization. Not only is this a great learning tool, it is fun and engaging for the students and professor.

I begin the class with a preview of what is to come during the class session and open up with a short "real life" video related to the topic of the day. While researching the appropriate video and related articles can be time consuming for the professor, it is well worth it. The ensuing discussion is usually exciting, involves feelings and emotions and most important allows the student to connect course content to the real world. By the time I begin the lecture the students have already become involved and dialogue flows readily.

As a professor, I want to provide suitable experiences, pose real life problems, set boundaries, while supporting students' ability to learn and be creative. Consequently, at least once per week I devote 45 minutes of class time to group activities where each group is assigned a "real life scenario," many of which I was personally involved in as an officer, lawyer, or social worker. This use of my own experience promotes the feeling of authenticity in the student. These situations then provoke reflection and critical analysis. The scenarios provide the opportunity for the student to take initiative, make decisions individually and within the group setting, problem solve, and come up with new ideas. Just when the group has come up with a solution that they perceive as workable, I will often take on the role of commanding officer, judge, district attorney and supply some unknown variable. This provides for some very spontaneous responses and some risk taking in sharing new ideas.

Classes and students have changed since I was a student. The freshmen of today are technology reliant. There is no need for them to take notes and participate in class discussion when all they have to do is take a picture. Recently, I shared with my own children the fact that when I went to school, computer access was limited; basically you had to know how to use a library. They laughed. I learn much of what students need from my twins, who are in their second year of college, as well as from the body language of my students during the first week of classes. College should be challenging and exciting, spurring intellectual creativity, not a place where students sleep or zone out. I do not want to stand in front of a class and not enjoy the experience. With experiential learning, everyone wins. Remember this is the next generation of officers, lawyers, forensics specialist. If they love the courses, they will love the job.

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The Experiential Learning Theory of Development(Kolb, 1984)

"Fear of Crime in My Neighborhood": Integrating Ethnographic Student Research in the Documentation and Analysis of Crime and Drug Trends in the New York City Area

Yolanda C. Martin
Social Sciences, Human Services, and Criminal Justice

Introduction

This article describes an ethnographic research project developed every semester by Criminal Justice students, (two sections per semester). It is part of the regular coursework and is used to train and mentor students regarding the collection of first-hand data on crime and drug trends in the New York City area neighborhoods. This research project produces a variety of beneficial outcomes for the students, the faculty and the college, such as enhancing student comprehension of abstract theoretical frameworks through their hands-on experience, and building a tradition of research that begins to distinguish BMCC from other community colleges.

The community-based research strategy I employ embraces qualitative and quantitative methods which help guide students in the study of issues of direct relevance to the public health and safety of their neighborhoods, namely, problems related to drugs and crime. This pedagogical approach, I argue, follows the radical view of education as an instrument of student liberation (Freire, 1984; 72), in which students build knowledge using their own individual experience as a basis, underscoring both a recognition of previous awareness and a non-hierarchical classroom dynamics in which student and faculty learn from each other. Feminist social activist and scholar (and former student of Paolo Freire herself), bell hooks' challenge of traditional classroom dynamics is useful here. According to hooks, faculty ought to acknowledge students' histories as an organic element in the building of learning communities, transgressing hierarchical dynamics, and turning them into collaborative practices (1984). Embracing feminist methodologies, on the other side, reminds us that "the personal is political." Teaching social problems that affect *criminalized* youth in largely underserved communities to students of color, many of whom have been racially profiled and stopped and frisked, and whose friends and relatives may have been subject to deportation, to violation of due process clauses, or to arrest for minor drug dealing, all of it, is political at its core. Students learn, by their own research exploration and interpretations, the intertwining of "private troubles and public issues" (Mills 1959; 8). Students' individual experiences are not random or completely individual; they are part of socio-economic and political patterns that need to be framed within spatial and temporal contexts. Ultimately, students are empowered upon the realization that their lives are shaped to a great extend by broader structural arrangements that move beyond personal responsibility explanations of their lives.

Lev Vygotsky's theory of a Zone of Proximal Development (or ZPD), also fits into the pedagogical methodology presented here. Vygotsky (1978; 19-36) is intrigued by differential capabilities shown by children with equal levels of mental development to learn, prompted by a teacher's guidance. Zone of Developmental Proximity refers to "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (1997; 33). In simpler words, ZDP captures those intellectual functions that have not fully developed, but are "seeded" and need to be nurtured by the educator (Vygotsky uses the metaphor of "buds" of development vs. "fruits" of development) (33). ZDP allows educators to foresee a process of intellectual maturation that will be spurred by previous learning. This concept is a powerful tool in education when embracing teaching methodologies that trigger developmental milestones that cannot (and ought not to) be quantified or measured at the end of the semester via standardized testing—such as abstract, inferential and critical thinking. Knowledge-based learning, in experiential learning, is a mere stepping-stone (however necessary), towards that sort of *deferred* problem solving and abstract thinking abilities that will play a larger role in the students' personal trajectories and professional careers. In summary, whether the student is a child or a young adult in college, learning within this framework awakens a series of developmental processes that will manifest independently, once the student has internalized those critical thinking processes in collaboration with peers and/or faculty.

Relevance

The lessons learned from research that documents, describes and analyzes the value of undergraduate research experiences like this has added significance for the education of our students at BMCC, and by extension, undergraduates at many other publicly-funded colleges and universities—especially those serving large minority populations. Most student research programs described in the academic literature, however, involve small numbers of students who are involved in intensive research settings—often laboratories—where they receive close mentorship from faculty and/or other more senior student researchers. The benefits of such programs for students are evident and it is not surprising that those who receive this additional attention perform better than those that do not. But these types of programs are not well suited to expanding student involvement in meaningful research beyond the handful that is selected. Laboratory-based programs are not easily scaled up to serve large numbers of students; they are often limited by existing lab space, faculty time to supervise students and other factors that discourage the expansion of their use. Indeed, these limitations mean that students must compete for limited available slots, which are valued as much for their significance for future educational options as for the content of the research itself. As a result, for colleges and universities that do not have rich traditions of research, the benefits of such opportunities for students do not materialize beyond the few fortunate individuals that are selected by faculty teaching STEM courses.

Unlike the laboratory research that is the norm, our students and others like them usually have few opportunities to work on the design and conduct of meaningful community-based research based on large sets of real data that they collect. The opportunity to conduct research into their own communities provides special meaning to their lived experiences, and to the relevance of their education. By contributing their own efforts to a growing database of ethnographic observations, students are better able to form their own research questions and follow them up with valid, rigorously conducted research. In this model, students are doing the fundamental work of survey research and data collection, interviewing, data assembly, statistical analysis, interpretation of research findings and their implication for public policies.

This educational strategy functions as a launching pad to more advanced studies—and potentially, develops our students' research interests and capabilities, supports their career ambitions, and enhances their future educational and vocational options. The fact that such research bears on complex, often controversial issues like drugs and crime, may be turned to educational advantage by virtue of the fact that its familiarity yet thought-provoking nature makes it more potentially engaging to today's CRJ students. Over 80 percent of BMCC's CRJ graduates transfer to John Jay College, where they may continue to engage in criminological research while taking courses in in a variety of disciplines, such as criminology, forensic psychology, sociology, criminal justice, or public health and epidemiology.

The evolution of an approach to student-based research
The capstone course for criminology majors takes the approach described above. CRJ 204, "Crime and Justice in the Urban Environment," is described as follows:

> This course takes a critical approach to the study of crime and justice in urban settings. Course materials examine contemporary crime-related issues that affect urban communities within a historical and sociological context. The course highlights the intersections of deviant behavior and the criminal justice system within the structures of class, race, gender, and power inequalities. Topics explored may include racial profiling, juvenile delinquency, media representations of crime, policing, the war on drugs, and prisoner re-entry.

The social problems covered by this course description mirror many of those experienced, directly or indirectly, by the vast majority of our students. Most of the CRJ students in my classes self-identified as either working or lower middle class students of color[1], residing in underserved communities that are often subject to more heightened police scrutiny than more affluent neighborhoods in New York City. I incorporated this approach in the fall of 2013 for the first time, in two sections, one of which was writing intensive (requiring an extended version of the

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[1]BMCC/CUNY currently serves more than 32,500 students in its credit (24,500) and non-credit (8,000) programs. 90 percent out of the total of students is comprised of minorities and groups historically underrepresented in collegiate programs. African American students account for 32 percent, and Latino students for 40 percent of the total college population.

final paper, with additional interviews and longer neighborhood ethnographic description). Although a few students questioned at the beginning of the semester the value of writing about their own community, by the end of the semester the vast majority of the students reported greater appreciation of theoretical frameworks that help them make sense out of their environments. This was reflected in the quality of their papers and oral presentations. To supplement their research experience, and as part of this experiential learning continuum, a group of four students put together a panel presentation for the Cross Cultural Approaches to Latino Studies, (Faculty Interest Group First Annual Conference), titled "Beyond Access: Latino Education and the Community College." In this panel presentation students reflected on their overall learning experience conducting criminological research, as well as on their individual research findings, discussing core issues in criminological research, such as obstacles in "gaining access" to hidden populations, or "establishing rapport" with study participants. A second group of six diverse students will present in the upcoming Left Forum Conference on May 31/June 1—four female students (two African American, one Latina, and one Afro-Caribbean); and two male students (one Latino, and one African American).

Conference Panelists: Students (left to right) David Pierre Fanfan, Isaac Sharman, David Antigua, and Dylan Giordano (CRJ 102/005, Fall 2013).

I modeled this project, titled "Fear of Crime and Drugs in My Neighborhood", on that of my long-time collaborator at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Professor Ric Curtis. Curtis, an anthropologist, has incorporated student research into his "Drug Use and Abuse" courses for over 25 years. Historically, about 15 sections of the class were offered each semester, with an average class size of about 35 students. Beginning in 1988, students in some of the classes were asked to conduct ethnographic research, including neighborhood observations and at least 3 in-depth interviews, for their 6-8-page final papers entitled "Drugs in My Neighborhood." The in-depth interviews completed by students for these papers form a particularly rich source of data about drug and crime trends in the area, and they have sometimes included interviews with anonymous police officers, but more often than law enforcement personnel, drug users and drug dealers who are family members, friends or acquaintances are often recruited by students to take part in the study. Now that this project has been implemented over the last two semesters at BMCC, it will continue to be developed in upcoming semesters.

Outcomes

The research project includes three main tasks that students are required to complete, a 35-question survey that students were asked to administer to 10 people in their neighborhood; an annotated bibliography of secondary source material that students assembled about their neighborhoods; and, finally, three in-depth interviews and students' own observations of neighborhood conditions. Altogether, these components of the scaffolded paper result in a rich dataset about the perception of crime and drugs in the New York City area over time. To make the management of this rapidly growing database easier, beginning in 2014, students began entering all of the various types of data that they collect as separate entries in an online electronic database. Each survey, in-depth interview, ethnographic observation and secondary source was now entered by students separately so that manipulating and searching the data became far easier and efficient than searching through the texts of the final papers that students submitted at the end of each semester. By engaging in the data-entry step, on top of producing a final research paper, students get to experience the full process of what "becoming a social researcher" entails.

For many undergraduate students, the opportunity to conduct research that directly relates to their everyday lives, their families and their neighborhoods, motivates them to devote extraordinary amounts of time and energy to collecting data and interpreting that data.

It was clear from the beginning of this project that the quality of the work that many of the students produced for the class—especially the narratives that they wrote that described their neighborhoods and/or recounted in-depth interviews—exceeded the quality of the work that they routinely performed for other classes; they were simply more emotionally invested in this work as compared with studying for the multiple choice exams and/or writing the literature reviews that they were asked to complete in other CRJ classes.

One excellent example of the level of achievement is a neighborhood description from an African American male student living in the Bedford Park area of the Bronx. This student's introduction to his neighborhood ably incorporates some historical data, official statistics, and a review of the literature, to critically contextualize the narratives that he collected throughout his in-depth interviews:

> "I have lived in the northern part of the Bronx, in district seven, for a little over a year. When I first moved to this neighborhood I took immediate notice to the disparities of living conditions compared to the rest of the city. The Bronx is a wasteland filled with poverty, poor health conditions, terrible infrastructure, and crime. However, the Bronx was not always this way, especially in my neighborhood, home to the prestigious Fordham University.
>
> According to Mary Smith Murphy (2006), The Bronx was a beautiful and wonderful place to live and frequently thought of as a suburb. Considering that Mary Smith Murphy only lived around the corner from where I currently reside gives a perfect contrast between the past and the present. One major difference is that my community was mostly Irish and Jewish, but it is now comprised of Hispanics and Blacks. To be more specific, the

total population in district 7 (Bedford Park) is 141,000 people. Of that total number, 90,000 are Hispanic and 26,000 are Black/African-American (nyc. gov, 2013).

There was a major shift in racial makeup throughout the Bronx from 1950 to 1980, a shift also known as "white flight". By the end of World War II many Blacks and Hispanics migrated to The Bronx attracted to the rent stabilized apartments and the ease of transportation (Ruby, 2008). With the major shift in the racial demographics of the population the crime rates begin to rise sharply. For example, the number of reported crimes increased from 998 in 1960 to 4,256 in 1969 (Ruby, 2008). This number astonished me and made me question why did the number of crimes increase so much. With further research I found that most of the blacks and Hispanics who migrated to this area were without work, directly affected by deindustrialization and the disappearance of unionized employment that allowed people of color to become part of the middle class."

Taken as a whole, the narratives that students provide from their own observations and from the interviews that they conduct with people in their neighborhoods offer an insightful account of a variety of neighborhoods throughout New York City and the surrounding area, over time and space—from the excesses of the crack era to the rise in popularity of marijuana and club drugs, and more recently, the emergence of youth gangs and prescription pill abuse. For example, one male Latino student who focused on the area of Flushing, Queens, provided a nuanced description of the drug dealing activity given by one of his research participants (given the fictional name of "Taco"), during the in-depth interviews:

"…my interview with Taco made me also realize something else that was very critical in my eyes: the geographical dispersion found in Flushing, Queens, and how this plays a role in the way that crime and drugs come into play. In poor neighborhoods you would have a certain type of drugs that you could get anywhere, since the demand for expensive drugs were not so high. In wealthier neighborhoods there is really no demand for anything but expensive drugs, such as cocaine. Flushing is a unique neighborhood in that it is an upper middle class area with spots of poor minority groups scattered all over it. Taco made me see it as a jungle. He was trying to explain in his interview how grateful he is to have started to sell drugs in the right neighborhood, right when there was a high demand for all drugs, and how he can also get a hold of any drugs or guns as needed. Taco even told me he has ways of making a sale without it being a direct sale just in case of the undercover cops. I believe all these little things contribute to the success of drug dealing: the easier it is to supply the drugs in a specific area, the more demand there will be for it."

Responses like this are typical of the project.

The impact of combining multiple classes from multiple institutions involving

hundreds of students each semester had the effect of propelling the project to another level of coordination, sophistication and potential. Faculty and students alike realized that the data collected and aggregated by the hundreds of students each semester had value beyond being simply a classroom exercise; that it could be a valuable source of data about public health and safety in the New York City area, and thus, it had implications for policy and practice in a number of fields.

For students, the benefits of participating in this research are numerous. Among others, I anticipate this study will (a) help BMCC students feel part of a learning community; (b) increase faculty-student interaction and enhance their professional bond; (c) improve students' communication skills; (d) build an appreciation for the scientific method of enquiry and greater science literacy; (e) increase critical thinking and problem solving skills; and, most importantly, (f) have students experience a dramatic increase in self-confidence and ability to engage in higher level academic work.

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Teacher Education and Critical Thinking: An Introduction

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I am an early childhood teacher educator... one who loves early childhood policy. And, in the recent months, as some of you might know, my colleagues within my Teacher Education Department and I have spent a great deal of time revising the Teacher Education programs. This effort was not without cause. I assume that our reasons may not be clear to the entire BMCC community but our Teacher Education students are why we began to change. This is yet one reason of how critical thinking serves our discipline. Policy would be the other reason that prompted us to change. Recently teacher certification requirements and a new mandated fourth assessment—a Digital Teacher Portfolio—prompted TED to take stock and undergo a "rethinking of our thinking." This work brought me here to write this article today.

The skills and processes involved in critical thinking are influential to early childhood teacher education preparatory programs. For me, it involves an understanding of a broader discussion of learning theory, and within it, a subset of ideals that are specific to the early childhood teacher education field.

Foremost, for my field, is the belief that "Teachers of the young must have the ability to think analytically" (Feeney, 2012, p. 42). Dare I call it the "Critical Thinking Common Core" of the teaching discipline? Jean Piaget, an epistemologist, first espoused this idea, and, it is foundational understanding written into the Code of Ethics from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2011). In my own practice, I know this to be true, because I have tried and continue to act upon this knowledge daily in my work. In fact, writing this talk was almost an act of editing my own philosophy of education.

The topic of critical thinking makes me think of three things: (i) learning is a lifelong process based upon individuals' experience; (ii) it involves action and interaction; and (iii) it can be enhanced by reflection. These items are three core elements of my work in my classroom.

The first consideration, as a teacher of teachers, is the idea that learning is life-long and involves an individual's experience.
This core element helps me recall that every student who enters my classroom is at a different stage of life. My students, just like children, are not blank slates: each has prior knowledge about something. This also reminds me that young children learn in a distinctly different manner than older children or the young adults and adults enrolled in my courses. Hence, daily, I try to show respect to all students as my means to promote how respect ought to be modeled to the children placed in their care.

This idea in early childhood teacher education is called the "principal of congruity" and it was first discussed by Lilian Katz in 1977. And, later, Vander-Ven (2000) explained that this principle is derived from two suppositions: "One is that [early childhood teacher educators] serve as a model for both adult and child students; the other is that there are generic teaching principles applicable to learners of all ages" (p. 256), such as the respect that ought to be modeled to children soon to be placed into my students care. So... often, this means that I must explain how my teaching displays my understanding of how differently my students learn in comparison to young children. Often this means that my teaching involves a lot of materials, which I often cart between my office and my classroom. And what is particularly important with that action is that my curriculum students are your students and we know that most of our students did not have utopian early learning experiences.

My students require me to promote and teach best practices carefully to them, without being disrespectful to my students' beloved early learning experiences. Often I use my knowledge of child development and intentional practice to question students about what they believe about how young children learn and often my comments are based upon what materials they do or do not use and how an activity is crafted to unfold. VanderVen's suppositions and Katz's principle of congruity are a core consideration for the early childhood teacher education field; it grounds action. It is applicable to both young and adult learners in the continuation of the lifelong learning journey.

Particularly important to TED and our revision of our program, was knowing that we have to provide learning experiences that would support our students' abilities to continue learning within other teacher education programs so they could realize their dreams. Their teacher certification is dependent on finishing at a senior college and entering graduate school, and passing mandated assessments. Our students needed a more developed skills set.

Second

Learning is active and interactive. For my discipline, *learning being active and interactive* is the idea that one's experience leads to other experiences and, according to John Dewey, "Everything depends on the quality of the experience which is had" (cited in Feeney, 2011, p. 35). Active learning experiences are essential to my students. I must replace non-utopian learning experiences with new experiences that resemble the best practices adopted by my field.

A friend and non-early childhood colleague reminded me that my own classroom is always very noisy—whether noise from me or some other ECE colleague. And, it is true. We are noisy. Walking by our door, you will see students actively using materials. My students need to use blocks, linker cubes, marbles, magnifying glasses, chart paper and tubs of water and sand to emulate real early childhood classrooms. I liken students' initial use of blocks to that of my first search for a "favorite study location" at the Teachers College Library during my first week in NYC. I didn't know where to start: a good portion of my students have never seen nor touched the materials I am asking them to use when they are in classrooms for young children. Getting the blocks off the shelf is half the battle,

because they know that putting them away might be difficult—"so why bother?" Contrary to the discomfort "picking up" blocks provides to young adults, when I facilitate using these materials and encourage experiences for my students, I am teaching technical knowledge in an active and interactive way. The use of these new experiences with materials and children is pivotal to their metacognition about their learning, teaching and their continued learning.

Jones and Bowman, two other early childhood teacher educators, separately discuss experiences as being comprised of both technical and personal types of knowledge. They suggest a learning cycle, where personal experiences and knowledge serves as the filter through which all new technical experience and knowledge flows,—and then which, in turn, influences students' personal experience and knowledge once again. To this need for both personal and technical experiences and knowledge, I try to take time to have students write informally about their Early Childhood learning experiences. I ask them about who was involved; did they have educational materials, such as blocks or water tables. I ask them to share how it felt to begin as well as to end the play. And, I have them take observations of our class time with the materials. How was it similar or different from the programs they know now?

Constantly, and no matter the age, I think about how my lessons actively engage my students and interactively build on prior experiences. Learning like this provides for experiences that can support my student's critical thinking skills, embraced by my discipline.

Third—Learning can be enhanced by reflection. Reflection, here, is way to meta-cognitively comment on thinking and in this way, to me, it is a teaching method, or, plainly, how any teacher develops new strategies. Reflection, here, also includes criteria, or the bases by which prior thinking is examined.

Earlier, I outlined how both Jones (1986a) and Bowman (1989) discuss new experiences as essential to new thinking. I argue also that reflection is a method that supports how "thinking" can be used by teachers to benefit children. For example, I am sure you reflect on what you teach by how your students respond to the subject matter. I, too, use it to understand how my students learn about supporting children's learning while using state-adopted learning standards or best practice methods. Or to offer another example, with my 400 level fieldwork course, I use my knowledge of child development and experiences to support students' understanding of choices made by their fieldwork placement teachers. Particularly, this modeled reflection is important when a student shares that she wanted a different result to occur for either her or for a child in her assigned classroom. Modeling a teacher's habits of mind, in that moment, I remember what Jones says, "[everyone] needs a model, someone who's been there before and can suggest useful organizational and survival strategies" (1986a, p. 120). To me and to others in my field, reflection provides an opportunity to create new choices as an expression of respect for the learner and the learning setting. Reflection, as a method, enacts a type of choice making which empowers my students during the learning process. And, I should say for the record, Rachel Theilheimer, Leslie Williams, and Thomas Sobol are the models I recall when I go to stretch myself through reflection.

Finally, what makes reflection unique within early childhood teacher education is the balance between technical and personal or self-knowledge. An almost synthesis must occur as new experiences build new knowledge.

Williams (1996) describes the bases of knowledge most teachers hold. She outlines five areas of knowledge as "(1) socially mediated life experience, (2) previously formed belief systems, (3) professional study and (4) dispositions stemming from cumulative classroom observation and (5) direct engagement in teaching" (p. 156). If we sorted these bases, then simply they would most likely fall into two categories—personal and technical knowledge. Like others, Williams argues, and I agree, these categories influence ECE teachers and ECE teachers will always need to strive for that balance—because learning is constant—lifelong. Leslie writes—and I love this idea—"The conscious recognition of these bases leads to power over them." That is to say teachers' ability to develop, change, replace or possibly create 'new' ways of teaching, or to provide better explanations about the ways they teach "or extend the practice in question" (p. 156) depends on this empowering balance of technical and personal knowledge. Our students for better or for worse must engage in a balancing act.

I believe from my own experience that most learners do not easily achieve this balance or that maybe this balance is one that constantly needs to be reassessed. For example, in my own classroom in September, a student who was a new mother in my introductory course used her "mother" instincts as a guide to how she should respond as a classroom teacher to a case study. The case study for the activity discussed a high contagious disease that affects toddler programs. Initially she hesitated. Yet, by the end of the discussion about the use of ethics to guide early childhood work in classrooms, this student stated to me that she had a better understanding how difficult teaching was going to be. My job is to create thinking teachers because that is what my student's deserved and that's what every child deserves to receive.

Today, and in summary, I have shared a little bit about how critically thinking is a part of my early childhood teacher education work. Learning is lifelong, involves actions and interaction; and is enhanced by reflection. Keeping these global ideas present in my considerations about teaching and learning assists me in supporting what I intend to be quality experiences for students.

It assists me in advisement as I try to really listen to students and hear what they know and want for themselves and their careers. It assists me in being a reflective model for others. I try to distinctly shape my work here at BMCC with these ideas.

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How is that Going to Help Me?": Helping Students See the Bigger Educational Picture

Jason Schneiderman
English

There are two primary ways that students perceive college as incoherent. One is that students perceive college as a mix of useful and useless classes. Students think of college as job training, so classes are valuable only insofar as they give them skills that they see as directly related to their careers. A nursing class or accounting class is "going to help" them, while a psychology class or a music class is not. The second is that students perceive classes as having different rules for no reason. Because students tend to think of education as being able to follow instructions or memorize facts, the different requirements of different classes often feel incoherent to our students, especially with regard to writing styles. My own feeling is that students are not entirely wrong, but because their knowledge is partial, they cannot see that general education and disciplinary difference are the bedrock of the college's value to them.

In order to achieve the larger goal of expanding student understandings of education, I want to work on two tracks. The first is that I'd like to give you a "thick description" of how we got here. I'm going to talk to you as colleagues about the genealogy of the American University, focusing on two pivotal moments in the history of American Higher Education. Then I'll make very direct suggestions about how to talk to students using a "thin description" that helps them make sense of the college in which they find themselves pursuing degrees.

Historical Event 1: In 1876, Daniel Coit Gilman became the first president of the newly founded Johns Hopkins University. Gilman had spent the 1850s touring French and German universities, and he wanted to bring the European University's focus on specialization and research to the United States (Graff 56-7). For the first time in American colleges, departments were cohorts of scholars grouped by disciplinary approach (58). In order to give these scholars the chance to publish their work, Gilman created the Johns Hopkins University Press in 1878—the first university press in the United States—and encouraged the creation of scholarly journals (58). This is basically the university that we recognize. Disciplines are defined by a method of inquiry and an object of study. The disciplines are self-policed through peer-reviewed publication and graduate study. Prior to late 1800's, American undergraduates usually went through all their classes together, and there was a heavy focus on Christian theology and ancient languages. There was not a lot of emphasis on what we would now call critical thinking. "The Yale report of 1828 defended the standard practice of teaching from a single textbook… it warned that reading a half-dozen different books tended to create confusion in the student's mind" (27). College operated on what Paolo Freire called "The banking model" in which students simply "withdraw" the knowledge in their teacher's heads.

Historical Event 2: In 1900, 31 years after become the president of Harvard, Charles Norton Eliot succeeded in requiring a Bachelor's degree as a prerequisite

for graduate work (Menand 46). Like Gilman, Eliot was an educational reformer, displeased with American education as he found it in the late 1800s. Here is Louis Menand's description of professional schools prior to Eliot:

> In 1869, Eliot's first year as president, half of the students at Harvard Law School and nearly three quarters of the students at Harvard Medical School had not attended college and did not hold undergraduate degrees. These were, comparatively, respectable numbers. Only 19 of the 411 medical students at the University of Michigan, and none of the 387 law students there, had prior degrees of any kind. There were no admissions requirements at Harvard Law School, beyond evidence of "good character" and the ability to pay the hundred dollars tuition, which went into the pockets of the law professors. There were no grades or exams and students often left before the end of the two-year curriculum to go to work. They received their degrees on schedule anyway... To get an MD at Harvard, students were obliged to take a ninety minute oral examination, during which nine students rotated among nine professors, all sitting in one large room, spending ten minutes with each. When the ninety minutes were up, a bell sounded, and the professors, without consulting one another, marked pass or fail for their fields on a chalkboard. Any student who passed five of the nine fields became a doctor. (46)

My guess is that this is a state of affairs that most of our students would actually find quite preferable. There are few gatekeepers to education, and the school played almost no gatekeeping function with regard to profession.

Historically, these two events are the keys to the puzzle that our students often cannot solve. The incredibly different demands and requirements of different classes are based in Gilman's introduction of disciplines, and the requirement to pursue a broad curriculum before (or while) professionalizing are found in Eliot's requirement of a BA prior to pursuing graduate school.

However, I am not suggesting that you give frustrated students a history of the American University. What I am suggesting is that we give students a clear sense of how the university is organized and why they have to take courses that will not "help them" as well as understanding why there are different rules for different classes. And here I offer my own approach for helping students to see that what initially looks likes incoherence as the most valuable and distinct aspect of attending college.

The first thing that I explain to students is that the different subjects at a college are based on different problem solving techniques. So in an art class, you might start with a lump of clay and have to get to a vase. In a math class, you might start with an equation and need to get to a line on a graph. Sometimes the disciplines overlap. Sociology, Psychology, and Nursing might all take obesity as an object of study, but each approach it differently. Sociology will want to understand what about the organization of the culture leads to obesity. Psychologists will want to understand why someone might make decisions that lead to obesity. Nurses will look at the physical causes and effects of obesity on a patient. I try to explain that these different approaches determine all sorts of things. For example,

you learn MLA style in humanities, and APA style in the sciences. APA requires you to include the year of the source in the text because scientists think of the most recent knowledge as the most accurate. It makes sense that you should be discussing cancer research from 2010, not 1932. Humanists, on the other hand, consider themselves to be engaged in a timeless conversation. We still care about what Aristotle, Shakespeare, and Emerson had to say—regardless of the distance in time between themselves and us—so MLA doesn't require years in the text. It can be confusing to study Chemistry in the morning, Economics in the afternoon, and Literature in the evening, because they have completely different objects of study and approaches—but those differences are ultimately what makes an associates or bachelors degree valuable.

The second thing that I try to explain is that having access to all of these different problem solving techniques *is* a form of job training. In the example I just gave, a Nursing class will take a particular approach to obesity, but the nurse will have to have some sociological or psychological understanding of their patients. It's not enough to be able to insert a catheter skillfully or take vital signs accurately—you have to understand the whole person, and here is where we can put the "universal" in university. The reason your employer will value your degree is precisely because you have been exposed to all these techniques. That art class *is* going to help you—but you can't predict when you will need that particular problem solving skill. Students are correct that procedural knowledge involves knowing how to apply a method, but they frequently don't know that the other half of procedural knowledge is knowing *when* to apply a method.

And, of course, if students only want to learn one problem solving technique—there are trade schools, conservatories, and vocational programs. To become a plumber, one need not complete a "Scientific World" or "Creative Expression" elective, and I use this example because I have a huge respect for plumbers and because the median salary for a plumber in Nassau County is higher than my own salary. But as our students have chosen to pursue an Associates Degree, they should understand both what it means to potential employers and how it determines their course of study.

I left my description of English to the last. English is the study of representations—it's the foundational skill of examining how different people understand the world and show it to be working. Understanding *Richard the Third* requires the same skills as deciding who to vote for or getting a good evaluation at your job. The presentation that I've just given is profoundly influenced by my discipline because I am discussing how education is represented in the minds of our students and how it's represented in my mind, and how I think it should best be represented. Of course, I think a Writing and Literature major is learning skills that are valued in every workplace by every employer, whether they know it or not. I hope that when you give this speech, you'll be able to make a similar claim for the value of your own discipline, while also making clear to students how the rest of us fit into the picture. I believe strongly in the value of disciplinary specialization, and I think that with the right explanation, students can see their educations as a whole, offered by an institution that should be celebrated for its differences rather than derided for its incoherencies.

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Emotion-Work and Anti-Racist Pedagogy: Managing Students' Complex Responses to Teaching and Learning about Racism

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Introduction

Teaching about race and racism through a critical lens requires recognition that this process can be both painful as well as transformative for our students. Unlike math or physics, in sociology courses students often have strong emotional responses to the topics and theories we discuss. The management of these feelings in the classroom or in individual encounters with students requires substantial emotional labor on the part of faculty who are viewed to be allies and/or available to hold the intensity of the students' emotional and affective experience of the course material. As teachers with a commitment to anti-racist pedagogy, and to building spaces within which we can foster a consciousness of oppression that is rooted in the "authority of experience" of students of color (hooks 1994), we explore here the resistance, and sometimes refusal, of our students to connect structural racism to everyday life experiences. We also explore our own experience as women of color who do not share black or latin@ identity with the majority of our students, and the emotional labor we engage in to effectively teach about forms of structural racism. This paper will address pedagogical strategies we use in the classroom and also modes through which we can build peer and institutional support for anti-racist pedagogy and minoritized faculty members.

Resistance, Refusal, Relief

Students of all racial and other social identities express resistance to studying racism. African American psychologist Beverly Daniel Tatum (1992) describes three sources of this resistance: 1) race is considered a taboo topic for discussion; 2) students have been socialized to think of the U.S. as a just society (the myth of meritocracy), and 3) students, particularly white students, initially deny any personal prejudice, recognizing the impact of racism on other people's lives but failing to acknowledge its impact on their own. In our experience at BMCC, students do not necessarily deny that there is structural racism or doubt the existence of discrimination but may see their personal situation as "the way things are" and not as part of larger forces of oppression in cultural and institutional frameworks. They believe so powerfully in the achievement ideology that brought them to college that a critical examination of racism makes many students uncomfortable. When they look around their communities and families, they see being in college itself as having "made it" in comparison to other people who they believe lack goals, ambition or a work ethic. To acknowledge and critique structural barriers feels too close to "excusing" peers or as discouragement if they are told that despite hard work, students of color may face structural barriers. Sometimes these attitudes and ideas are on the surface and students express them openly,

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but other times, they may be subconscious, feeding into resistance rooted in un-articulated fears and frustrations.

The first form of resistance is the belief that discussing race and racism in itself encourages racism. Based in dominant ideologies of "color-blindness" and "post-racial society," this challenge contends that talking about racism is danger-ous because it strengthens racism. Here, examples of racism are interpreted as exceptional and can be explained by circumstances, thus upholding colorblind ideology. For example, in (Soniya's) Sociology 100 class discussion of *The New Jim Crow* by Michelle Alexander, students brought in examples of their own and/or community experiences of racial profiling via Stop and Frisk practices in NYC to ground the author's argument about the powerful role that police discretion plays in creating a racial caste system in the United States (2012). At the same time, students insisted that the U.S. legal system is now colorblind. This move serves simultaneously to uphold dominant ideology and to invalidate the experi-ence of being profiled by implying that these are individual exceptions or mis-takes, occurring outside the norm of the law, and not produced by the law itself. And, at the same time, other students, who did not relate to this experience, were clear that they had never been stopped under Stop and Frisk because they "did not do anything wrong." In these discussions, the professor can become a proxy for students' frustration and the barriers they may have and may still face. Students' responses can range from silence or refusal to read or do assignments to angry confrontations in the classroom or during office hours.

The second form of resistance centers on the power of the achievement ide-ology or the myth of meritocracy. From the "I'm a strong (fill-in-the blanks) and I can overcome anything" narrative to "What about Jay-Z?" students often place blame of lack of achievement among minority group members on their lack of determination. They utilize narratives of personal responsibility with their own desire to "make it" where being in college is evidence of their own agency. A formerly incarcerated person in (Rifat's) sociology of the family course said he was tired of hearing college professors talk about inequality because in his expe-rience, when minority group members hear liberals talk about racism, they just decide to give up and they use racism as an excuse for not trying. Here, hope plays a big role; even if students accept that the exceptional cases are just that, the myth of meritocracy offers hope that can serve as motivation. The problem, of course, is that structural obstacles become interpreted as personal failures, and the emphasis on individualism does not allow for solutions to social problems on collective or structural levels.

Lastly is the response that "I've never experienced racism or discrimination in my life," where the student perceives racism as an interpersonal phenomenon rather than a structural problem. For many students, they had not encountered overt individual forms of racism because they lived and attended school in com-munities of color. To have these conversations develop well requires discussion of structure, stratification, ideology, and other engagements with the distributions of power in society. This can bring up conflict between the ways that students see themselves and the ways in which a sociological perspective can place their social location. For example, in one class, students articulated that their commu-

nities are "just as racist" towards white people as white people are towards them. Moving this conversation out of the interpersonal realm required a discussion of racial hierarchies, racism, and the difference between racism and resistance to racism. Another example comes up in conversations about W.E.B. DuBois's articulation of "double consciousness," in which students disagree that they have ever experienced this double way of seeing their selves; if their own individual experience does not resonate, they also disagree that what he writes is "true." Here, the challenge is to create an opening for students that is not prescriptive, or assumes knowledge of their own interior selves, but that is also attentive to the barriers that they/we have had to put up in order to survive the pressures of educational institutions.

Dialogues about race and racism in a classroom made up of students of color have the potential to be transformative, and part of this process can be emotional, including triggering experiences of trauma (as we understand that racism itself can be traumatic). Of course, there are always a few students who are eager to talk about these issues with some feeling that for the first time, they have a space to articulate some of the thoughts and feelings they have had about racial discrimination and inequality. Others have read or discussed these issues in an English or other social science course and are excited to add to their knowledge and engage in discussions. One of the challenges that emerges, then, is to avoid having a small group discussion between a professor and a few eager students while the rest of the class looks on but tries to create an engaging classroom environment where those normally silent students feel moved to participate either through discussion or in their written work.

Pedagogical Strategies that Attend to Social Change

Nancy Davis (1992) identifies an additional response that can emerge in sociology courses focusing on inequality, and that is paralysis, where students feel depressed and paralyzed, unable to see the potential for creating social change. Students' responses, which include resistance, paralysis, even trauma in discussions of racism, can create a barrier to learning, so it becomes important to teach in ways that harnesses these complex emotions into a transformative experience. Recognizing that these dynamics and emotional undercurrents exist in the classroom is the first step in an approach that incorporates the scholarly/ intellectual aspects of racism theory but also informs an anti-racist pedagogy which deals directly with the emotional fallout of confronting difficult topics. Feedback from students has directly included comments about the course feeling "depressing," or leaving them feeling overwhelmed and unsure about what to do about all that they have learned. A critical strategy here, then, is to ensure that course texts both demonstrate the limitations that structural oppression produce as well as social change strategies that work to dismantle these structures. For example, pairing a text like *The New Jim Crow*, which details the structural racism of the criminal legal system and prison system in the United States, with a film like *Visions of Abolition*, which demonstrates the visionary work of prison abolitionists in the U.S., offers the students both a deeper understanding of social forces and the creativity and dedication of social movements that work to change these con-

ditions of oppression. Another example is to connect course materials to local organizing projects, such as pairing a text about transnational families, migration, and changes in the domestic sphere (e.g. Rhacel Parreñas's work on Filipina domestic workers in the U.S.) with materials from the National Domestic Workers' Alliance, an organization that fights for labor rights of domestic workers.

Understanding where students are coming from can be difficult. For faculty at community colleges, there is an extra layer of complexity where students may be struggling not only on a personal level but academically as well. Students feel vulnerable and insecure on a number of levels as they struggle not only with the substantive aspects of course content but also with academic preparedness whose challenges that might make them feel doubly frustrated. It is important to tackle the dual frustrations and understand the myriad factors that may make our classes difficult for students, both emotionally and academically. For those students eager and prepared to learn and discuss race critically, the classroom is a place for both intellectual and personal growth, but for others we as faculty need to develop strategies to address the challenges they face on different fronts. In developing pedagogies and practices that confront these difficulties head on, our classrooms truly have the potential for creating transformative and liberatory experiences for our students. This involves both a continual rethinking of our course content and assignments, but also developing effective ways to manage emotions in the classroom.

As sociologists, we have an understanding of the structural and cultural forces that have shaped our students' lives and we are well-positioned to develop pedagogy that can address the complexity of their learning experiences. In discussing the idea of sociology as pedagogy, Judith Halasz and Peter Kauffman (2008) call for a reflexive pedagogy where teaching is linked to sociological practice. For sociology professors at community colleges, this is something we tend to put in practice through teaching as a form of social justice work. So when we choose readings, develop assignments, and provide academic supports, we are actively pursuing the dual goals of "achieving learning outcomes" and of promoting positive change in our students' lives. This requires practical strategies in terms of assignments and course content but also emotion-work which requires us to tap into our own strengths and vulnerabilities.

Pedagogical strategies:
• Whenever possible, give students context, alternative views and background information about assigned materials

• Provide students with "low stakes" writing opportunities to reflect on what they read and learn; encourage students to reflect upon their own experiences and link them to larger social forces (i.e. hone their "sociological imaginations")

• Clarify expectations about mutual respect and boundaries when discussing issues related to race, inequality, gender and sexuality

• Encourage students to discuss these issues with each other through focused group activities or partner dialogues

- In formal writing assignments, provide students with opportunities for reflection in addition to reporting and analysis

- Provide feedback which honors students' efforts—think about guiding and revising rather than "correction"

- Offer mini-lessons and provide the whole class with information about developing reading, writing, analytical skills so that less prepared students don't feel singled out

- Use classroom outbursts as opportunities to clarify the environment you want to promote in the classroom

- Let students know that you are available for further discussion outside the classroom

- Bring in course material that shows both the limitations that structural oppression produces as well as social change efforts that disrupt these forces.

Balancing Emotion-Work and Institutional Pressures

The social identities of the instructor inevitably come into play in how these conversations are constructed, and in the responses that we both give and are expected to give. Students can have ambivalent feelings about instructors, whom they see as inherently privileged, even if they are faculty of color. For us, as South Asian women, being read as "ambiguous non-whites" (Kibria 1996), who are associated with stereotypes ranging from "model minority" to "terrorist," can add to the ambivalence. Gender dynamics come into play as male students challenge or attempt to provoke or intimidate us in front of the class. As female professors of color, we challenge their assumptions of how professors or other authority figures should look and act. Yet, our authority, age, and relative class privilege (as full-time faculty) positions us as distant from them, even if there are also points of connection. Here, identities, ideas, and interests (e.g. women of color, anti-racism, discussions of structural racism) can become conflated, leading to expectations of disclosure of personal information.

Navigating this terrain requires an intentionality of disclosure (King 2013). Students may want to know—and we may want to offer—information about ourselves that allows the students to connect with us through shared experience. Additionally, because we teach sociology, "everyday experiences" can offer us rich sites for exploration and analysis. Pedagogical approaches that include disclosure on the part of the professor offer a potential disruption in the power dynamics between students and professors as well; for example, in *Teaching to Transgress*, hooks states that she never asks her students to reveal anything about themselves that she would not also reveal. However, we may intentionally not disclose, especially when our own social positions are marginalized (e.g. due to sexual identity, religion, etc.), and may choose to create that distance for many reasons, including pedagogical commitments (i.e. we want to focus on ideas and not identities) as well as real concerns about emotional and personal safety (King 2013). These negotiations of social identity and position in the classroom add

another layer of emotion work for women of color professors who teach about intersectionality of oppression as part of our course material.

Across all institutions, faculty are asked to accomplish an ever-increasing set of tasks; community college faculty are especially challenged. In our institution, we not only have teaching and service requirements, but we are required to do research and publish for tenure and promotion. In order to balance our commitments both to our students and to our careers, we have to recognize the need to reach out to and create supports for the work we do. In contrast to research procedures which require us to have a protocol for working with human subjects, in teaching we have no such clear protocols. In the "nurturing" work that we do as teachers, students with emotional responses to the content we teach seek us out for counsel and support. As faculty we need to seek out resources for our students both within the college and in the communities where our students reside. Faculty who incorporate this level of emotional labor into their teaching practice run the risk of isolation and their own emotional overload. It is important for us to seek out and create opportunities across classrooms and disciplines to support other faculty engaged in anti-racist pedagogy and social justice-oriented teaching. This strategy is helpful both to disrupt the isolation that we may feel as professors, but also because it helps to deprivatize the issues that we discuss so that they are not limited to our classrooms. For students to interact with other faculty members—beyond their own individual professor—who are tackling similar issues in their classes decenters the primary professor as the sole representative/conduit of the hard conversations.

Among the recommendations we will outline, there is a need to create spaces to support minority faculty who carry this emotion-work in order to disrupt isolation, as well as to create an environment in which dynamics of power and privilege among faculty can be addressed. It will not be possible for junior faculty to achieve this one their own, but they can seek potential allies among mid-career and senior colleagues, and they can lay the groundwork for creating a culture of support through other strategies like collaborative teaching projects and participating in informal peer networks.

Strategies for faculty across classrooms:
• Implement horizontal/peer-based strategies that support minoritized faculty

• Create/encourage the creation of formal/informal mentoring networks for faculty of color and their allies

• Engage in collaborative teaching efforts with faculty with similar orientations e.g. bringing in outside speakers or taking students on a joint field trip; seek out peer allies among peers and senior faculty and sympathetic administrators

• Integrate the idea of wellness as central to, not outside of, education, including attention to our own wellness as faculty as an essential factor in creating a setting for effective and difficult dialogue (see hooks 1994 for a longer discussion about wellness)

Conclusion

While students of all racial and other social identities express resistance to studying racism, there are unique dimensions that come up in classrooms made up of a diverse composition of students of color and facilitated by women of color professors. This paper addresses the different forms of resistance, refusal, and relief that students enact in conversations about structural racism, as well as the impacts that we experience as women of color. Through different recommended strategies, we propose the creation of supportive, transformative learning experiences for students but also to create support networks to address the potential isolation and marginalization of faculty in similar positions.

Community college faculty are engaged in all manners of invisible labor. We often take it as a given that emotion-work is part of our teaching but we do not necessarily address the consequences of this work. When teaching race and racism, emotions run especially high and it can be difficult to manage without having "protocols" or strategies to manage students' emotions and our own responses. In proposing strategies to support both students and faculty, we hope to broaden the discussion of ways in which we can empower and nurture ourselves as well as our students.

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Teaching about Inequality and Discrimination to Marginalized/Disadvantaged Students

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This summer, I presented my research at the International AIDS Conference in Melbourne, Australia. My paper "The Association of Marginalization with HIV Risk Behavior Differs by Primary versus Non-Primary Partner Type among Inter-racial Gay Male Couples" was presented during the poster session. The research explores the impact of various forms of discrimination (i.e. homophobia, racism) on interracial same sex couples. One of the participants' most asked questions was "Why interracial couples?" and "How do they experience discrimination?" For my part, I thought this question was incredible because I thought that the relationship between discrimination and health outcomes is fairly obvious, and that as scholars and academics, the participants would have a firm understanding of this as well. After all, HIV as a health issue disproportionately affects people of color and indigent people worldwide (aids.gov, 2012). I was disappointed to find out some of my colleagues could not see the connections. Even among my research study team, some of the members questioned the reasons why I would choose to look at interracial couples at all and how this would be related to health outcomes. It was frustrating to me, as a medical sociologist who focuses on health disparities, to know that some of my colleagues who study health know little about the impact of discrimination on one's well-being.

Then I thought about the United States, and more particularly about my students. Race has become a hot button issue once again in the United States, with the incidents taking place in Ferguson, Missouri, as well as the one that happened in New York City in July 2014, in which Eric Garner was placed in a chokehold on Staten Island—and died—when police officers saw him as a threat, although witnesses say he was simply selling loose cigarettes. Even in what appears to be civil unrest and resistance in Ferguson that is tied to race, there is still a debate about whether race is a factor or simply a byproduct or secondary to the incidents that took place. White Americans and Americans of color look at issues of race very differently. According to a recent CBS Poll, forty percent of blacks say there is a lot of discrimination against African-Americans today, compared to just 15 percent of whites how believe there is (Dutton, et. Al., 2013).

Based on this data, it's clear that Americans have a very different view on whether racial discrimination still continues. After President Obama's election in 2008, there was discourse held throughout the country in academic circles, as well as in the media and within communities as to whether we were now experiencing a post-racial era and that our society was quickly becoming colorblind. The rationale to this "post-racial era" was that since the United States elected a Black man, we have leaped over the long legacy of racial tension hurdle and crossed as W.E.B. DuBois described, "the problem of the 21st century" finish line, so to speak. There were conferences, news programs, and lengthy discussions about the United States as a post-racial, color-blind society and yet we

have witnessed racial tension in the U.S. in the forms of Amadou Diallo, Sean Bell, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, and Eric Garner.

So, it's no surprise that students who enter my class are confused or ignorant about social inequality and racial discrimination in the United States, even though many of them come from communities that are affected by income inequality and racial discrimination. The one tough part of teaching about discrimination and inequality is that we live in a country as great as the United States that espouses the ideals of equality and democracy, while at the same time demonstrates a historical legacy of discrimination and unequal treatment. As a nation it is difficult for us to conceive that we promoted policies that stripped land away from indigenous people (see Native Americans and Mexicans), enslaved a group of people (See African Americans and poor White ethnics), placed our own people in camps during World War II (See Japanese Americans), exploited workers for cheap labor using their bodies to create the great industrial marvels that we still use today (See White ethnic Americans; African Americans, Chinese Americans). So it's hard for students to not make the connection between their own experiences as disadvantaged and as Americans with those from the past. Like the rest of Americans, many of my students have not been told about these events or do not want to relive/think about them.

And here lies the problem. The totality of student's learning experience about income inequality and racial discrimination is taught to them in the context of the African-American experience and slavery. This type of discourse leaves students dismally unprepared to think about and discuss social inequality in meaningful ways once they reach my class and leaves them dangerously unprepared for dealing with social inequality once they leave our campus. Many of us want to wish away the bad things, like racism, sexism, homophobia, and discrimination, as if not talking about it will make it go away, like one does as kids to make the bogeyman go away. However, closing our eyes doesn't prepare our students for the very real world experiences of both discrimination and social inequality that many of these students may experience in their lifetime. One only has to read the newspaper or the internet to acknowledge the various examples of social inequality that takes place in our country and worldwide on a daily basis. For many of these students they do not simply have to look to Ferguson, Missouri or Sanford, Florida. They can look in our own backyards, in the neighborhoods of East New York, where racial profiling is rampant for young Black and Latino men who may be our students, or to Bushwick, where a young man was attacked two years ago because he was mistaken for gay because he was walking down the street embracing his brother or in my neighborhood, in Harlem, where a young transgender woman was attacked and killed by a young Black man in the fall of 2013, who was expected to go back to college the following week. What I'm suggesting is that our inability to teach our students about both social inequality and discrimination can literally be dangerous to their lives. Moreover, that both social inequality and discrimination takes place in our great, diverse city, every day. Even as I write this article, the *New York Times* reported in September 2014 that Manhattan is the most stratified place in the country based on data reported by the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (*NYT*, 2014). According to

the census data, the top 5% of families in Manhattan make 88% more income than 20 percent of the poorest families. This amounts to approximately $60,000 (*NYT*, 2014). You may wonder how a city that is so rich in diversity and culture can have such disparity in wealth. If it's hard for us to fathom, what is it like for students who may come from communities that have/are neglected, or from families where they may be the first person in their family to attend college or even graduate from high school?

As some of you read this, you will say to yourself that "We talk too much about inequality and discrimination" or "We've talked about this enough already". That's just the point. Perhaps our students haven't. While there may have been meaningful conversations about race, inequality, and discrimination for previous generations in the past, for many students from disadvantaged backgrounds, some of them have never had these conversations and are only just beginning to gain the language to articulate what some of them have already been experiencing. I think it's our job to equip them with an awareness about social inequality and to inspire and provide them with ways to navigate and deal with these issues in their everyday lives.

The 2000s, the decade in which many of our current students came of age, certainly doesn't help them acquire consciousness around inequality. Between the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the great recession, reducing inequality and developing social programs that address inequality became an afterthought to increases in war budgets and increased scrutiny and surveillance of people characterized as "other", namely non-whites. We've seen policies implemented in places like Alabama, Texas, and Arizona to restrict the rights of average Americans through voter ID laws, redistricting, and immigration enforcement legislation.

Students, whether advantaged or disadvantaged, have three specific ways of dealing with issues of inequality and discrimination according to Sociologist Nancy Davis. She describes the three forms of response as *resistant*, *paralysis* and *enraged* (Davis, 1992). Many of our students can be described as what Nancy Davis calls as "resistant students", students, both advantaged and disadvantaged students who often deny the existence of systematic or structural determinants of inequality such as discrimination and prejudice, and who fail to see how structural inequality affects their opportunities for success (Davis, 1992). Students develop very sophisticated rationales to explain the systematic inequalities that they fall victim to in their daily lives. For example, women in my classes often justify the gender inequality that they witness and may personally experience beliefs such as women are physically inferior to men or that women are nurturers or better parents because they have been indoctrinated by the media and sometimes even the educational system to believe that this is reality. Davis argues that this resistance is the result of the media painting a rosier picture than what the reality is. Oftentimes, my students would rather wear rose-colored glasses than face the bleak reality of inequality and how closely it presents itself it their lives. Resistant students prefer to think of inequality as something abstract or far removed because this allows them forgo interrogating the explanations for inequality and how it impacts their lives (Davis, 1992).

Once students become more conscious about social inequality and dis-

crimination issues, for some of them it can be an extremely painful situation and at times students may lash out at you for raising their consciousness. It's almost as if students are going through the grieving process. While exposing them to the various forms of inequality and discrimination in our society, many of them must come face-to-face with their own lives and it can be overwhelming. In my sociology classes, we watch documentaries such as *People Like Us*, a film that discusses the idea that class is almost invisible in the United States so it prevents many Americans from recognizing it. The film is humorous but it does point out the ways that income inequality is both invisible and systematic in the United States. In my *Health Problems in Urban Communities* course, I incorporate films that questions why healthcare is so expensive in the United States and that health varies based on socioeconomic status (SES). I demonstrate this by showing my students films such as *Unnatural Causes* and Michael Moore's *Sicko* that compares various healthcare systems across different countries. These films help student's challenge their resistance. Resistance is useful because it means that students are grappling with the complex issues of inequality. However, the semester allows students time to digest what they've learned, consider other perspectives from the ones they used their entire lives to explain inequality, hear different voices, and to gain their own experiences based on what they now know.

To be honest, I hate talking about race and ethnicity in my classes because it is such a hard topic for students to deal with. It is difficult for me as well. When I think of all of the various forms of inequality that exist in our society, it can be overwhelming and an enhanced consciousness makes you acutely aware of the these things on a daily basis, and not just the overt examples, but the examples of micro-aggression that disadvantaged people experience on a daily basis: being followed in stores because of their race and ethnicity, harassed by law enforcement in their communities, and then there are the subtle things like living in a city of exorbitant wealth while facing lives of relative deprivation. However, the discomfort is secondary to creating strategies for me and my students to address the various forms of inequality that exist.

I've developed teaching strategies and exercises that I use in my classroom when I'm introducing students to concepts such as social stratification and race, class, and gender inequality.

1. **Don't skirt around talking about issues of race, class, and gender inequality.**
   Our students are aware of issues of inequality and discrimination even if they are unable or unwilling to verbalize it. As the instructor, it is helpful to me to tackle issues around inequality and discrimination head on and it allows students the ability to discuss these issues openly. Many of them haven't been given the chance to express their feelings of frustration and hopelessness that come from experiencing discrimination or the isms. Your class is an opportune moment to allow this.

2. **Acknowledge the various forms of privilege we all have.**
   When I walk into the classroom, I bring my entire self with me and so it's important that my students are aware of the privileges that I have that shape my perspective and experiences in the world. I use the "teacher as text" method,

where I use my own experiences as an opportunity to discuss my privilege and how it gives me an advantage in our society. I let them know that as a man, I can do certain things that some women cannot do because of social norms. I let them know that I've had a great deal of opportunity primarily because I'm American. I let them know that because I am the product of an educator (my mom was a school teacher for 25 years), I had an advantage in the educational system that rewards students who grow up in homes rich in books and learning. When my students hear about my advantage from birth, they understand their own disadvantage and that for all of us our privilege or advantage is the result of our parents.

3. **Ground your classroom discussions on race, class, and gender inequality in empirical data. Challenge your students to do the same.**
Anytime I introduce ideas around inequality and discrimination in the class, I have to bring empirical data to support it and I encourage students to do the same. Otherwise, we are simply talking about feelings. Students need to know issues like racism, homophobia, and sexism aren't just about "feelings," but real issues that may impact their lives.

4. **Develop simulation exercises that give students the chance to view the world from the perspective of "others".**
I incorporate exercises in my classes such as *move forward, move back* where I ask students from varied SES backgrounds to answer questions about their background. The questions are based on markers of privilege or disadvantage. Moving forward is akin to having an advantage and moving backwards is equivalent to having a disadvantage. For example, I may ask students to move forward if they are male, or move forward if their parents owned the home they live in. The students who this applies to move forward, while the students who don't have this advantage move back. Every semester, without fail, some- one white or male is typically at the front of the line at the end of the exercise. This demonstrates to the students that our society is stratified and that our life chances are different at birth.

5. **Expose students to topics and issues that address their identities and perspec- tive through readings, multimedia, and through speakers.**
I expose my students to all sorts of multicultural and diverse materials from a wide range of sources from NPR to TMZ. I expose them to podcasts on the BBC channel, television programming on channels like BET and PBS, and articles and readings from diverse sources such as the New York Times and Ebony. I bring visitors to my classroom who share their identities and experi- ences. In this way, I try to reflect my student's lived experiences in meaningful ways. It allows them to see education as more than something only within ivory towers, but that can be found everywhere.

6. **Create meaningful diversity programming throughout the college and university.**
Colleges and universities create diversity programming, but it is really impor- tant that students see it at every level of the institution. So, they need to see

faces that look like them in the classrooms, but also in leadership positions. Diversity programming should be reflected in the activities that the university/college creates, programming that is student-centered and not professor/administration centered. It should expose them to new ideas, but also to ideas familiar to them.

7. **Help students come up with real world solutions for issues of inequality and discrimination.**
Rather than leaving students hopeless or dispirited when they "discover" the levels of discrimination and inequality that exists around them, help facilitate a mechanism to address these issues in ways that are meaningful to them. I allow my students to participate in consciousness rising events that take place throughout the city such as demonstrations, political debates, volunteering activities, and projects that address inequality and discrimination. For example, many of my students participated in several of the forums held across the city for solutions to problems in NYC sponsored by Mayor DiBlasio last winter. Last fall, some of my students attended a conference on rights for formerly incarcerated individuals that took place last fall. In this way, students come to understand that they can be part of the solution for the various forms of injustice that exist.

While it is true that many of our students who "Start here" can "go anywhere", the reality for some are that they will face real life inequality throughout their lives. As we approach a new school year, we can also reflect on ways to improve our pedagogical strategies in ways that acknowledge student's lives, the various forms of inequality and discrimination, and ways to navigate these barriers to improve their lives.

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The Primacy of Passion: On the Requisites of Education

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> "The barbarian, late or early, is typically an unmitigated pragmatist; this is the spiritual trait that most profoundly marks him off from the savage on one hand and from the civilized man on the other hand."
> Thorstein Veblen, *The Higher Learning in America*

There is one core truth about education that is easily recognized by most but, tragically, is repressed in our society. That truth is that *you can only become educated if you like it*. One can be trained or schooled, but to become someone who is educated it is necessary that you have a love, a passion, for the thing itself.

Many of us know educated people. My friend Constantine is educated, his eyes light up when he explains financialized capitalism by way of T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land". My friend Carla is educated; she can talk for hours about every English translation of Max Weber and which concepts have been mangled by each. My friend Michael is educated; he can map out every innovation in materialist thought from Epicurus to Alain Badiou. George W. Bush, not one of my friends, is schooled but not educated, he has degrees from Yale and Harvard but prefers clearing brush on his ranch to discussing Aristotle.

Many forces today conspire to preclude such a passion from forming, and to extinguish it should it emerge. First and foremost, in this regard, is the contemporary reduction of education to practical concerns, whether they are the careerist pursuits of teachers and administrators or the quest by students for formal credentials in their struggle to secure a position in the labor market. The notion today that education is a good unto itself, that any question of economic impact and vocational aspirations is in opposition or, at best, secondary to the process of intellectual creation and understanding is unthinkable to most. Questions regarding the importance of universities or other educational institutions are dominated with calculations of economic impact, graduation rates, employability, and salary differentials. Students are advised on what to study based on projections regarding future needs of the labor market. For students with an eye toward getting the best job and the highest salary possible, any substantive qualities of what is being taught quickly vanish. Readings, discussions, essays, all are simply means toward the ends of employment, certification, a better mousetrap, or a host of other pragmatic goals.

This raising of market values and practical concerns as the highest, and often only, value in education not only corrupts the aspirations and sensibilities of students, it also transforms the procedures of education in ways that make schools and universities ever more antagonistic and alien to the love of thinking. Schools employ an elaborate system of human dressage by way of which students are sorted, processed, formatted, and distributed. The techniques involved in this dressage (repetition, punishment and reward, standardization, tracking) lead

many students to, quite naturally and correctly, view and experience education as oppressive, humiliating, brutish, and boring. The current trend of standardized curricula, exhaustive testing, police roaming the hallways and campuses of schools and universities, and ever growing tuition and debt rates (which compel nominal students to view themselves as consumers and/or investors that need to maximize 'satisfaction' and/or 'returns') are key elements in an ever tightening vise of a market ethic and bureaucratic coercion which has largely destroyed the mission, privilege, pride, and honor of being a student. Under such conditions it is no surprise that the machinery of schooling today is extraordinarily efficient in minimizing education and maximizing training and subjection.

If we take these two simple positions as points of departure, that to be educated you have to want and like it and that schooling today overwhelmingly works against the formation of such a desire, I believe there are many important implications for those of us who teach in institutions of higher learning, especially institutions like BMCC. Although we have no choice regarding the society within which we find ourselves and possess little agency in relation to the broader system of schooling that our students have been subjected to, how and what we teach is still, largely, within our control. What can we do, then, to help reverse the damage done to students and to encourage the formation of a passion for intellectual life? How can we break from the broader pedagogical trajectories of the present in order to, at a minimum, do no harm to the capacity of students to think and to their desire for such thinking? It is undoubtedly true that there are students who, despite all, come to us with a passion for intellectual inquiry that has taken root and flourished even in these barren and inhospitable times and many more students still have the potential living within them. For such students, what it is that we can do to further that passion or potential? In the remainder of this necessarily brief exploration of the why and how the encouragement of a love for thinking should be a primary focus for all university teaching, I will highlight two areas of instruction: what we teach, how we grade. The intended character of this essay is not to present some blueprint for teaching. Rather, by examining teaching through the lens of how it might impact the desire for thinking, I hope to problematize some common teaching practices and uncover what are often opaque ideological implications with an eye toward some broader discussion of the reasons behind the how and what we teach.

Although it may be the case that some students come to form a great love of thinking completely externally to their classroom experiences, for many of us this passion was passed down from someone in school. Witnessing a teacher's great passion often inspires and spreads a love for thought. At a minimum, it is clearly the case that unless the teacher or professor themself is passionate about the substance of what they are teaching, there is little chance that the students will be passionate about what is being taught. A fundamental requisite of teaching needs to be that the teacher is invested in what they are teaching.

Of course, the goal here is not that we simply act excited about the class but that we are teaching ideas, questions, readings, and concepts that we consider to be important and valuable. There is a great threat to this in colleges such as ours where the vast majority of what we teach are introductory, survey, classes.

Whereas specialized graduate level or upper undergraduate level classes are often very much narrowly within our areas of greatest interest and expertise, this is not always true of introductory level classes. More importantly, textbooks are, much more often than not, the foundation for introductory level undergraduate classes. The danger present here is that we end up teaching material that is not that which excites our own interests and does not go to the heart of the questions and problems that we consider to be the fundamental and key ones in our subject areas. In my own field of political science, for example, introductory textbooks are often immense collections of empirical facts, pie charts, graphs, and descriptive accounts. What one does not often find are the concepts and questions that underpin social scientific inquiry. How is it possible to become interested in social science from textbooks that are largely devoid of the substance of social science? The textbook industry, from giants like Pearson on down, creates textbooks to appeal to as wide a range of instructors as possible. In so doing, the content of the books become homogenized and inoffensive, appealing to the lowest common denominators within each discipline. Having a strong, explicit, analytical point of view or being too conceptual would not bode well for sales. The only people whose pulse gets racing about textbooks are the accountants who keep track of the profits and royalties. Although I am sure that there some areas of inquiry (such as the natural sciences or mathematics) that may be more amenable to textbooks, in my own experience I have found it impossible to teach from any one textbook and also have the class correspond to a meaningful exploration of the key questions and problems of the subject area. Thus, I believe, in introductory classes especially, students need to be exposed to the most meaningful sets of readings and ideas possible. Regardless of the level of study, students need to be taught those texts and arguments that we ourselves think to be fundamental. When we teach something that we consider important and meaningful, the probability exists that some of the students will come to share that passion and judgment. In short, the "what" we teach needs to be very strictly of our own choosing and the decision of what we teach cannot be surrendered to the textbook industry or other forces that attempt to homogenize and standardize content and curricula.

As important as what we teach is how we assess students. Grades have no pedagogical value. Sorting students in terms of their relative performance does not help them understand the material being taught or the world around us any better. Grades, of course, do exist and are important since they indicate how students performed relative to each other; grades function as a way of helping select which students will be chosen for jobs, graduate schools, scholarships and awards, and so on. In educational institutions that were detached from the labor market (such as Plato's Academy) or, at least, struggled to not be subsumed by market discipline (the first years of the University of Paris VIII, 1969 to the mid-70s) assessments have normally been pass/fail, students needed only to master the substantive content well enough to be able to move on to the next level. A key problem for us becomes how to use the grading system we have in ways that are consistent with the demands of education and to keep students from experiencing and reducing higher education to a competitive struggle for credentials and

resources or to an oppressive and punitive set of practices. Since it is impossible that a love for thinking can be created through fear and threat, students need to experience grades not as rewards and punishments but as a way to maintain some discipline and focus. One very key dimension of this point is that grades need to be exclusively about the substantive foci of a class. That is, a deduction of marks for something like class attendance and lateness would indicate to students that teaching them to be on time is indeed a goal of the class. It is likely that this is not one of the 'learning objectives' of the class but many instructors might fall into the trap of thinking that using the threat of a grade deduction will get the students to attend the class more regularly. That may or may be not be true but it is a certain that using coercion and threat will not lead to a love for what is being taught just as it is true that attending a class is not sufficient for understanding what is being taught. This is also true regarding a host of many other formalities that some may take into account regarding grades, things like fonts, referencing styles, and deadlines. Why penalize for deadlines? Is it an unfair advantage that one student had more time than another to complete an assignment? Why emphasize referencing styles? Are they in any way pertinent to the substance of the assignments? Does it matter if the authors' initial or entire first name is used or if the title is in italics or underlined? Grades need to indicate as clearly as possible, what it is that we consider to be the substance of the class, and what we want students to learn from the class. This allows the student to recognize and fully focus on what it is that we hope to teach them.

Similarly, the more that our classes remind our students of the heavy handed disciplinary practices of the high schools that many have endured, the more they will perceive us and our classes as antagonistic to their own autonomy and development. The more our own classes break with what many of our students have experienced in high schools, the more likely that they can appreciate and come to care about the substantive content of what we are teaching. In addition to using grading to make clear and allow students to focus on the substance of a class, grading can also be used to help maintain the discipline that a student needs to successfully achieve the objective of a class. Rather than using grading to penalize and strike fear, grading can act as a tool for helping students maintain and intensify their efforts. In my classes, for example, I allow students to revise and resubmit essays as many times as they like. I give back written assignments with comments and suggestions and students are free to rework them and hand them back in to be regraded. Ideally, students can use the process to continue their efforts on understanding the material.

If passion is necessary for education to be possible, all that inhibits or decreases that love for thinking needs to be eliminated. In our own classes and departments, we need to be absolute in our focus on higher education and cautious of external, practical, influences and attempts to reduce students to consumers or investors. When we focus on creating a climate that most encourages students to develop a passion for thinking, for attempting to understand the world around them, many tendencies that have become second nature in our universities become recast. What we teach and how we grade, most importantly, need always to be considered from this standpoint. Even though the broader society in which

we find ourselves is anti-intellectual and becoming more barbaric by the day, we should do our best to maintain the traditional role of universities as a sanctuary from this barbarism and to maximize the chances that students develop as thinkers and civilized beings.

Making BMCC Quantitatively Literate: Reflecting on the Importance of QL in the Classroom

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A deficiency in quantitative literacy skills is becoming an increasing concern as today's college students are preparing to enter a very competitive job market. The ability to reason with numerical information is a skill that is vital in today's workplace, where reports need to be compiled and analyzed, and decisions need to be made based on key performance metrics. The one or two required math courses that many undergraduate institutions require as part of a liberal arts degree are not enough to ensure that graduates have competency in the very basic statistical reasoning that will be helpful throughout their professional careers.

Steen (2004) argues that many students finish school without the tools to effectively deal with the quantitative demands of everyday life. He also believes the importance of being numerically literate has not been properly advocated by the public and the education leaders in the United States. Faculty need professional support to effectively implement quantitative reasoning into their courses. Even though overall quantitative literacy levels have been increasing since the early 1990s due to programs implemented to address deficiencies, the rates of students showing proficient levels of quantitative reasoning have not risen (Kutner et al, 2007). Many students are still lagging behind and improvements to teaching quantitative literacy need to be instituted.

Students in the United States rank near the bottom compared to other countries in the world when tested on mathematical reasoning and content knowledge (Wilkins, 2000). Even when they have a positive attitude towards mathematics and believe that they excel in mathematics, American college students often perform worse than their counterparts in Europe. Students in the United States may see quantitative literacy linked to job success, but they should see it as a fundamental skill that is a necessary part of critical thinking in everyday life.

Nationally, approximately 30 percent of students in two year colleges have limited quantitative literacy skills (Baer, Cook, & Baldi, 2006). These students can only perform basic mathematical calculations such as adding up the costs of items purchased at a store and are unable to accurately interpret graphs or manipulate data in any manner. Quantitative literacy skills also lag behind written literacy skills at both community college and four year institutions. In addition, white students at the community college level were more likely to have proficient quantitative literacy skills compared with all ethnic minorities (Baer,

Cook, & Baldi, 2006). Foreign-born students also struggled more compared to native students when it came to scores on a quantitative literacy test. In 2010, the composition of BMCC students was 34% African-American, 40% Hispanic, 12% Asian, and 14% white. Given that ethnic minorities, and more specifically African-Americans and Hispanics, have lower overall levels of quantitative reasoning, the need for a campus-wide quantitative literacy training initiative is especially pronounced.

Teaching quantitative literacy is not the same as teaching statistics. Quantitative literacy is a framework for viewing the world in a certain way, while statistics is all about viewing the world in an uncertain way. It is not about calculating the probability of an event happening, but more about learning how to manipulate data and using it to make sound decisions. Traditional statistics courses are often taught using a format in which students have to just plug numbers into a formula and solve the problem, which by itself can be meaningless. On the other hand, quantitative literacy is a skill that always has meaning because it focuses on everyday life. Applying numerical information to everyday life problems is the main focus of quantitative literacy training. Students who are more prepared to use numbers to inform their decision making in their day to day lives will be at an advantage when it comes to adapting to an ever increasing data-driven world.

Quantitative literacy is not only a vital part of the classroom learning experience but also an important part of the normal everyday citizen's life. For example, during a political campaign polls are conducted on important issues that may influence voter turnout and preference. A common component of polls is the margin of error, which is the range in which the true value of the population is most likely to fall. If a particular political candidate is leading by five percentage points in a particular state with a margin of error of five percent a few days before an election, a voter may mistakenly see the race as effectively decided and their vote as meaningless. However, if this same voter were to understand the idea of a confidence interval which forms the margin of error, they would see the political race as a statistical dead heat and be more likely to take action and vote in the election.

The state of the economy is another area where quantitative literacy plays an important role. During the past two years politicians have argued that the economy is recovering, with average household income nearing $70,000 (US Census Bureau, 2012). People who are not aware of measures of central tendency may be misled by this argument and conclude that economic prosperity is around the corner. However, a look at the distribution of incomes in the United States makes it very clear that the mean household income is distorted by outliers and the distribution is skewed. Once a more appropriate measure of central tendency is chosen (i.e., median), representative household income drops to near $50,000. This paints a much more realistic picture of an economy that is still struggling to turn around (See Figure 1).
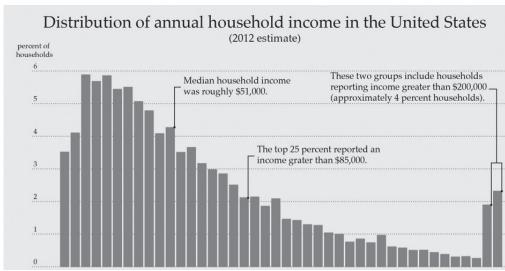
Figure 1: The positively skewed distribution of household incomes in the United States. Students need to understand that the median is a better measure of central tendency for a skewed distribution than the mean is.

The media is not exempt from confusing the quantitatively illiterate consumer. In 2012, Fox News conducted a poll and displayed the percentage of voters who believe that scientists falsified data about global warming. As depicted in Figure 2, the categories are not mutually exclusive and they overlap to a great degree. A person who lacks basic quantitative literacy skills is going to see large percentages of people agreeing with this statement. The three categories add up to 120% which is an impossible figure to attain. This is also a poorly worded question in which the respondents are unable to clearly discriminate among the three options presented. A student with a basic idea of quantitative literacy is less likely to be swayed by media distortions and will make more informed decisions.

Figure 2: A distorted analysis depicting opposition to global warming. The three response categories are not mutually exclusive.

Quantitative Literacy at BMCC

At the end of the spring semester 2013, a Quantitative Reasoning Coordinating Committee was formed at BMCC. Margaret Dean chaired the committee, while Daniel DePaulo and Lina Wu constituted the rest of the committee. Three QL fellows, recruited from the CUNY Graduate Center, were appointed to work with

faculty members in the coming fall semester. Prior to the start of the fall semester 2013, six faculty members were then recruited to participate in a pilot program in which they were asked to implement quantitative reasoning in the classroom. The participating faculty were Edna Asknes (Nursing), Fabian Baldarini (Economics), Bertha Ferdman (Speech), Masha Komolova (Psychology), Manita Pavel (Biology), and Michelle Wang (Business Management). Each of these faculty members participated in the training workshops offered during fall 2013.

The coordinating committee established a set of quantitative literacy (QL) learning outcomes. To achieve the desired degree of quantitative literacy, students should be able to read and interpret graphs, understand correlation and causation and differentiate between the two, differentiate between percent and frequency with an understanding of and how to calculate percent increase and percent decrease, develop a basic understanding of descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode) and when to appropriately use each of them, and finally, attain a working knowledge of margin of error and confidence intervals. Faculty were told that the activities designed for the courses they are teaching should attempt to encompass a minimum of three of these learning objectives.

During fall 2013, five pilot workshops were offered dealing with the instruction of quantitative reasoning. Workshop One detailed what quantitative literacy is and why it is important. Faculty members discussed ways in which quantitative literacy can be implemented into their specific courses. The benefits of becoming a quantitatively literate student were emphasized. Discussion also focused around how many projects and how much time can be devoted to introducing quantitative literacy. Workshop Two focused on data presentation and analysis. An emphasis was placed on teaching students how to read various graphs such as bar charts, histograms, pie charts, and line graphs. Examples of misleading graphs used in everyday life were also presented. Attention was paid to the scale of the graph as well as the format of each graph. The faculty discussed ways of implementing the teaching of graph interpretation into their courses. Session Two also emphasized the teaching of basic statistical reasoning including the most basic elements of central tendency. Many students do not understand the difference between mean and median, and that the median can be a better measure of center when a distribution is asymmetrical. Identifying outliers and how they can influence the mean is important, in particular because many political pundits will incorrectly use the mean in this situation to convince voters of the veracity of their claims. The last topic touched on in Session Two was correlation and hypothesis testing. The difference between correlation and causation was emphasized along with ways to test research ideas. Session Three focused on the assessment of quantitative literacy using a standardized measure. The issues of validity and reliability were discussed along with a discussion of the difficulties in doing assessment. Session Four focused on strategies employed to help students deal with their math anxiety. Many students are resistant to dealing with numbers and a large part of the quantitative literacy initiative is to ease student math anxiety. A standardized metric was introduced as a way of assessing students' math anxiety over the period of the quantitative literacy training. Session Five consisted of faculty members presenting their quantitative reasoning intensive course syllabi.

Each faculty member with the aid of their quantitative literacy fellow devised two to three quantitative reasoning intensive projects to be completed as part of their spring 2014 courses. After all faculty members presented their proposed projects, a discussion revolving around any possible modifications to the proposed projects ensued.

Quantitative literacy fellows were present at the workshop to help each of the faculty members enrolled to design an effective quantitative reasoning section of a class they were teaching. CUNY Central provided three QL fellows from the CUNY Graduate Center: Wenyi Lu, Naomi Podber, and Konstantinos Pouliasis. Each graduate fellow was assigned to work individually with two faculty members. They visited the classroom, discussed QL needs with the professor, attended symposiums pertinent to QL activities and syllabus, and provided suggestions and resources for incorporating QL into the curriculum. Throughout the semester, the QLAC Coordinator (Dr. Margaret Dean) met weekly or semi-weekly for two or more hours with the QL fellows to develop support systems for teaching QL in the classroom and to discuss faculty needs as the training program progressed. These QL fellows are vital to the success of the program and without their assistance many of the faculty would not be able to design effective courses meeting the QL standards set forth.

A huge obstacle to overcome when teaching quantitative literacy is how to overcome math anxiety. Mathematics has acquired a negative reputation in today's society. Many people have been taught that learning math is simply a matter of memorization and repetition. When students fail to learn using these techniques, they do not receive adequate instructional support and often fall behind other students. Since learning mathematics requires one to build upon previous knowledge, students can continue to fall further and further behind in their course work. Numbers start to become something that students are afraid of and the dreaded math anxiety is born. Math anxiety has become an even greater concern for women who were often pushed away in school from pursuing a career in the mathematical sciences due to ridiculous stereotypes that women are not capable of being successful in these fields. Despite a recent influx of female students pursuing careers in mathematics, math anxiety is still an obstacle to overcome for many undergraduates. The Quantitative Literacy Committee at BMCC is in the process of examining the impact of quantitative literacy training on students' math anxiety.

During the summer of 2014, the Quantitative Literacy Committee is assessing the impact of the pilot training program at BMCC. Performance data from the spring semester is currently being entered, analyzed, and interpreted. Modifications are currently being made and improvements for the future workshops are in the works. We encourage any interested faculty members to contact Dr. Annie Han at yhan@bmcc.cuny.edu.

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Using Peer Mentoring to Increase Retention in an Online Class: A Case Study of a Student Taking the Course for a Third Time

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What can you do if you are teaching an online class and you have a student who keeps enrolling in the course, but cannot complete it? What can you do when you have already sent hundreds of e-mails, left many phone messages, and spent many hours on the telephone with the student each semester? What can you do to increase the chances of this student succeeding in your class? The answer might be peer mentoring. This paper discusses how I successfully used peer mentoring with a student repeating an online class for the third time in fall 2013.

Peer mentoring is when a student provides practical advice, encouragement, and useful information to other students, which is different from tutoring (CCSF, undated, a). When peer mentors are used in online learning, Taylor and Zeng (2008) point out that the preferred term is "e-mentoring." Taylor and Zeng write: "...peers are an untapped source of potential to mediate problems, to role model, and to mentor peers online." (p. 82)

Online classes are growing in colleges (Allen & Seaman, 2007), but they face the challenge of lower retention rates compared to face-to-face classes (Bart, 2012; Brown, 2011; Jenkins, 2011). This is due to online students facing a combination of technical problems, isolation, lack of structure, and problems balancing time for school, family, and work (Brown, 2011; Muilenburg & Berge, 2005; Tyler-Smith, 2006). Lower completion rates in online courses have also been found among community college students (Brown, 2011).

The City College of San Francisco (undated, b) reports that peer mentoring has benefits to both the mentee and mentor. Benefits to the mentee are: increased engagement and success in the course, increased engagement with peers, faculty, and administration; increased connections between students and resources available at college and in the community, increased self-esteem and confidence; improved communication skills, and better time management skills. Benefits to the mentor are: improving communication and interpersonal skills; developing leadership qualities; reinforcing study skills and knowledge of your subject(s); giving back to the college community; increasing confidence and motivation; and enhancing a resume.

To address the growth in online learning and the lower retention rates for online classes, it is important to develop innovative strategies to help college students succeed. Peer mentoring could address the online student retention issue. Despite the benefits of peer mentoring in the online environment, there is little research done (Taylor & Zeng, 2008). This paper will discuss my first attempt to use peer mentoring in an online class with a student who is repeating the course for the third time.

The Class

The course that is the subject of this paper is a fully online class, Introduction to Disabilities, which is part of the Social Sciences and Human Services offerings. A 200-level course, it is open to majors as well as non-majors. The course uses a piggybank system, so every item that students do in the course adds up every week to a total of 100 (or 105, if extra credit is done). Every week in the course, students are required to use Discussion Board to earn two points (one point to make an original posting, one point to respond to a classmate); there is a home-work question (two points) or a major paper (the first major paper is worth 10 points, and 18 points each for the second and third papers); and there is a five point extra credit option to do the Blackboard Tutorial Orientation.

(Note: All student names have been changed.)

The Repeating Student

Ms. Velez reported being a HUM major in her middle-twenties, has her own apartment, and does not have children. Ms. Velez also reported working a full-time job, with various hours, at a social service agency in NYC. It was, she noted, her last semester at BMCC. Despite these strengths, Ms. Velez presented a unique challenge for me. She enrolled in my online HUM course three times, and it is quite unusual for me that I was not able to reach her sooner.

The first time Ms. Velez was in my class was in fall 2012. She did sporadic work in Discussion Board and weekly homework during the first few weeks. She was contacted by email and we talked on the phone several times. She reported stress from her school and work schedule. I tried referring her to the BMCC e-learning adviser for time management, the college counseling center, as well as locating outside providers that took her insurance or sliding-scale payment. She did not submit the first major written assignment in the course in Week #6 and did not follow through with any of the referrals. Due to missed work, she had only earned 18 points at the time when other students had earned approximately 30–40 points. In light of her situation, we discussed that she needed to withdraw from the course and she obtained the "W" grade.

The second time Ms. Velez enrolled in the course was spring 2013. I contacted her before the start of the semester. We worked out a special schedule for her to submit all assignments on Mondays, her day off from work. She was doing better during the first few weeks; however, the old pattern of being inconsistent and needing reminders to submit work returned. We were in touch by email and phone and the student talked about her plans to quit the job. Once again, the first major written assignment was not completed at Week #6.

However, she insisted she was quitting her job soon and things would be better. Unfortunately, after she quit her job mid-semester, she continued to be inconsistent with submitting weekly items. By the end of the semester, she was logging in around once a month, ignoring my emails and phone calls, and had not submitted any of the three major papers required in this course. She earned 19 points out of 100 points for the entire semester. Ms. Velez received an "F" in the course.

The Process of Peer Mentoring with the Student

The third time, Ms. Velez enrolled in the course was fall 2013. When I opened the class two weeks early, I noticed Ms. Velez on my roster again and contacted her right away. We talked about what was going to be different this time. I learned she had a new job, outside of the social services field, with better hours, better pay, and a better location. She promised to try harder this time.

I was wondering about how I could work with Ms. Velez differently this time to help her to be successful. I had discussed her situation with a few colleagues, but had not gotten any new ideas. At last, two days before classes began, Ms. Velez posted her introduction in our class Discussion Board with such honesty about her situation it reminded me of a time when I used peer mentoring in a face-to-face course. Yet, I wondered if peer mentoring could work in an online course. Ms. Velez's remarkable posting that got me to experiment with e-mentoring was:

> Hello Professor Gleicher and classmates! My name is.... and I am a Human Services major. I have yet to choose one particular topic I'm MOST interested in learning about but my goal is to learn some about most. I hope that makes sense and if it doesn't let me know. *I have taken online courses before but I have yet to complete one due to personal issues that are still excuses. This class being one I've yet to complete. It is my goal to change that and do extremely well in doing so.* (Italics added)

Selecting a Mentor

Once I had decided that peer mentoring was the new approach that I wanted to use with Ms. Velez this semester, I faced the challenge of selecting a mentor from students who I had never met in person. I picked Ms. Anna Smith, who had emailed me her contact information and a question over the summer; all of the students were all asked to e-mail me contact information at the end of the registration process, but only a few did.

Ms. Smith and I had a few e-mail exchanges over the summer and she had logged in as soon as I announced that I had opened the class two weeks early. In addition, she began to do some of the coursework, even though it was not required. I got a chance to learn about her from her introduction in the Discussion Board and her first homework. The things that stood out about Ms. Smith were that she wrote well, wrote nice things to her peers, had taken online classes before, reported to have gotten grades of "A" in the online classes, and reported being a HUM major. Thus, it was my impression that this student was caring, responsible, and reliable, followed directions, had good time management, etc.

Beginning Mentoring

Before classes began, I wrote to Ms. Smith, to get the process started. I began by telling Ms. Smith what a peer mentor is and that she had the qualities I was seeking in a peer mentor, such as responding with support to her classmates postings regarding taking a first online course in our first Discussion Board. I pointed out a new posting that was made last night by Ms. Velez, and asked her to check it

out. I told Ms. Smith I was concerned about Ms. Velez, who had written in the Discussion Board that she was repeating this online course, and that I thought a peer mentor would be needed for her situation. I wanted someone to encourage Ms. Velez to talk about concerns about online classes, to encourage her to do her work, and to share tips with her about managing an online course. I told Ms. Smith about these goals and that she would receive extra credit. I asked Ms. Smith permission to give her name, email address, and cellphone number to Ms. Velez.

The next day Ms. Smith sent a very enthusiastic response. For example, she wrote: "I love helping people and giving advice, support and courage so that said; I'm very interested in this opportunity and honored that you thought of me!" She said yes to giving out her contact information and was very eager to learn the next steps in the process.

To begin the process, City College of San Francisco (undated, b) says that the mentor needs to introduce him/herself to the mentee and provide information such as a reason for being a mentor, academic background and schools attended, classes currently enrolled in, email address, and information about one's hobbies, interests, and family.

In light of this information, I explained to Ms. Smith that she needed to write a nice introduction to Ms. Velez, told her what to include, and reminded her about Ms. Velez's Discussion Board posting. Ms. Smith made a nice response to Ms. Velez's posting in the Discussion Board surrounding time management and trying to stay ahead, so I was not surprised that Ms. Velez wrote back to me right way and accepted the idea of having a peer mentor who would be Ms. Smith.

Ms. Velez also thanked me "for my concern," and gave me permission to give her contact information to Ms. Smith. I talked to Ms. Smith about sending me copies of the first emails that she wrote to Ms. Velez because I needed to know that she was doing her job as peer mentor and also to guide her in the process of helping her first student. I told her that I did not want to see copies of Ms. Velez's responses unless there was something of concern.

I talked to Ms. Smith about setting up a schedule where she would contact Ms. Velez on the days when there was Discussion Board or homework due. I told Ms. Smith to check the Discussion Board first to see if Ms. Velez had posted. If Ms. Velez did not do the Discussion Board by mid-week, I asked the mentor to mention that problem in the contact—how is your Discussion Board and homework going? If the mentee completed the Discussion Board by mid-week, Ms. Smith was asked to comment about that in the e-mail: I see that you did your Discussion Board, but how is your homework going? Ms. Smith needed to let me know if Ms. Velez did not respond in 24 hours.

Ms. Smith wrote a lovely letter of introduction to Ms. Velez about her role of peer mentor and what it meant, such as giving support and helping out with concerns, and tried to set up a first conversation. I told Ms. Smith that her email was on the right track in terms of trying to connect with Ms. Velez and thanked her for her efforts.

In the second week of classes, Ms. Smith contacted Ms. Velez telling her not to hesitate to call if there was anything she was concerned about, asking her to

call if she ever felt like quitting, encouraged her, and gave her tips about how to do well in the course, such as highlighting the textbook. The second week, the mentor informed me that the mentee did not respond in a day, so I contacted the mentee by email.

In the third week of classes, Ms Smith reminded Ms. Velez that we were nearing the due date for the first major paper in the class, and suggested that Ms. Velez take a look at the questions, read over the things she had highlighted in the textbook, and asked her if she had questions. Their connection continued on throughout the semester. Ms. Smith reported that she and Ms. Velez texted each other on their cellphones at all hours of the night, at hours when a professor is unlikely to be available.

The Outcome of the Mentoring

Ms. Velez had a few "bumps" during the semester, such as when her textbook was stolen at work, and during midterm when her second paper was a few days late. However, Ms. Velez completed the course successfully, with one of the top grades!

I used peer mentoring again in spring 2014. My experiences lead me to conclude that students do well when they feel that the professor and other students care about them, and that peer mentoring works in an online class. Moreover, e-mentoring fits in with the growing literature on "academic caring" (Carlson, 2014; Jones, 2010; Kaiser, 2012; Online Classroom, 2004; Tippens, 2012).

Conclusion

This paper advocated for using peer mentoring with online students, discussed the benefits of peer mentoring for the mentor and the mentee, and gave a particular case example of a third-time repeating student who received e-mentoring and successfully completed the course. In spring 2014, I developed a suggested application and criteria for selecting a peer mentor, which are provided at the end of this paper. In conclusion, I recommend trying out e-mentoring with students at risk in online courses, as "...it potentially could be a tool of social justice and advocacy in helping many under-represented groups to succeed in online programs" (Taylor & Zeng, 2008, p. 96).

TIPS FOR RECRUITING A MENTOR

It is hard to select an e-mentor from 25 students whom you have never met, but here are some clues to look for in selecting an online peer mentor.

1. In the college registration materials, special instructions section, I ask students to email me with their name, cell phone number, and personal email address when they register for the course. Out of 25 students, I usually get about 4-5 students who notice this and email me. This can give me a clue as to who can follow directions and might make a possible mentor.

2. When I open the course, I notice who logs in right away and who needs many reminders. A student who logs in right away might give a clue as to being dedicated to his/her studies and thus a possible mentor. However, now Blackboard notifies students automatically when I open the course, so this might not work out unless I can figure out how to turn off this feature.

3. A new optional homework assignment (see below), added to the first homework of the semester gives a brief assessment of a potential mentor's writing skills and personality.

4. The Blackboard Orientation Tutorial is an optional (5) five points of extra credit that students can do from the time I open the class, two weeks before classes start, until the end of the first week. A student who completes this optional assignment might me a clue of a student who is dedicated and a possible mentor.

5. A student who starts emailing me questions as soon as I open the class, and who completes the first homework, introduces him/herself in the Discussion Board early, and attempts other assignments ahead of schedule also gives clues as to being a dedicated student and a possible mentor.

6. A student who makes positive, supportive comments, especially to concerns from first-time online students, in our class Discussion Board and/or gives the class good suggestions for success in an online course is also a sign of a dedicated and possible mentor.

SAMPLE RECRUITMENT FOR AN E-MENTOR

Homework #1a: Application for Peer Mentor
Directions: Please fill in, save with your name, and email it to me, if interested. What is a peer mentor? A peer mentor is a student who provides personal support to a fellow classmate, such as encouragement, which is different from tutors. In online learning, the preferred term for peer mentoring is "e-mentoring."

Being a peer mentor involves exchanging your personal email address and cell# with another student in the class who needs encouragement or reminders to do Discussion Board and then receiving that student's email and cell#. At least twice a week, you will need to check Discussion Board and then email, text message, and/or call a fellow student who has not posted in Discussion Board. You only need to send me copies of the mail that you send to the other student (not the student's response), so that I know that you are performing your role as mentor and I can give you comments.

If you are selected as a peer mentor and you do a good job, you can earn extra points towards the final course grade, and/or be exempted (in some circumstances) from writing the 3rd paper for the course, and nice reference from me for a job and/or BSW program.

Today's date:_____

Dear Prof._____,
My name is:_____.
If the opportunity arises during the semester, I would be interested in being a "peer mentor" to another student in this class.
My GPA is currently:_____. My major is:_____
My interests in becoming a peer tutor are:_____ (Please explain briefly in one or two paragraphs.)
I have completed at least one online course before with an A, A-, B+, B. I have good time management skills. I use Blackboard well. I have taken the following online courses (Name of course, Prof.. name, grade, Fall/Spring semester and year).
_____,_____,_____
_____,_____,_____
I read the above information and understand it. I will contact Prof. _____ at any time, if I have any further questions about it.

Sincerely,
_____ (Please type in your name.)

SAMPLE AGREEMENT for the Mentee

I,_____, will contact my peer mentor,_____ twice a week, near to the time when we have Discussion Board postings and/or homework due. My peer mentor's name is_____. My peer mentor's cell # is: _____. My peer mentor's e-mail is:_____. The tentative schedule for our regular contact will be on _____and _____, by use of (circle) telephone/text/e-mail, at _____time of day, if possible. I can contact my peer mentor at any time for assistance with things like time management, questions about course material, questions about the major written assignments, and things like that. I can always contact Prof. Gleicher, if I need more assistance than my mentor can provide at rgleicher@bmcc.cuny.edu or (917) 750-0574. If I am feeling very stressed, I will go to the BMCC Counseling Center to talk to a licensed mental health counselor (199 Chambers St., Room # S-343) 212-220-8140 (Monday –Thursday: 9am–6:30pm; Friday: 9am–5:30pm) or call 1-800-LIFE-NET.

Sincerely,

_____name _____date

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ePortfolio: A Pedagogical Tool to Support Students' Job Search Preparation

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Electronic portfolios (ePortfolios) have been used in many disciplines for different purposes. In recruiting, employers assess the candidates' ability to perform the desired quality of work. Portfolios give employers an in-depth look at the applicant's skills and ability. A career portfolio is actually an extension of a resume. Two career ePortfolio projects were implemented in career planning classes in Fall 2012 and Summer 2013; 49 students participated. The data revealed tremendous differences between the two classes as regards the students' motivation to use the ePortfolio, project outcomes, and the desire to continue the ePortfolio on their own. What were the key success factors?

Introduction

In recent times, the electronic portfolio (ePortfolio) model has been adopted by many disciplines. An ePortfolio serves as a tool to support student learning in higher education in both public and private colleges and universities (Skiba, 2008; Chen & Black, 2011). It can be used to help students in college transfers and career searches. When recruiting, employers assess the candidates' capability for high-quality work. To hiring managers, a resume only gives them a glimpse of what the applicant can do, but a career portfolio shows the proof. Making the adoption of the portfolio model in career planning class a priority is aligned with BMCC's mission of fulfilling personal and career goals, and preparing students for career mobility.

The process of setting one's life goals and achieving them can be extremely confusing for students. In career planning and development, self-awareness and understanding is a central concept. Students' overwhelming desire to simply land any job rather than satisfy their true passion presents a common dilemma in the job search process. It also hinders them from discovering themselves and their life's purpose. A job search thus becomes an instrumental, task-oriented process. Statistics reveal the need to reflect on how the faculty can help students deepen their self-understanding, improve their job search self-efficacy, and eventually plan a meaningful career path.

Literature Review

An ePortfolio is an electronic system that facilitates the development, collection, and management of digital resources. These resources might be drawn from a range of learner experiences over a period, including formal and non-formal learning opportunities (Peacock, Gordon, Murray, Morss, & Dunlop, 2010). Recent research has shown that ePortfolios permit students to appreciate their classroom work as preparatory skills development for future jobs (Rowh, 2008; Ken, 2012). The method also increases students' marketability by exhibiting their individual skills and capabilities to prospective employers (Fred, 2004; Saul,

2005; Anderson, Gardner, Ramsbotham, & Tones, 2009). A study by Naude and Moynihan (2004) on the ePortfolio experiences of 32 students indicates that self-reflection via activities such as the evaluation of skills and setting of learning and career goals was thought to be the most valuable aspect of the process. Essentially, an ePortfolio is an extensive resume that links to an electronic repository of a student's papers, projects, and extracurricular activities. It affords students a new sense of their own accomplishments (Young, 2002), thus further contributing to a positive learning experience.

The researcher, backed by five years of teaching career planning, identifies the areas that should be improved to boost the students' success in their future job searches: (1) a systematic approach with technological support to prepare students for employment search, pursuant to the current online recruitment trend and (2) an authentic approach to students' self-exploration/discovery so as to deepen their awareness and understanding of who they are, and what they desire in life. The ePortfolio concept is multifaceted, as it constitutes a technology, pedagogical approach, "process," and "product." According to Chen and Black (2011), an ePortfolio captures and documents the students' learning, reflection, rationale building, and planning, thereby establishing a culture that shares personal learning and promotes student-centered learning. Because of the positive results, this researcher decided to integrate the ePortfolio in the career planning class so as to improve the students' chances of finding jobs in the current competitive market. This proposed study was guided by the following research questions:

• What impact does integrating the ePortfolio in career planning class have on students' job search preparation?

• What impact does integrating the ePortfolio have on the students' overall learning experiences?

ePortfolio Platform Selection—Epsilen

There are many portfolio software platforms, such as Digication, Coroflot, Carbonmade, VisualCV, and Epsilen, which the students can use to create their own portfolios. The researcher chose Epsilen (www.epsilen.com) to conduct this study because the tool requires a relatively minimal learning curve and is available address to faculty and students with an "edu" at no cost. Epsilen features that are relevant to this project include welcome notes (biography), resume, contact information, showcase (a collection of a student's document files, videos, and sites), interests, certification, and blog.

The Study in Fall 2012

The researcher conducted an ePortfolio study in the CED201 Career Planning class in fall 2012. Thirty-two business students registered for the class and learned how to create their ePortfolio project, 80% of whom were in the 18–22 age bracket and had very little or no work experience. Only 19 volunteered to fill out the surveys. Below is a brief description of the study.

Class Design

During the second week of the class, the students created their ePortfolio accounts via the Epsilen platform. They learned the basic technology functions with the help of Ms. Carina Nieves, a guest speaker and ePortfolio mentor from Queens College. The project was given as an extra credit assignment to students in consideration of their possible anxiety and resistance to the new online environment. The students were given assignments for the project, such as "Statement of Who I Am," "Resume," and "Reflection on Accomplishments." Because of the unavailability of a computer lab, the students built their ePortfolio practically on their own. Whenever the students had questions, the researcher demonstrated ePortfolio how-to functions in the classroom. By the end of the semester, the majority had dropped the ePortfolio project and their responses to the assignments were not positive.

Data and Findings

The following are the findings from the students' responses:

1. **Lack of motivation.** Forty-two percent (42%) of the students did not believe the employer/human resources department would have the time and interest to read their career portfolio. Sixty-five percent (65%) believed that the ePortfolio is best suited for art, multimedia, and video students, not students of accounting, business administration, and nursing.

2. **Concern about privacy**. The Epsilen ePortfolio is a public webpage that can be seen by anyone with Internet access. Thirty-two percent (32%) of the students were reluctant to reveal their school or job-related work in a public forum, even if Epsilen provides a key function that gives users access control over specific parts of the information to protect privacy.

3. **Difficulty with the Epsilen platform and future charges by the company.** Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the students claimed to have difficulty in navigating the Epsilen platform, even though 79% rated themselves as having good or excellent computer skills. The Epsilen account is free, but 65% were concerned about possible future charges should the company change its policy. Therefore, they did not want to spend time and effort on the project.

4. **Not knowing what work to include and how to present it.** A fourth (25%) of the students did not know what to showcase in the ePortfolio. A few said they were only in their first semester in college and did not have any work to present yet. The rest claimed they did not find any accomplishment presentable enough for a prospective employer.

5. **Lack of Time.** Thirty-two percent (32%) of the students claimed not to have time for the ePortfolio project because of the amount of work it required, their college course load, and responsibility at home. Fifty-eight percent (58%) spent less than five hours on the assignment outside class time in the whole semester.

The researcher struggled to implement the Fall 2012 project successfully in the face of the lack of lab hours and technical support. The researcher realized that the students needed individual support, but providing one-on-one guidance to 32 students required a tremendous amount of outside-class time. The students did not believe that a career ePortfolio could help them with their job search. Seventy-four percent (74%) of the student did not want to continue the ePortfolio after the semester ended. The researcher reflected on the pedagogical design and suggested improvements in the following areas:

- **Graded ePortfolio assignment.** Students will be motivated to complete their career ePortfolio project if it is a graded assignment. A grade is normally the most obvious extrinsic reward for most students.

- **Provide technical support and lab time.** It is important to provide immediate support when students encounter technological challenges. Because of the time constraints of the students and faculty, the required lab hours can help students familiarize themselves with the online technological platform and hone their technical skills.

- **Create a custom-made instructional ePortfolio manual.** Since the ePortfolio is new to students who are planning their careers, classroom alone is not sufficient to develop their skills. A custom-made instructional manual for the project is recommended.

- **Encourage peer feedback.** Feedback from peers is received more quickly and in larger quantities. The objective opinions of peers can be very helpful in creating a good ePortfolio project.

- **Create an ePortfolio rubric.** A rubric can communicate expectations between the faculty and students, and assess the students' performance.

The Study in Summer 2013
A total of 17 students registered for the career planning class in summer 2013, of whom 65% had over five years of professional work experience. Their ages ranged from 23 to 55 years.

Class Design
The students were given a graded career ePortfolio project that accounted for 15% of their entire grade. The researcher was able to reserve computer labs in order to allow students to work on their ePortfolio for at least an hour per week, with guidance and support from the instructor and ePortfolio consultant. An ePortfolio instructional manual was created using Softcloud software and uploaded on the class Blackboard. A rubric of the ePortfolio project was included in the manual. The three key components that students had to complete on Epsilen's ePortfolio design were (1) Welcome Notes—a place for self-introduction, (2) Resume, and (3) Showcase—a place for presenting achievements, such as educational accomplishments, school activities, community participation, and work performance. The researcher designed class assignments that helped students

complete the three key areas, such as a reflective writing about themselves, work value assessment, seven successful stories, and resume writing. The researcher invited ePortfolio consultant Professor Fei-Wen Pirovolikos from Queens College to demonstrate the use of the ePortfolio and explain Epsilen's technological functions. This bolstered the students' technical skills, and they were able to create a portfolio immediately.

In addition, the researcher made the purpose of the career portfolio project clear to the students on the very first classroom session. The students were open to the new way of presenting their knowledge, skills, resume, and accomplishments to prospective employers. They were given the responsibility to give their peers feedback on the design, writing, image, and evidence selections. The researcher asked the students about the effects of integrating the ePortfolio in career planning class. Below are the findings from the survey:

Data and Findings
[Data: Summer 2013, 17 Career Planning Students]

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
The ePortfolio project …			
1. Increased self-confidence.	95%	5%	0%
2. Improved self-understanding.	100%	0%	0%
3. Increased job-search confidence.	95%	0%	5%
4. Increased technological skills.	77%	23%	0%
5. Improved writing skills.	70%	30%	0%
6. Improved organization skills.	70%	30%	0%
7. Improved motivation to learn the subject.	88%	12%	0%
I want to continue to develop my ePortfolio on my own after the class is over.	95%	5%	0%

The data revealed that 100% of the students agreed that the ePortfolio project helped them deepen their self-understanding. The project required them to constantly reflect on their learning experience, work-related skill levels, and desired career and life goals. Self-awareness and understanding is a central concept in career planning and development. A person who has deeper self-understanding can plan a better future. Seventy percent (70%) of the students agreed that the project improved their writing and organizational skills. A digital portfolio is a collection of electronic evidence, which often includes inputted text, electronic files, and images. Students needed to constantly assemble, manage, and check the accuracy and quality of their evidence. The data also revealed that 77% of them agreed that the project improved their technological skills. A few expressed their anxiety about using technology and learning various functions of the Epsilen portfolio at the beginning of the class. All students completed their project at

the end of the term, and 95% said they would like to continue to develop their ePortfolio on their own.

The students expressed their experience about the three key areas they needed to complete—"Welcome Notes," "Resume," and "Showcase." Below are their responses.

Welcome Notes

Eighty-eight percent (88%) of the students said that "Welcome Notes" was meaningful and relatively easy to complete. The section helped them think deeply about themselves, and their interests and values. Below are excerpts of what they wrote:

> I found 'Welcome Notes' the most comfortable sections of the three. It is both interesting and a little bit challenging. It leads me to question myself: "Who am I? What are my interests? What are my values?" It makes me think deeply, be honest, and explore myself more than ever.

> It was the easiest part of the ePortfolio because I used a quote that makes it meaningful.

However, a small number of students found it difficult to complete this section because of their concern about privacy in the public forum. A student wrote:

> … when it comes to introducing myself to others…I don't like people to know even a little about me because it is dangerous to put personal information in web pages these days.

Resume

Twenty-three percent (23%) of the students claimed that the "Resume" section was relatively difficult and challenging. Writing a solid and effective resume for landing a dream job required several skills: choosing right keywords and effective titles, knowing how to describe professional achievements instead of merely listing responsibilities, and more importantly, understanding the purpose of the resume and who the audience was.

However, 77% claimed that "Resume" was the most important and helpful section. The "Resume Wizard" was clear and easy to do. The Epsilen portfolio enabled the students to construct an organized and professional resume for presentation to prospective employers. Here are some passages that the students wrote:

> It was the hardest to get done. I didn't know what I should put in the resume because I have little work experience. In addition, I am not familiar with how to change the font and letter size in the ePortfolio.

> My resume looks very professional and I feel very confident about my job search.

> I consider preparing Resume as one of the most important and helpful sec-

tions. The ePortfolio project helps me to prepare my resume in an organized manner—the best resume I have ever made. The challenging technical part is to how to adjust the font, size, and layout in order to produce a well-organized and presentable resume.

Showcase

Sixty-five percent (65%) of the students claimed that "Showcase" was the hardest to complete. Among the challenges were the students' inability to understand the function of the section, difficulty in identifying what to include in their accomplishments, and lack of documentation of past work. Below are some of the students' responses:

> My biggest challenge was to create my showcase. It was hard for me to find the right words and images that would reflect me.

> The difficulty of creating my showcase was in not finding pictures that could prove my accomplishments. I thus realized the need to document my future work and certificates in an electronic form.

> It was the most challenging part of the ePortfolio project because I needed to take the time to figure out what comprised my best work. I finally chose my volunteer work and one of my best accounting projects for my showcase.

ePortfolio Overall Experience

The students' overall learning experience with the career ePortfolio project is positive and meaningful. They stated that the project had helped them (1) organize prior work and identify achievements, (2) improve their writing and reflection skills, (3) appreciate teamwork and learn how to give feedback, (4) evaluate their personal progress and academic performance, and (5) improve self-confidence and job searching skills. The following are samples of the students' writing:

> I really appreciate this project, which allows me to organize my prior work and identify my achievements.

> Working on my ePortfolio helped me improve my reflection ability and writing skills. Now it is easier for me to choose words that better express what I think.

> Teaming up with classmates helped me stay focused while working on my ePortfolio, especially when I needed help and feedback about my project. I learned so much about how to create a dynamic portfolio by giving and receiving feedback.

> I just love the ePortfolio because it can document my college experience. It gives me a chance to evaluate my progress and see my academic performance and personal growth.

Integrating the ePortfolio in classroom teaching requires a well-thought pedagog-

ical design. The researcher reflected on the two studies—Fall 2012 and Summer 2013—and concluded that the success of the ePortfolio's implementation hinged on (1) the allocation of regular lab hours throughout the course, (2) technology support for students, (3) regular feedback regarding the students' work and the opportunity for peer review, (4) one-on-one consultation outside classroom time between the faculty and students, (5) the creation and embedding of class assignments for students in preparing the ePortfolio project, (6) the making of the project into a graded assignment, and (7) the initial implementation of the ePortfolio on a small class—ideally 10 to 15 students—given the enormous time required of the faculty. More importantly, the faculty needs to define the purpose of the ePortfolio project and its learning outcomes.

Conclusion
The ePortfolio can be implemented to support students' college learning experience, prepare them for future employment, and improve their critical thinking and reflection skills. Students can internalize their learning through the process of creating their ePortfolio. Documenting learning in an ePortfolio is a way for students to explore and reflect on their knowledge by asking critical questions, and a means to put the answers into practice (Light, Chen, & Ittelson, 2012). The students' experiences revealed that the ePortfolio is a very useful project, helping them develop essential skills for future employment and supporting their learning and personal development.

Suggestions to BMCC
College-wide student ePortfolio implementation requires support from the faculty, staff, and administrators. A number of issues associated with student ePortfolios were brought up for discussion in many colleges:

• Should an ePortfolio be an official record of a student's work?

• How long should an ePortfolio remain in an institution after the student graduates?

• Does the institution providing the ePortfolio system own certain elements of a student's archived work—similar to other college records?

• How does one create a culture in which educators and students understand how to map their learning experiences together to facilitate an effective student ePortfolio system that is a learner-centered, developmental, and reflective aid?

• How are ePortfolios evaluated in a manner that is both valid and reliable?

• How can institutions encourage critical reflection in the design and use of ePortfolios?

If BMCC has the initiative to implement the ePortfolio college-wide in the future, it is recommended that research be carried out to identify a successful model that is suited for BMCC. Top administrators also should discuss the above issues that are associated with student ePortfolios.

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All Kinds of Coffee: Teaching Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum

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Developmental Skills

A friend of ours claims he has an idea for a study on critical thinking. When he visits New York City, he raises his eyebrows whenever he tries to order coffee. His favorite is "Americano." According to his expertise in coffee, an Americano consists of two shots of espresso and the rest of the small cup is filled with water. The usual cup size, to make the effect better, should be 8 oz. However, when he goes to a coffee place in New York City, they often tell him they do not have this kind of Americano because they only have 12 and 16 oz. cups. This reply always surprises him. He explains that simply adding less water to a 12 oz. cup can actually do the trick. On the other side of the counter, the attendant gives a baffled look. Now, we cannot be completely sure that this description is accurate of the experience, but we can see where this is going in terms of critical thinking abilities. And it is not one particular person's fault. It is the way we have been trained to think and behave.

Our friend is not alone in perceiving this "lack of critical thinking" ability. Many faculty members at BMCC might have a similar perception regarding the students in our college. This semester, we had the opportunity to develop a seminar about critical thinking across the curriculum. We invited faculty from all other disciplines to participate. We gathered a group of twelve instructors from a range of disciplines: English, Speech, Music and Arts, Health Education and Science. Although the participating teachers represented a broad range of teaching styles, they expressed common concerns about students' overall passivity and shortcomings as readers and writers. Rather than looking for ways to "fix" the students, however, we challenged the teachers to look critically at their own teaching practices: expectations, materials, and methods. Before we can expect critical thinking from our students, we must apply it to ourselves.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1968/2003) strongly emphasizes the need to change the indoctrination patterns of our education today to that of a dialogue in which the learner and the teacher alike learn from each other. Paulo Freire sees traditional forms of education as "banking education," and he proposes a model that is more "liberatory," one that enhances an individual's conscious awareness through dialogue. Banking education is defined as education that depends on memorization, a teacher's deposits of knowledge into students, where students are merely receptacles of knowledge. The instructor is in charge of all problem-solving and students do not question. On the other hand, a liberatory education lets the students and instructors scaffold problem-posing tasks together, developing mutual critical consciousness through a creative process.

In traditional schooling, to paint a map in a different color from what the teacher expects or to ask a question in the middle of a lesson are viewed as disrespectful gestures and lack of discipline. In trying to school students, for instance, teachers, the educational system, and the curriculum end up missing opportuni-

ties to engage in critical inquiry. This is what creates what Ivan Illich (1970/1999) calls a "deschooling" society, in other words, subjects that lack agency and the ability to build on critical thinking to make informed decisions that build the common good.

Critical thinking is usually defined as the careful application of reason in the determination of whether a claim is true, in the evaluation of claims. But, the fact is that lately, critical thinking classes are really informal logic classes that become the bread and butter courses of college, not leaving enough space to explore what critical thinking really is about. Students often register in these classes assuming the content will be an easy pass to comply with their core curriculum requirements. In addition, faculty might hold the idea that critical thinking is a subject they can teach simply because they perceive themselves as critical thinkers. These are two assumptions that need to be deeply challenged if we really want to build a path to critical thinking and inquiry.

Critical thinking is an opportunity to engage in interactive teaching and learning processes. It is an opportunity to break with that banking model of education and to break with traditional and useless hierarchies in the classroom, and offer a safe space where all of our assumptions are explored, faculty and students alike. It should be an opportunity to help students grow in their evaluative skills not only for the classroom, but also for their lives. Regardless of the subject matter, be it in science or the humanities, critical thinking should be the opportunity for professors and students to put themselves in the spot, examining assumptions, evaluating the evidence for these assumptions, seeing these assumptions from different perspectives, and learning to make informed decisions to take actions (Brookfield, 2012). This can only be done when faculty first are able to model to students how to go about critical analysis of materials, from every day situations to theories to text excerpts; thus, they are giving students the tools to do this by themselves thereafter.

From small tasks regarding the content of the course to the many connections students can make with their realities, they can see the utility of applying critical thinking all the time. Simply giving a reading just because an instructor finds it interesting is not enough. Simply giving a task because it seems like a good task to practice inductive/deductive reasoning is not enough. Students must be invited to engage in tasks with the instructor and in tasks that connect with their realities. Students must feel that they are making by performing. Students must be the agents of their own change.

To conclude, we would like to make three practical suggestions for teachers who wish to promote critical thinking in their classrooms. First, use materials that can open doors to analysis of real world issues. Secondly, be a model of critical thinking for your students. Third, treat the learning process as an end in itself. Worry less about what information the students acquire and more about how they analyze and solve problems. Help your students realize that if we have the courage and flexibility to question assumptions, we can fit any type of coffee into any size cup.

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On Pathways

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Social Sciences and Human Services

Currently the City University of New York (CUNY) is undergoing a cataclysmic shift in its historic mission to provide an affordable college education with its new Pathways curriculum. In fall 2013, the academic disciplinary committees of the Department of Social Sciences, Human Services, and Criminal Justice were asked to assign their courses to one of five subject buckets. I abstained from voting because I felt the bucket areas failed to recognize the historical complexity of what sociology encompasses. Ultimately the sociology disciplinary committee assigned sociology to the study of "Self and Society." I have grave concerns that this decision diminishes our understanding of what sociology is, and that it will negatively impact our understanding of what sociology could be. I wanted to elaborate on these concerns in this essay.

For those unfamiliar with Pathways, it is the redesigned general education curriculum enacted by the CUNY's Board of Trustees through a 2011 resolution, despite widespread faculty opposition; it began being enacted in fall 2013. The new curriculum, supposedly designed to facilitate the time to graduation, designated English, math and science as the "common core" and changed once-required courses in English, art/music, and the social sciences to a "flexible common core." These changes will result in students having less reading, less writing, and less exposure to foreign languages, and the social and physical sciences. As the nation's oldest and third largest public urban university, the changes being enacted at CUNY are likely to have wide ranging effects.

According to the new schema, to get an associate in arts (AA) or an associate in science (AS) degree, a student must complete the "common core": two courses in English (for most majors previously three); one course in mathematical and quantitative reasoning; and one course in life and physical sciences (previously two). Meanwhile, once required general education courses in subject areas such as music/art, foreign languages, and the social sciences, have been re-organized into a "flexible common core" with one of the following five emphases: (1) World Cultures and Global Issues; (2) US Experience in its Diversity; (3) Creative Expression; (4) Individual and Society; and (5) Scientific World. As previously noted, the department ultimately voted to put the Introduction to Sociology course in the Individual and Society bucket; yet clearly sociology fulfills all of the "flexible core" subject areas, except perhaps for Creative Expression.

Probably needless to say to our college's readership, sociology emerged in the late 19th century as a critical, interdisciplinary analysis of society that sought to bridge the gap between the personal/biographical and the social. C. Wright Mills described the sociological imagination as what "enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society" (1959, 6). Perhaps even more critically, key classical and contemporary theorists presumed a scientific method, upon which their theories would rest upon empirical evidence —whether historical, ethnographic or experimental. Sociology's object of study

was never meant to be just the individual and society, nor a particular nation, nor a global system. Rather, it was meant to apply the scientific method to study the social, i.e., all of those things—all that which exists outside of us, constructing us, constraining us. And that could be a nation, but it also could be all of human history, or a method of analysis.

I thought I would draw upon classical and contemporary theorists to validate this claim. The three classical theorists of sociology, generally, are recognized as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Since Marx is conceptualized as a precursor to sociology's emergence, I will only briefly note that his work sought to theorize scientifically how human nature was historically and potentially structured by material relations of production. The sweeping scope of his analysis of bourgeois society, particularly of its global reach, is reflected in this quote: "It [the bourgeoisie] forces all nations to adopt the bourgeois mode of production or go under, it forces them to introduce so-called civilization amongst themselves, i.e., to become bourgeois. In a phrase, it creates a world in its own image" (5). In this quote, one grasps the dynamic, emergent, all-encompassing scope of Marx's analysis. Emile Durkheim, meanwhile, defines sociology as the study of social facts. In *Rules of Sociological Method* (Catlin, Free Press, 1938/1966, 2), he defined social facts as being "external to the individual, but moreover, endowed with coercive power, by virtue of which they impose themselves upon him, independent of his individual will." Max Weber defined the "historical and cultural sciences" thus: "They teach us how to understand and interpret political, artistic, literary and social phenomena in terms of their origin" (1946, 145). Weber emphasized cultivating a historical, multi-cultural, interdisciplinary social science: "Science today is a 'vocation' organized in special disciplines in the service of self-clarification of interrelated facts" (Ibid., 152).

Finally, let me include some contemporary theorists:

W.E.B. DuBois, of course, wrote, "The problem of the 20th century is the problem of the colorline". Hence, it seems hard to imagine how any introductory sociology course would not "analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation and belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies," as required by the "World Cultures and Global Issues" bucket.

Meanwhile, the previously cited Mills defined "social analysts" as consistently asking three sorts of questions:

1. What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? What are its essential components, and how are they related to one another. How does it differ from other varieties of social order? Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature for its continuance and change?

2. Where does this society stand in human history? What are the mechanics by which it is changing? What is its place within and its meaning for the development of humanity as a whole? How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? And this period—what are its essential features? How does it differ from other periods? What are its characteristic ways of history-making?

3. What varieties of men and women now prevail in this society and period? And what varieties are coming to prevail? In what ways are they selected and blunted? What kinds of 'human nature' are revealed in the conduct and character we observe in this society in this period? And what is the meaning for 'human nature' of each and every feature of the society we are examining? (1959/2000, 6-7)

These three question-areas posed by Mills clearly illustrate how sociology satisfies the requirements for World Cultures and Global Issues, US Experience in its Diversity, and Individual and Society.

Finally, consider bell hooks's concept of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, which evokes a historical, global worldview. She writes,

> I began to use the phrase in my work 'white supremacist capitalist patriarchy' because I wanted to have some language that would actually remind us continually of the interlocking systems of domination that define our reality and not to just have one thing be like, you know, gender is the important issue, race is the important issue, but for me the use of that particular jargonistic phrase was a way, a sort of short cut way of saying all of these things actually are functioning simultaneously at all times in our lives... To me an important breakthrough, I felt, in my work and that of others was the call to use the term *white supremacy*, over *racism* because racism in and of itself did not really allow for a discourse of colonization and decolonization, the recognition of the internalized racism within people of color and it was always in a sense keeping things at the level at which whiteness and white people remained at the center of the discussion."

In light of these statements regarding the scope of sociology, it seems a disservice to the academic discipline we serve and whose art we practice if we isolate its concerns to just one of the five possible buckets. As scholar-teachers, we need to honor the traditions of our discipline. To best reflect the intention of sociology, I think the Introduction to Sociology course should flexibly fulfill multiple buckets, i.e. "World Cultures and Global Issues," "US Experience in Its Diversity," "Individual and Society," and "Scientific World".

A colleague suggested that placing Introduction to Sociology in the global culture might make us compete with French. However, I think multi-bucketing would resolve this problem. Students who harbor an interest in a foreign language or sociology/social sciences would be able to sacrifice neither…and ultimately, multi-bucketing will give students more flexibility to follow their intellectual curiosity. Why must we be limited to just one bucket?

Yet an even more grave concern than inappropriate subject buckets is the diminishment of CUNY's general education curriculum, which has always been the heart and core mission of a liberal arts education. The liberal arts education was intended to study canonical original texts to raise fundamental questions about human existence. Such a critical mindset requires a depth of broad knowledge that demands a wide range of courses, as opposed to a diminished general education curriculum with an increased focus on technical and vocational training.

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Valuing The Writing Process

Margaret Barrow
English

Grades indicate to students how well or not they have completed the assigned tasks. Often, instructors will have worked long hours on grading only to watch their students turn to the last page of an essay to see the final grade and frequently, ignore the comments on the paper. The long hours it takes to carefully read through student papers boiled down to that one letter on the last page.

With this in mind, I put more emphasis on the writing process—grading students' efforts to work through it, and I provide comments along the way. From choosing a topic; outline; drafts (2 or 3); peer reviews (2); final proofreading; to the final polished essay, each part of the process is seen as equally important. I don't believe in teaching writing in ways that negate the essential messy writing processes that take place. To grade just the final product teaches students not to value the actual messiness that must occur in order to reach the final polished version of a piece of writing. I agree with Valerie Strauss when she says, "For grades to be meaningful and useful to students, they require some explanation, perhaps suggestions or direction" (Grading writing: The art and science—and why computers can't do it—The Washington Post) In that same vein, I take time to explain ways students can improve a piece of writing.

At the outset, providing students with clear grading criteria essentially helps them to understand what is expected of them. Therefore, I hand out *grading rubrics* and variously specific writing task oriented *checklists*. John Bean's important pedagogical suggestions in his book *Engaging Ideas* offer many more ways to ensure clarity in grading criteria; in addition to the two mentioned above, *in-class norming sessions, peer-review checklist, revision-oriented comments*, and *student responses to instructor's comments* (to name a few) present clear grading criteria. And, we must not forget that our comments, which often align with grading, need to offer students encouragement as they participate in the writing process.

In a Freshmen Composition course at a community college where there are between 25-30 students, many of whom are struggling writers, taking the time to explain to students how they can improve their writing requires a lot of time, coffee and hand strengthening exercises. For me, there is no getting around how important the process of writing is and my students begin to understand and value it as much as they do the final grade, because in working through the process as a valuable part of writing, students experience writing as a work in progress shaped by their engagement in the process. A single-minded focus on counting and circling all errors in a paper can effectively demoralize students and constrain their efforts to learn to improve their writing. To meet the learning needs of my students, we focus on the process of writing and the notable improvements in writing that occur along the way. Students have informed me that this approach generates a deeper understanding of writing and the grades associated with developing and improving writing skills. By focusing on grading the

process of writing, both students and instructor become invested in the writer's work as it takes shape.

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Imaginary Syllabus for an Imaginary Class at an Imaginary College

Robert Masterson
English

Imaginary Syllabus for an Imaginary Class at an Imaginary College
Eng345 – Writing With Purpose
MWF 11:00 – 11:50 am / Room 324 Spittarn Hall
[The course is designed to build upon previously learned writing skills to provide the student with a renewed sense of intention and an appreciation for the varied communicative values of language.]

Spring Semester
Learn to bake bread
Fight, break up, and make up with a romantic partner
Eat something unfamiliar
Take something apart. put it back together, and make it work despite the leftover pieces
Watch the last of the ice in the gutter dissolve under the first warm rain
Explain a feeling to a stranger
Eavesdrop constantly
Read a paperback book at least 25 years old (especially one with a lurid cover)
Remember something forgotten
Drink to excess and experience remorse
Make a mask
Buy used shoes at a thrift store or flea market and wear them

Summer Semester
Wake up late
Try to attract songbirds to your home
Give up an advantage
Wear a t-shirt backwards and/or inside out all day
Assemble a model airplane, boat, or car
Slowly reread a favorite book from childhood
Eat cold food
Experiment with musical instruments
Eavesdrop constantly
Revisit a childhood playground
Wear shoes on the wrong feet
Learn the names of 12 stars

Fall Semester
Destroy a favorite possession
Explain centrifugal force to a child
Pick at a sweater
Go barefoot all afternoon
Smoke a cheap cigar
Call someone unexpectedly
Read outside until darkness makes it impossible to continue
Stare at a half-glass of vodka for at least 20 minutes
Imagine what it would be like to lose a limb
Eavesdrop constantly
Run laps around something
Do something that seems like a good idea at the time

Winter Semester
Wear a friend's shoes
Learn a new game and play it obsessively
Compose a love letter and burn it
Consider the leafless trees
Eavesdrop constantly
Exacerbate a problem
Nurse a houseplant back to health
Experiment with smoking a pipe
Read someone else's diary; don't get caught
Say something awkward in public
In some fashion or another, go fishing
Sit by a window with a cheek pressed to the cold glass

CALL FOR PAPERS

Inquirer is a journal devoted to teaching, learning, and scholarship at BMCC. The editors welcome manuscripts on any number of topics, including but not limited to the following:

- Successful and innovative classroom activities
- Special teaching themes and units
- New pedagogies in theory and practice
- Ways to enliven the classroom
- Teaching challenges faced and resolved
- Disciplines and skills across the curriculum
- Classroom-based research
- Assessment and evaluation of students and teachers
- Impacts of syllabus, curriculum, and policy changes
- Teaching about race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class
- Teaching about globalization and global citizenship
- Teaching about sustainability and environmental awareness
- Fiction, poetry, and narratives
- Book reviews
- Proposals for Teachable Moment Symposia (four or more papers on a shared theme)

Please submit a 250-500 word proposal or working manuscript to the editors by February 7, 2015.

The deadline for completed manuscripts is April 1, 2015

Authors should aim for a finished manuscript of roughly 2500 words, though the editors will consider longer and shorter submissions. Works in Progress will also be considered for our new section on this topic.

All submissions should be in Microsoft Word, double-spaced and in 12 point font, with text, notes, and references formatted in a recognized style (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago) or in the conventional style of the author's discipline.

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