ALL ABOUT

MANDELL

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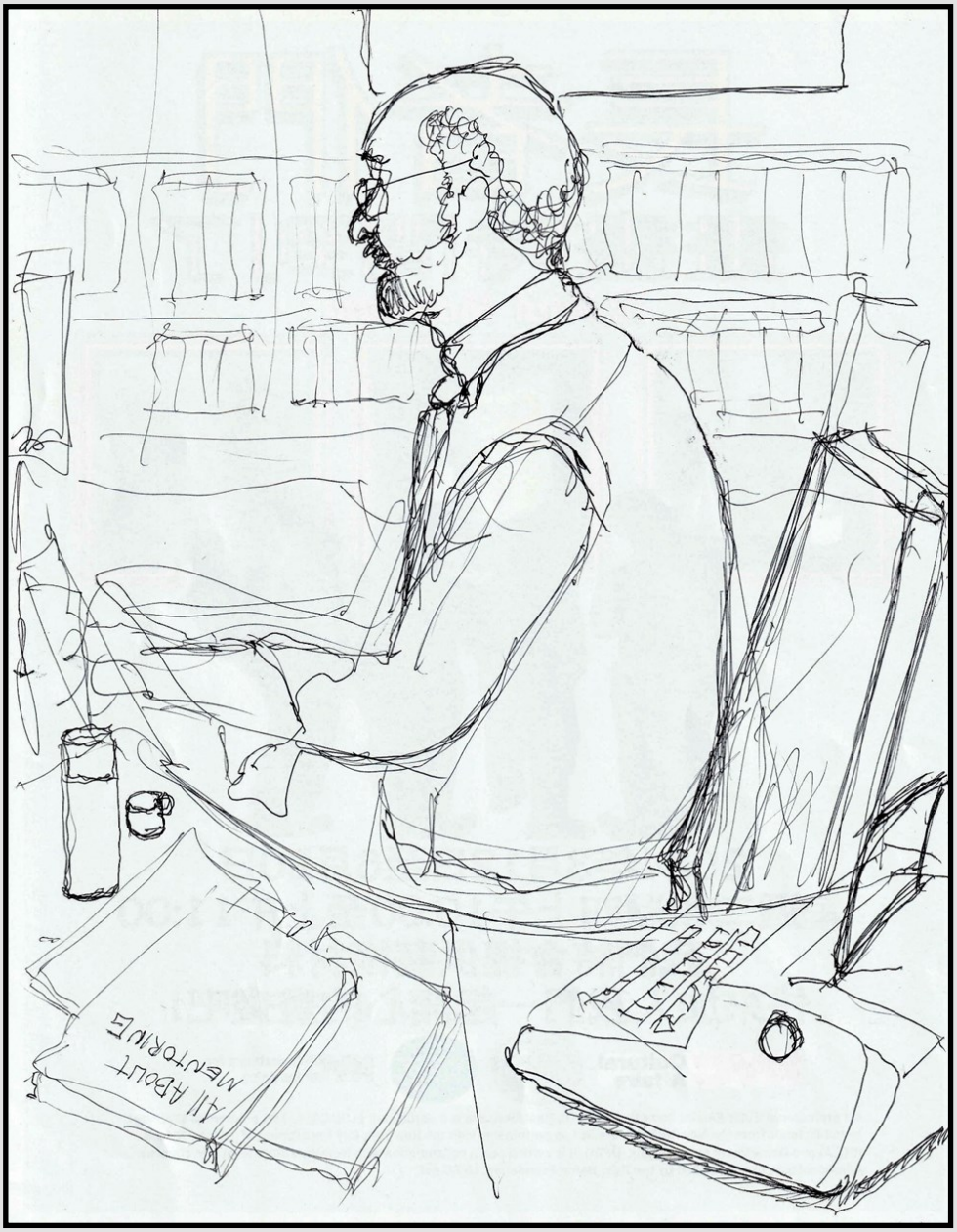

All About Mentoring Special Issue: All About Mandell

What about all of this history? What do we do with it? …

Without any doubt, an obsession with the past can pull us into big trouble. We can get stuck; we can imagine some institutional golden age (when exactly did it begin and when did it end?), some flush times, some designated period in which what one or a group of us cherishes held sway (or so we believe). That is, without even noticing, our chosen historical lens can be off: we can cover over the fights, the confusions, the uneven practices, the blind spots, the poor decisions and the critiques of day-to-day institutional life that hovered around almost from the very start. By imagining there was a much purer time, we can lose touch with the call and the need for change.

So here's my sense: It's not about a romance with some past, and it's not about smashing it all up and rebooting. Rather, it's in our best interest to grapple critically with the history of Empire State College. That history is stunningly rich, varied, complex, full of questions and, for sure, no linear affair. The college was created as an experimenting institution responding to a specific set of socioeconomic and cultural circumstances.

The dream of access, individualization, a new faculty role and an unrelenting attention to "learning" wherever it is taking place seemed impossibly out of step and wildly out of reach. But, in some pretty amazing ways, it's happened and it's happening, and we shouldn't let it disappear. It is not 1971, the world is a hugely changed place, but maybe that "one quality" – part of our history – can guide and help define us.

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring, Issue 51, Winter 2018*

All About Mentoring

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Alan

Pen on paper, 2024

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Introduction | By Elana Michelson


Elana Michelson

It could not have been more of a pleasure, or an honor, to put this publication together. When Deb Amory asked me to take this on, an image of Alan came to mind that was not very different from Raul Manzano's wonderful rendering of Alan on the cover of this volume. I could see him at his desk, in front of a computer (but with his typewriter in the background!), deep in thought and, most likely, in communication with a colleague or a student. I dove into the volumes of *All About Mentoring* that Alan had crafted over so many years, at first mostly looking for Alan in its pages, and found myself awash in memories – of ideas, of colleagues, of moments in the life of the college that delighted or outraged me at the time, and of friends.

That should have come as no surprise. Put a finger on any moment of Empire State's history, and you will find Alan. This current publication has only scatterings of Alan's words in it, but it is indeed *All About Mandell*. It mirrors, in a small way, the ways in which Alan has shaped our collective intellectual and institutional life. And it seems, looking back, that as he worked so hard in the everyday, he was also keeping a record of who we have been and who we wanted to be.

The pieces included in this publication fall into several overlapping categories. There is the scholarship of mentoring itself, an endeavor that Alan spent a career nurturing. There are pieces that group themselves around the relationship of mentoring to the quest for social justice, a connection that Alan has also nurtured and that many of us have tried to make central to our lives and careers. Often on the part of retiring faculty – a group that Alan now joins – there are deeply felt and often intimate memories of life in this ever-evolving institution, memories that join personal evolutions to organizational and social change.

The offerings here begin with an "invitation" in which Pat Isaac invokes poet John Masefield's praise of the university as a haven of inquiry for "knowledge seekers." That invitation speaks to the role of the university "in these days," as Masefield puts it, "of broken frontiers and collapsing values," much like our own.

That Masefield was a poet points forward as well to a singular quality of the pieces in Section I: The Scholarship of Mentoring, namely, the centrality of language. In the first two pieces, Cindy Bates connects the "deep listening" required of mentoring to that of acting and directing in the theater, while Elaine Handley follows with a consideration of the teaching of poetry as critical thinking. Language, and its role as cultural mediator, is central as well to the three articles that round out Section I. In exploring mentoring as intercultural practice, Eric Ball and Alice Lai coin the term "heteragogy" to name mentoring as an ethnographic encounter in which negotiations take place across languages with very different degrees of social power. David Starr-Glass focuses on language and difference in his exploration of the metaphorical "sardine hedge" that marks and circumscribes our cultures and those of our students. Finally, Barrie Cline and Rebecca Fraser explore the role of writing and art in giving visibility both to blue-color students and to "the tensions between the academic and the vocational, head work and handiwork, artist and artisan."

These last two pieces, in turn, anticipate the theme that is explored further in Section II: Mentoring and/as Social Activism. The metaphor of the "sardine hedge" and the focus on the Labor College's

IBEW apprentice program remind us that our students are both discrete individuals with their own life stories and members of communities defined by class, nationality, race, gender, language and ways of knowing. As such, our encounters with them are both highly personal, and, at the same time and in the broadest sense of the term, necessarily political.

In this section, my own piece points to the ways in which gender as a social category plays out across the politics of knowledge. Raul Manzano considers the ways in which his own individual creative process is at the same time a political act. Frances Boyce and Shantih Clemans record a dialogue in which differently configured positions of privilege and marginalization define both individual identity and the grounds from which any one of us speaks. The next two articles, by David Fullard and Ruth Goldberg, explore two Empire State ventures, the Arthur Imperatore Forum and the Black Male Initiative, that have served to foster social change. Finally, to close out this section, Himanee Gupta, Lisa Parkins and Anastasia Pratt share field notes, as it were, from "teaching, mentoring and activism in an Age of Trump."

Alan's retirement after 50 years seems an appropriate occasion to look back, and Section III: Memory, History and Change consists of retrospectives on life and mentoring by members of Alan's generation of mentors. In their reflections, Miriam Tatzel, Steve Lewis, Al Lawrence, and Wayne Willis recall life in the evolving institution we then called Empire State College. They remember how they came to be something called a "mentor" and how they and the college grew in interaction with each other. Questions concerning the mixed blessings of change and the difficult balance between hope and fear fill these reflections, and Wayne Willis' piece especially reminds us that worries about the institution "killing the spirit" date at least as far back as the late 70's.

These questions, and two very different takes on institutional change, are the theme of Section IV: Facing the Future. Alan Tait, a contemporary and close colleague of Alan's from The Open University in the United Kingdom, wonders with us "how well do radicals age?" and argues that perhaps we have not fulfilled our mission of fostering social justice and social mobility through access to education. Nadine Wedderburn, a member of a newer generation of faculty, sees "policy punctuations" as a necessary part of institutional growth and change, providing opportunities for "`new' thinking and learning within organizations."

Finally, with Section V: Endnotes, this volume concludes by evoking two aspects of the life of Empire State for Alan's generation of mentors. One is the Core Values statement that Alan faithfully – in both senses of that word – included in every issue of *AAM*. The other, by Jim Robinson, is a kind of "day in the life" of a group of Empire State colleagues in the kitchen of a regional center. For better or worse, both of these pieces are now largely historical documents. The ways in which the Core Values, at the best of times always partly aspirational, will continue to inform the work of mentors is an open question. And coming to work in a location that was a "center" in two senses – a form of academic organization and a gathering place – is now a thing of the past.

Yet what strikes me about both of these documents is how full of life they still are. One can still picture the discussions and debates that went into the original framing of the core values, likely in a room at 2 Union Avenue, likely among colleagues who, by the end of the day, were seriously needing some fresh air, or a drink, but who were committed to articulating a shared vision of what higher education for adults could be. And Jim Robinson's sketch of one probably-not-very-unusual day at the Long Island Center serves as a stand-in for countless such exchanges among colleagues who

were grumpy, affectionate, overworked, easily irritated, effortlessly funny, and committed, sometimes in spite of themselves, to another day's hard work.

One last thought: as an editor, Alan, you know as well or better than any of us the mountainous TO DO piles, writer's blocks, and family emergencies that form the myriad reasons for either turning down a requested piece of writing or, having promised to produce one, failing to get it in on time. This time, it didn't happen. Barrie emailed back: but I'm in France! Miriam was awash in grandchildren. More than one person wrote back from the beach or the woods: *you want it when?* But everyone took the deadline to heart – a deadline that coincided with, of all things, Labor Day weekend. Your colleagues were thrilled to have been asked and grateful for the chance to honor you. I have never been thanked so many times for asking people to extend themselves.

So I hope – no, *we* hope –that as you read, you can feel the admiration and gratitude in these pages. You have inspired and shaped so many of us. You have embodied the best in us. You have reminded us what we meant to do when we forgot. In the immortal words of Woody Guthrie, to whom I'm always happy to give the last line: This world was lucky to see you born.

"But here's what concerns me: Are we as a college clear about what criteria we are using to evaluate every single move we are making?... What are the effects, over time, of doing this or that or moving here or there? …Can we, at age 50, get back to basics — not back to some image of the work people were doing in 1971 (or any other year along the way), but to the mission and the core values, and to the heart of this place?"

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 55, Autumn 2021

SUNY Empire State College: An Invitation to the Institution of Knowledge Seekers | by Patricia Isaac

Prelude

Patricia Isaac, 2021.

There are few earthly things more beautiful than a University. It is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see. (Masefield, 1946).

In looking back on this article and the words of British Poet Laureate John Masefield (1878-1967), no other person embodies this statement as well as Alan Mandell. He is the consummate knowledge seeker, scholar, mentor, academician and teacher. Over the many years Alan has taught, collaborated, mentored, and edited All About Mentoring at Empire State University, he never stopped caring for, sharing with and listening to others. He inspired scholarship with others and quietly orchestrated a movement towards systemic change. He welcomed all opinions and seemed to have never tired of engaging in dialogue with others. Dialogue was always reciprocal with the promise of meeting another time.

For 50 years Alan made significant contributions to Empire State College from its infancy to present day and he consistently espoused the importance of mentoring. Mentoring is the hallmark and cornerstone of Empire State University in the interaction between faculty and students and faculty supporting faculty.

There are few things more enduring than a University. Religions may split into sect or heresy; dynasties may perish or be supplanted, but for century after century the University will continue, and the stream of life will pass through it, and the thinker and the seeker will be bound together in the undying cause of bringing thought into the world. (Masefield, 1946)

What endures when one departs?

I am repeatedly reminded in life that is it the good actions and what one brings to society that are enduring. Alan may depart, but he leaves behind a rich and everlasting positive footprint in many corners of Empire State University and especially on the lives of so many he interacted with.

I will never forget the first time I engaged with Alan in a series of interviews on the concept of caring and its connection to mentoring at Empire State College. This was my first submission to All About Mentoring. This shared dialogue during these interviews allowed me to think aloud and explore what caring really is and how caring translates to teaching pre-service teachers. The interviews, discussions and subsequent publication of my first article culminated in my academic career that is prominently couched in caring and mentoring with students and colleagues.

How do we thank and honor Alan Mandell?

We can give gifts, cards, books …etc. I deeply feel we give the gift of carrying on his legacy of mentoring, kindness, caring, collaboration, sharing and teaching to our students and each other.

... where seekers and learners alike, banded together in the search for knowledge, will honour thought in all its finer ways, will welcome thinkers in distress or in exile, will uphold ever the dignity of thought and learning. ... (Masefield, 1946).

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Isaac, P. (2009). Toward an ecology of caring: Teaching our teachers. All About Mentoring, 36, 62-63.

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Original Article Published in Issue 55 of All About Mentoring (2021)

As SUNY Empire celebrates its 50th anniversary as an innovating higher education teaching college, let's reflect on our past and proudly focus on our future.

I'm always moved when I read these words written by Britain's poet laureate, John Masefield (1878-1967):

There are few earthly things more beautiful than a University. It is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see. …

These words still ring true for me irrespective of what we know of the traditional university as the keeper of knowledge found in ivy-covered buildings. I honor "those" who seek the truth and abhor ignorance. I honor those knowledge seekers who came before me, who persevered and endured to break down the hidden and not so hidden barriers. These honored ones did not retreat nor break at the onslaught of adversity. The knowledge seekers understood their birthright and fought for acceptance. Their dreams were weathered but not broken; their every hope held firm and did not diminish. They sought affirmation and value and recognition because, as Masefield reminded us 75 years ago, the university must "uphold ever the dignity of thought and learning":

… where seekers and learners alike, banded together in the search for knowledge, will honour thought in all its finer ways, will welcome thinkers in distress or in exile, will uphold ever the dignity of thought and learning. …

The university is not just a structure; rather, it is made up of individuals who individually and collectively seek knowledge; and for many, the love of learning is unquenchable because knowledge is free and a human right that should be accessible to all who desire to know and learn.

SUNY Empire's founder and champion, Ernest Boyer, questioned the purpose of the traditional university in 1970. As Richard Bonnabeau (1996) wrote in his history of the college's first 25 years:

> *… Empire State College sought to bring about meaningful change, to make higher education relevant and accessible. It was this search, courageously undertaken by the founders, administrators, faculty, and staff of Empire State College, that put it, from its inception, on the cutting edge of innovation in American higher education. (p. 16)*

And here is Masefield again:

> *There are few things more enduring than a University. Religions may split into sect or heresy; dynasties may perish or be supplanted, but for century after century the University will continue, and the stream of life will pass through it, and the thinker and the seeker will be bound together in the undying cause of bringing thought into the world.*

Twenty-one years into the 21st century and we still see the tension in higher education between idealism and reality, between exclusion and acceptance, and between elitism and equality. As thinkers and knowledge seekers, have we kept our promise to ourselves and our students? What are the most pivotal questions and answers that must be explored? Masefield's speech challenges us to consider all possibilities and engage in a shared journey of dialogue. In the spirit of Masefield's speech, I ask all of us to think about how we see ourselves as knowledge seekers and how we express it.

John Masefield's Speech

Reply to the Toast of the Honorary Graduands [at the University of Sheffield], 1946

There are few earthly honours more to be prized than this which you are now giving to us. There are few earthly things more splendid than a University. In these days of broken frontiers and collapsing values, when the dams are down and the floods are making misery, when every future looks somewhat grim and every ancient foothold has become something of a quagmire, wherever a University stands, it stands and shines; wherever it exists, the free minds of men, urged on to full and fair enquiry, may still bring wisdom into human affairs.

There are few earthly things more beautiful than a University. It is a place where those who hate ignorance may strive to know, where those who perceive truth may strive to make others see; where seekers and learners alike, banded together in the search for knowledge, will honour thought in all its finer ways, will welcome thinkers in distress or in exile, will uphold ever the dignity of thought and learning and will exact standards in these things. They give to the young in their impressionable years, the bond of a lofty purpose shared, of a great corporate life whose links will not be loosed until they die. They give young people that close companionship for which youth longs, and that chance of the endless discussion of the themes which are endless, without which youth would seem a waste of time. There are few things more enduring than a University. Religions may split into sect or heresy; dynasties may perish or be supplanted, but for century after century the University will continue, and the stream of life will pass through it, and the thinker and the seeker will be bound together in the undying cause of bringing thought into the world.

To be a member of one of these great Societies must ever be a glad distinction.

In conferring it upon us you declare, or let it be presumed, that we are qualified to teach in those ways of life which we have followed. It has been a mark of the Humanist since he began among us that "he

wol gladly lerne and gladly teche"; and although all of us would more gladly learn than teach, to be counted fit to teach is something of a crown to all men.

On behalf of my fellows in this glory, on behalf of the very learned, valiant, wise and gifted men beside me here, who stand for the Law by which we live, the Air by which we breathe, the Free Enquiry by which we hope to endure, and the Art by which we shall be remembered, I thank you for this great distinction, which links us with you while we last. (P. Errington, personal communication, November 18, 2020)

Note

Special thanks to The Society of Authors as the Literary Representative of the Estate of John Masefield, Phil Errington and Sarah Baxter for the permission to include Masefield's speech in *All About Mentoring*.

Reference

Bonnabeau, R. F. (1996). The promise continues: Empire State College — The first twenty-five years. The Donning Company.

"Powerful socio-economic forces have put adults on the educational map. These same forces have embedded us in a highly competitive academic world where money, educational market shares, credentials and a preoccupation with the supposed efficiencies of new technologies hold sway. Yet, such a world has simultaneously opened up the possibility of seriously asking about what schools do, how and what teachers teach, and if and how students learn. Even if it were our desire, we could not wish this world away."

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring,* Issue 17, Fall 1999

The Scholarship of Mentoring

Alan Mandell in his home office.
Photograph by Lee Herman.

Mentoring as Deep Listening | by Cindy Bates

Prelude

In many ways, this article I wrote for All About Mentoring in 2013, "Mentoring as Deep Listening," was an homage to Alan Mandell. I learned new ways to listen, hear and think from him. We all know his body language at meetings where he leans forward and sometimes even drops a knee to the floor as he engages in dialogue about the topic of the moment. His entire body – his entire being – becomes immersed in what I once called "deep listening."

As I reflect on this article and all my years of working with Alan, I'm humbled to see how much of what I said in this article holds true for me today and how much of it comes from my relationship with Alan. Just seeing the name of Felipe Sostre, the former mentee whom I talk about in the article, brought joy to my heart. Most of what I brought to my relationship with Felipe were skills and techniques I learned during my experiences at New Mentor Orientation – either as a newbie myself or then as a member of NMO team for a few years after. Back then, Kathy Jelly and Alan Mandell were the leaders of NMO, and both brought a wonderful sense of generative questioning to our training. NMO wasn't just about learning the systems and policies of the college, but about how to listen and ask questions that would allow a student to discover their own journey through their education. It was undeniably incredible to watch Felipe's journey unfold, and since then, we have kept in touch about our lives and careers. Lifelong learning isn't just about learning; it's about relationships.

I also really loved hearing my younger self talk about theater and the connections between theater and mentoring. Improvisation and collaboration are incredible tools for life, and despite all the changes in our institution, I still embrace both in my work here. My directing style hasn't changed either, and I recently directed an incredible piece at my local theater called Becoming Dr. Ruth by Mark St. Germain. I knew so little about Dr. Ruth before directing this play, but as I began to learn about her life, I was astounded by her fortitude, her humor, and her commitment to education. I know it's cliché, but it's also important: Ruth Westheimer (nee Karola Siegel) was driven to make this world a better place, one person at a time. Does that sound like someone else we know? Yes, I often thought of Alan during our rehearsals and of his commitment to social justice and equality through education. Indeed, I was delighted to learn that Alan and Dr. Ruth worked together when she was an adjunct for Empire State College. What I would have given to be there for that!

My life has been forever touched by Alan's gift of deep listening. I hope to keep paying that gift forward through my work with our students and through the creative work I do in the theater.

Original Article Published in Issue 44 of All About Mentoring (2013)

"Deep listening is miraculous for both listener and speaker. When someone receives us with open-hearted, non-judging, intensely interested listening, our spirits expand."
– Sue Patton Thoele

"I am determined to practice deep listening. I am determined to practice loving speech."
– Thich Nhat Hanh, *True Love: A Practice for Awakening the Heart* (2004)

Cindy Bates, 2013.

A few years ago, I was asked to participate in a Center for Mentoring and Learning workshop about educational planning and to talk about the work I do with mentees. While I looked forward to this opportunity to engage in an exchange of ideas with colleagues, I was even more excited be able to invite one of my mentees to join our session and to share his perspective on the educational planning process. I asked Felipe Sostre, one of my mentees who designed a unique degree in the Community and Human Services area of study with a concentration in social advocacy, to join us. Little did I know that this hour-long session – and Felipe's contribution – would become a turning point in my life as a mentor.

Felipe came to Empire State College with a wide array of transcript and potential prior learning assessment credits. His background included knowledge in religion, law, child advocacy/foster care and a myriad of other areas. He needed a degree that would serve him well in his yet-to-be-determined career while also reflecting his past experiences and future dreams. To be honest, I had no idea how to "help" Felipe when we began working together. I did not have a magic wand that would create his degree nor was I an expert in Community and Human Services, but I did have some insight into some of the topics he brought to the table. My life includes religious practice, my husband is an attorney (and I used to think I wanted to be one, too!) and we were waiting (at that time) to become parents through adoption. I remember listening to Felipe's ideas and trying to help him find ways to shape those ideas into a college degree. I remember trying to help him find a way to honor his past and plan for his future. I knew he could earn credits toward his degree through individualized PLA. Throughout our work together, I can't say that I remember "listening deeply," but that is exactly what Felipe said that I did. And when he honored our work together by describing it as such, my life was forever changed.

In their foundational work, From *Teaching to Mentoring: Principle and Practice, Dialogue and Life in Adult Education*, Lee Herman and Alan Mandell (2003) suggested that one of the basic principles of mentoring is that, "Mentors engage in dialogue with their students" (p. 8). As Herman and Mandell discuss the importance of dialogue in the mentoring relationship, the subtext of the "dialogue" they describe includes "listening deeply." Dialogue in itself doesn't necessarily require that either party is listening – lightly or deeply – but a mentor/mentee dialogue most certainly does require that both parties pay attention not just to the words, but to the emotions and experiences beneath the words. As the epigraphs to this essay suggest, listening deeply requires paying close attention to what our mentees say as well as to how and why they say such things. It also includes what they don't say, can't say, won't say, but what we can sense is beneath the surface. When we enter into dialogue with

our mentees, we often need to remind ourselves that dialogue includes silence and nonverbal signals, as well as reciprocal trust.

Perhaps Felipe's description of my work with him as "deep listening" struck a chord with me because in the world of theater, we are trained to practice and recognize something akin to deep listening in a variety of ways. As nascent actors, we are taught that acting is 10 percent doing/speaking and 90 percent listening. And yet the hardest thing to do on stage is to listen authentically. To truly listen to your fellow actor and to the character he or she has developed takes training and perhaps some talent in that direction. A strong actor cannot anticipate what his or her fellow actor is going to say even though both parties know the script. A strong actor allows himself or herself to respond in the moment to one's fellow actor(s). Throughout the various schools of actor training, there are various exercises and philosophies designed to help students learn how to listen truthfully, or perhaps "deeply."

"I'm not suggesting that mentoring and theatrical improvisation are the same tasks. But I am suggesting that perhaps the practice of 'Yes, and…' or 'No, but…' can help us to listen deeply to our mentees."

In mentoring, though, the script is developed improvisationally. That is, the dialogue described in the work of Herman and Mandell comes to life in the moment of the discussion, in the moment of two people living, breathing and sharing a space together. The art of theatrical improvisation requires really good listening skills. While a traditional script can be acted (albeit poorly) without the actors possessing good listening skills, improvisation without careful listening falls on its face. The golden rule of improvisation is to say, "Yes – and … ." In some circles, this rule is known as "never say no." By this we mean that when one actor, for example, says, "Look, here comes the president," the other actor cannot say "No, there's no one there." Or when one actor says, "Your pink sequin dress is beautiful," the other actor cannot say, "I'm not wearing a dress." In other words, theatrical improvisation requires both actors to agree to work cooperatively together towards an unknown end. One actor can, however, send the scene in a different direction by saying "Yes, and …" or "No, but. …" For example, when one actor says, "Look, here comes the president," the other actor can say, "I don't think that's the president; I think that's her husband." This new statement doesn't stop the action; instead, it moves the action in a new direction toward a cooperative goal of creating a story together.

I'm not suggesting that mentoring and theatrical improvisation are the same tasks. But I am suggesting that perhaps the practice of "Yes, and …" or "No, but …" can help us to listen deeply to our mentees. Instead of trying to find an answer, these phrases can help us and our mentees bring up new ideas, new paths of inquiry. They open us to a multitude of possibilities.

There is another similarity between mentoring as deep listening and theater that I would like to mention briefly here concerning the work of a theatrical director. A few years ago, I gave a presentation at a Northeast Center meeting where I described the similarities between directing and mentoring. At first, this idea baffled my colleagues because they tended to think about a "director" as a person who gave orders, telling others what to do. And, while one form of directing is indeed "director as autocrat," many of us practice another style of directing in which our job is to collaborate with other theatrical artists toward a common goal. This is how I practice my work as a

director – and as a mentor. As a director, I present the basic vision I have for the play in production, and then I refine this vision as needed while I work with and listen to the ideas of the actors and designers. As a mentor, I have the big picture of a college degree in sight and I can communicate that to mentees, from logistical requirements such as numbers of advanced and liberal credits, to a more philosophical idea of what makes a liberal arts college degree "good." But in dialogue with the student, we can shape how that degree comes together. In both instances, directing and mentoring, I practice deep listening skills so we can bring as many ideas to the table as possible while we craft our production or the student's degree plan.

When I "direct" actors in rehearsal, I am not dictating to them where to walk or how to say their lines. Instead, I am helping them discover their characters and the relationships between the characters. For example, I might ask an actor what his or her character wants to achieve in the few pages we are studying. What is the character's goal and what obstacles stand in the way? We engage in a dialogue about this and then try out some possible ways to play the scene. I also help actors discover the space in which our story is told and how each character might use that space. I encourage actors to try out different times to sit, stand, move, etc. based on instinct as well as logistics and stage pictures. When I mentor mentees, I also am not dictating to them how to design their degrees or even which studies to take. Rather, I am (I hope) asking them generative questions like I do in rehearsal and then listening carefully to their answers so I can help guide them to some possibilities from which they can choose. At the end of the day, their degree plans and rationale essays have to meet the expectations established by the college and, to be frank, the ways in which my center and I have interpreted those expectations. Likewise, when I am directing a play, character choices and blocking (where actors move on stage) have to be established and rehearsed at some point; this often requires me to make decisions, but only after listening to all those involved and assessing where the creative process has led us together.

I want to offer one final lesson I have learned as a director that serves me daily as I work with mentees. When working together in the kind of collaborative setting that theater and mentoring offer, sometimes we have to make choices that, at the beginning, seem silly or wrong in order to find the better choice. Failure is not only an option in theater, it's a requirement. Only through our experiments and our combined successes and failures does our particular version of a play come alive. I have found the same to be true in mentoring. When the mentor and mentee work collaboratively together, sometimes the best path to a degree plan is not the straight and narrow one, but rather a long and winding path with many offshoots that seemingly go nowhere. And yet, when we are both (all) listening deeply to each other, the journey becomes a place where knowledge is generated.

I will forever be indebted to Felipe Sostre for sharing his perspective on mentoring with me, and for helping me to see how I helped him. This, in turn, has helped me become a better mentor. Listening deeply, to me, means listening without judgment, without anticipation, without distraction, and with compassion, critical thinking and joy. I cannot always do this. There are days when my life doesn't allow it. There are mentees with whom I cannot make the connection needed to listen in this way. But there are many, many other mentees with whom I have journeyed in this way. At the end of the day, deep listening is my one, not-so-simple but immensely rewarding goal in every encounter with my mentees.

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"As a professional identity, mentoring has always been precarious. It has been stimulating because the kind of work that it cherishes pushes at the boundaries of what we know and asks us to regularly engage in conversations that alter conventional relationships of authority. It has been frustrating because there are no models upon which we have been able to rely that help us hold what we do in high esteem."

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 13, Spring 1998

Teaching Poetry: 'In the Noise and Whip of the Whirlwind' or The Poetry of Teaching Poetry | by Elaine Handley

Prelude

"Poetry, like all art, has a trinitarian function: creative, redemptive, and sanctifying. It is creative because it takes the raw materials of fact and feeling and makes them into that which is neither fact nor feeling. Redemptive because it transforms pain, ugliness of life into joy, beauty. Sanctifying because it gives the transitory a relative form of meaning." --Vassar Miller

Like solving a trigonometric function or analyzing an abstract painting, poetry insists we think differently. And that's my joy; to lure my students out of their comfort zone and enmesh them in poetry. Poetry allows us to express our lives' complexities using language and metaphor. Even when I am not teaching poetry per se, I use poems to illuminate ideas.

I bring poetry into my Critical Thinking class—often "Those Winter Sundays" by Robert Hayden. I ask students to come to the study group with five questions about the poem; this takes the pressure off them to have figured out just what the poem 'means.'

THOSE WINTER SUNDAYS

Sundays too my father got up early
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labor in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,
who had driven out the cold
and polished my good shoes as well.
What did I know, what did I know
of love's austere and lonely offices?
-Robert Hayden

We analyze possible meanings together by asking their questions aloud and seeing what answers we can find. Hayden's poem is one that students can relate to, because it is about regret. Written in the voice of an adult son, he now better understands his father's struggles and how love was there all along, although not articulated in words. His regret comes in never acknowledging his father's hard life or love.

As a class we look at some of the descriptions in the poem and I ask students to ponder phrases like "blueblack cold," and "fearing the chronic angers of that house," and the final question of the poem "what did I know/ of love's austere and lonely offices?" We read the poem aloud and listen to the

words that make a crackling sound, like the fire the father set to warm the house on frigid mornings: blueblack, cracked, ached, weekday, banked, thanked, wake, breaking, call, chronic. As poetry is both sound and sense, I work to help them hear the music of the poem and find meaning, enhanced by elements, like structure and rhythm, working together to create an intense experience for the reader.

Because poetry is typically short, it is an excellent genre to use to introduce students to textual analysis. They like looking for clues. It is also easy to use poetry to point out the work that strong nouns and verbs do in writing, how parallel structure works, how clichés don't. It's the best way I know to teach figures of speech.

I like to make students aware of metaphorical thinking, and two favorite poems are "Metaphors" by Sylvia Plath and "Your Eyes" by Octavio Paz.

METAPHORS

I'm a riddle in nine syllables,
An elephant, a ponderous house,
A melon strolling on two tendrils.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising.
Money's new-minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

-Sylvia Plath

It often takes students several readings of Plath's poem to realize that it's about pregnancy, and to see how much fun Plath was having by creating a nine-line poem, with each line containing nine syllables.

By contrast, the Paz poem offers a list—one metaphor after another describing a specific someone's eyes and what they reveal. The metaphors are complicated: "trapped birds, sleepy golden beasts," "a lie that nourishes," "the absolute, quivering,/cold uplands." Students come to understand and speculate on the problematical relationship between the speaker and the subject.

YOUR EYES

Your eyes are the land of lightning and the tear,
silence that speaks,
hurricanes without wind, sea without waves,
trapped birds, sleepy golden beasts,
dazzle of topaz shocking as the truth,
autumn in a clearing of the woods where light sings on
the shoulder of a tree whose leaves are birds,
beach that morning discovers starred with springs,
basket of fruits of fire,
a lie that nourishes,
mirrors of this world, doors to the beyond,
the easy heartbeat of the sea at noon,
the absolute, quivering,
cold uplands.

-Octavio Paz

Translated by Muriel Rukeyser

Poetry is a crystallized way of exposing students to human dilemmas, to help them find their own lives and selves in verse. Everyone can relate to the loneliness that informs Frost's sonnet "I Have Been One Acquainted with the Night."

I HAVE BEEN ONE AQUAINTED WITH THE NIGHT

I have been one acquainted with the night.
I have walked out in rain—and back in rain.
I have outwalked the furthest city light.

I have looked down the saddest city lane.
I have passed by the watchman on his beat
And dropped my eyes, unwilling to explain.

I have stood still and stopped the sound of feet
When far away an interrupted cry
Came over houses from another street,

But not to call me back or say good-bye;
And further still at an unearthly height,
One luminary clock against the sky

Proclaimed the time was neither wrong nor right.
I have been one acquainted with the night

.

- *Robert Frost*

"Miss Rosie" by Lucille Clifton, on the other hand, resonates as a poem about human dignity in the face of old age and poverty.

MISS ROSIE

when i watch you
wrapped up like garbage
sitting, surrounded by the smell
of too old potato peels
or
when i watch you
in your old man's shoes
with the little toe cut out
sitting, waiting for your mind
like next week's grocery
i say
when i watch you
you wet brown bag of a woman
who used to be the best looking gal in georgia
used to be called the Georgia Rose
i stand up
through your destruction
i stand up
-Lucille Clifton

Wislawa Symborska's poem "The End and the Beginning" helps us to contemplate what happens when a war ends; she graphically describes the mundane tasks that need attending to in the face of unspeakable grief and loss.

THE END AND THE BEGINNING

After every war
someone has to clean up.
Things won't
straighten themselves up, after all.

Someone has to push the rubble
to the side of the road,
so the corpse-filled wagons
can pass.

Someone has to get mired
in scum and ashes,
sofa springs,
splintered glass,
and bloody rags.

Someone has to drag in a girder
to prop up a wall.
Someone has to glaze a window,
rehang a door.

Photogenic it's not,
and takes years.
All the cameras have left
for another war.

We'll need the bridges back,
and new railway stations.
Sleeves will go ragged
from rolling them up.

Someone, broom in hand,
still recalls the way it was.
Someone else listens
and nods with unsevered head.
But already there are those nearby
starting to mill about
who will find it dull.

From out of the bushes
sometimes someone still unearths
rusted-out arguments
and carries them to the garbage pile.

Those who knew
what was going on here
must make way for
those who know little.
And less than little.
And finally as little as nothing.

In the grass that has overgrown
causes and effects,
someone must be stretched out
blade of grass in his mouth
gazing at the clouds.
-Wislawa Szymborska

One of the very best pieces of professional advice I ever received was from a wise high school English teacher who told me (as if I were going to be teaching poetry someday), not to overdo it—"just give students a taste of poetry." I understood her to mean to be careful not to ruin poetry by analyzing it to death, not to engage, as Billy Collins says in his poem "Introduction to Poetry" in "beating it with a hose/ to find out what it really means." I seek to make students curious enough, and provide them with sufficient resources, that they might go on reading poetry outside of class, including coming back to poems that they bring new insights to based on their lived experience.

In a Peanuts cartoon Sally says to Charlie Brown "We've been reading poems in school, but I never understand any of them….How am I supposed to know which poems to like?"

Charlie Brown answers her "Somebody tells you."

I'm not that teacher; I love infecting my students with poetry so the only cure is more poetry. I often hear "Oh, I don't like poetry…I don't understand it." That's a personal challenge I find hard to resist. Most people don't like poetry because they have been exposed to so little of it; poetry isn't taught much (and I fear not well) in elementary and high school. Besides there still exists that lingering notion that poets and poetry are only for the effete.

Many years ago, I was teaching College Writing in a prison. I started each class by handing out a poem that I would read aloud—no discussion, no analysis. Each class they expressed eagerness for the poem…they were more open to poetry than I ever could have imagined. Why did poetry make a difference to these men? I can't speak for them, but I suspect what they loved about the poems I gave them was what I love about poetry—the music of the words, the imagery, the way poetry gets to the heart of things, captures a moment or a feeling you know. Maybe it's the way a poem can contain so much sheer humanity.

I ask poetry haters if they will allow me to find a poem I think they might like…and I have had some success in converting people into zealous poetry fans. Mostly I make some progress in helping people get that poetry is about them. They come to see that poems can be serious and goofy and heartbreaking. Yes, some are obscure, intellectual, full of literary allusions and therefore off-putting—but mostly poetry is about experiences we all have.

Poetry springs from the human desire to convey feeling and insight—to bedazzle, bewitch, startle, horrify, delight, disgust, mourn. In short, to express the complications, mystery and quirkiness of being human. Gwendolyn Brooks wrote at the end of poem "The Second Sermon on the Warpland":

"It is lonesome, yes.
Nevertheless, live.
Conduct your blooming in the noise and whip
of the whirlwind."

From what I know of our students' lives--and our own--challenges are many, both personally and in our present society. We live in the whirlwind of family and job responsibilities, academic endeavors, illness, financial worries, community obligations, politics-- all of it demanding, much of it difficult. It is easy to lose heart.

I think Robert Frost was right when he described poetry as "a momentary stay against confusion." Poetry demands our presence, our attention, our heart and our head. It keeps us connected to what other human beings have endured over the centuries, to our own human condition, and gives voice to our lived experience.

Isn't that, in part, what life-long learners need, deserve and crave?

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Original Article Published in Issue 53 of All About Mentoring (2020)

"*Poetry, like all art, has a trinitarian function: creative, redemptive, and sanctifying. It is creative because it takes the raw materials of fact and feeling and makes them into that which is neither fact nor feeling. Redemptive because it transforms pain, ugliness of life into joy, beauty. Sanctifying because it gives the transitory a relative form of meaning.*" -- Vassar Miller

Elaine Handley, 2020. Photograph by Tom Stock.

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Heteragogy: Mentoring as Intercultural Practice | by Eric Ball and Alice Lai

Prelude

As faculty quite new to the college at the time of writing this essay—and at a time when it was arguably still possible to be more academically optimistic about the institution and its place, however humble, in a complex academic ecosystem—we felt invigorated by the ongoing efforts of Alan Mandell and many of his closest Empire State College collaborators (especially Lee Herman and Elana Michelson) to theorize the foundations of higher education critically, and in ways that were deeply attentive to the particular nuances of Empire State College structures, practices, jargon, and history. That said, we also worried (and we take this to be an ongoing Mandell worry also) that such sustained local attentiveness entailed the risk of relative isolation from relevant critical discussions happening around the academy (especially those concerning power) in fields ranging from comparative and cultural studies to art education. We were also concerned that too much looking inward might have made it a little too easy for straw-man caricatures of "mentoring" to gain traction among some colleagues, and that it encouraged some faculty to conceive of "mentoring" as a reified practice erected upon timeless concepts, sacred precepts, or universal principles to which Empire State College faculty felt especially privy.

This essay was one of several "efforts" (a very Mandell word to use!) to try out a line of thinking intended to consider mentoring at Empire State College from our vantage point as academics "out there" in our fields. Simultaneously, we intended to suggest that the work of mentoring as a radically experimental approach to teaching, advising, and scholarly activity at Empire State College might provide significant opportunities for, and insights into, day-to-day practice that, to our mind, some of our radically minded colleagues in more conventional institutions had less access to.

On a much more general level, we should also note that when we arrived at Empire State College, it automatically made sense for us to jump into these kinds of discussions, debates, and articulations of questions because the overall institutional structures and culture encouraging them were already in place, including the faculty-created and (in those days) faculty-led Mentoring Institute and, of course, All About Mentoring, both of which were steered and tirelessly nurtured by Alan Mandell. Ironically, or perhaps just tragically, much if not all of the utopian potential of so much from those days has since been co-opted, commandeered or dismantled by many of the forces that are also busy reshaping much of the rest of the academy, and so in some ways we are back where this whole mentoring business "started": the ongoing need for radical, utopianist critiques of (conventional and unconventional) academic institutions and practices, and an urgent need to create and support academic institutions where faculty and students might find themselves much more free to learn.

Original Article Published in Issue 29 of All About Mentoring (2005)

We dedicate this essay to Elana Michelson and Bernard Smith because it grew out of ideas that arose in discussion with the latter about the 2004 All College presentation of the former.

Introduction

Long before an explicitly "cultural turn" in the humanities and social sciences would revolutionize the form and substance of much higher education and academic scholarship, founders of Empire State College showed remarkable prescience in composing documents that would erect this institution, in part, on what today might be called an intercultural principle. Anticipating the future popularity of critical pedagogies, multicultural, cross-cultural, and intercultural approaches to education, the founders focused attention on the academic institution as a progressive location where diverse systems of meaning converge as intercultural dialogues: "An intelligent person from the ghetto or urban area will not be excluded because he cannot communicate within that symbol system or reflect its cultural expectations" ([n.a.] 2003[1971]).

For some of us working in culture fields and disciplines that are (some might say) obsessed with meaning – those of us whose academic heritage includes, for example, a Barthes, a Geertz, a Garfinkel, a Bourdieu, a Haraway, or a Derrida – this deceptively simple declaration opens up the possibility of bringing to our mentoring the critical lens(es) of our academic training. In fact, the prescriptive quality of this founding statement suggests that it is necessary that we bring such a perspective to our work as mentors, work which requires not only direct engagement with students, but also ongoing interpretation of what we even mean by "mentoring," continual reflection about what we do as mentors and about how our conceptual models for thinking about mentoring condition what we do, and an incessant disassembling of assumptions behind every characterization of mentoring.

Toward such ends, in what follows we would like to indulge in a brainstorming exercise. We want to posit an analogy between mentoring and the academic study of cultural "others." At this point, our brainstorming will do little more than produce some questions. Further investigation into these questions, we propose, could help us understand mentoring better. We won't be offering much in the way of answers. If our presentation does nothing more than spawn some new conversations about mentoring or reinvigorate old conversations in different terms or from new angles – especially, let's say, those of the post-1990 culture fields and disciplines – then we will have achieved our immediate goal.

Mentoring as an Ethnographic Encounter

Let's begin by looking at a fuller version of the quotation we began with. (Our thanks go to the panel organized by Jim Wunsch, Ed Warzala, and Alan Mandell for bringing this to our attention at the college's Spring 2004 Evaluation Conference, and to Richard Bonnabeau for digging it up in the first place):

> *The faculty will be responsible for ensuring rigor and quality. One of the key elements will be their evaluation of accomplishment, of experimental skills, and of skills derived from the mastery (perhaps privately) of one of the creative or nonverbal arts. Each of these skills can be related to a particular life area of work, and academic credit will be given for such skills. An intelligent person from the ghetto or urban area or isolated community who is currently at a disadvantage in learning the predominant cultural symbol system in our society will not be excluded because he cannot communicate within that*

symbol system or reflect its cultural expectations. […] The ultimate evaluation of a student's performance will still rest with the faculty. But the student's own needs will shape the process within which the judgment will take place. ([n.a.] 2003[1971])

What an intercultural premise for mentoring! Let's attempt a translation of the passage into contemporary academic jargon employed by the culture disciplines (into our "symbol system").[1] We might say that the college, as an institution, sought to problematize certain hegemonic assumptions about faculty-student interaction in general, and about faculty evaluation of students in particular, via a sociocultural contextualization[2] of "learning" ("accomplishment," "skills," "mastery," and the like). The college upheld the conventional educational distribution of authority wherein faculty are authorized to judge students' learning, but it pointed out that the justification[3] for faculty judgments should not be viewed as deriving automatically from faculty's direct access – irrespective of "bias" – to each student's learning (via the student's articulation of that learning). After making the relatively unremarkable assertion that a faculty member may inhabit a different "language" and "culture" (academia) than a student whose learning might be recognizable in his or her own linguistic and cultural context, the founders took a quantum leap: They decided to lay part of the burden of translation onto the shoulders of the college faculty.

Conventionally, the founders implied, the burden of articulating learning would fall entirely to the student; the student would need to learn the symbol system of academia in order to communicate his learning to faculty who, already fluent in this idiom, would be in a position to recognize it as such. Empire State College, on the other hand, would be different. It would acknowledge that not every potential college student would be (nor should be put) in a position to communicate in academese in order to have their learning granted college credit.[4] The college would therefore strive to put extra effort into communicating with the student in his or her own symbol system, or at least it would try to meet the student part way, so that learning could be recognized (interpreted as such) and granted credit. It would seem, then, that the legitimacy of an Empire State College mentor's interpretation (and especially her evaluation) of a student's learning would derive only in part from her academic qualifications, her academic knowledge of a field. Legitimacy would also derive from the fact that the mentor was continually trying to apply her expertise in a translational context. The mentor's judgments about a student's learning would be justified when they were the product of active attempts to learn his language and culture. Her evaluations would be responsible only insofar as they recognized the learning delivered even, as it were, in a "foreign tongue."[5]

As we think about the founding passages in this way, an analogy between mentoring and ethnography springs to mind, ethnography being an obvious example of academic engagement with cultural others. Just as the faculty member – not the student – has the ultimate academic authority to interpret students' learning, the ethnographer – not her informants – is ultimately authorized to produce academic interpretations of the particular cultures she studies. On the other hand, just as an Empire State College faculty member's interpretation of her student's learning derives part of its validity from that faculty member's self-conscious attempts to engage the student in a dialogue which is taken to be interlingual and intercultural, so the ethnographer's interpretation of a culture derives part of its legitimacy from its sensitivity to, and engagement with, the complexities involved in cross-cultural interpretation. Or, to put it another way, again crudely: an ethnography produced by an ethnographer who merely required the people she studied to master her language to explain themselves to her would not be considered good anthropology. A potentially good ethnography would require that the ethnographer learned (however imperfectly) the language of the culture

studied, inhabited that culture (however imperfectly) as a participant-observer, and engaged in (self-consciously) intercultural dialogues with informants – each learning about the other in the process.

We should note that while we find the analogy between mentoring and ethnography to be particularly compelling, however imperfect,* we could construct similar analogies between mentors and other academic interpreters of "others." (For example, we might consider an analogy between mentoring and comparative literary criticism.) Still, there is something we find particularly productive about theorizing mentoring through the analogy with ethnography specifically – perhaps because ethnographers claim to be good listeners who seek to establish dialogues with their informants; perhaps because cultural anthropology's extensive self-critique of the epistemological and methodological grounds for ethnography has been so widely disseminated in academia. Whatever the reasons might be, for the rest of this essay we would like to pose two very broad questions and engage in further speculation about some of the things this analogy suggests to us.

"Should mentors write their narrative contract/course evaluations in the first person? Can mentors emulate the ethnographers by not writing evaluations so that they sound like 'summaries' of the 'learning self'?"

Two Questions

Question 1: On the whole, ethnographers have let go of atomist, individualist, objectivist, essentialist, and positivist epistemological assumptions in favor of sociocentric, interpretivist, contextualist, and constructivist epistemologies for empirical social science.[6] What relevance might this have for mentoring?

For instance, this migration of epistemological preference for empirical research could have a fundamental bearing on how the "intercultural" relationship between mentor and student can be understood.[7] Instead of seeing each mentor or student as a well-defined individual who belongs to a particular, definable sociocultural group (e.g., "the ghetto") with its own distinctive, shared language and culture (e.g., "academese"), we could view every student and mentor as located in multiple, shifting, interactive networks that produce sociocultural groups as effects as much as they constitute the interactions of their "members." From this vantage point, every student and every mentor can be viewed as "gendered," "racialized," "ethnicized," "sexualized," "geographically-placed," "geopolitically-located," "economically-classed," "collar-colored," "aged," "educationed," or "professioned." From this perspective, every student is "other" with respect to various indices (not only the student who comes from a group widely recognized as disadvantaged). Yet we also recognize that this "othering" of the student is in some respects the product of the categories, practices, and discourses we are using to identify or locate her. The intercultural is no longer seen as a special case of mentoring (when it just so happens that mentor and student are from communities we typically recognize as distinct), but as an inescapable precondition of all mentoring. We inaugurate an understanding of mentoring practice as **heteragogy**.

Hence, a second possible consequence for mentoring of this paradigm shift in ethnography concerns how to view the communication of learning itself as a matter of "cultural translation."[8] In an

objectivist framework, "the learning" would be something objective, ideal, "out there." The "actual learning" could be viewed as something abstract, independent of its particular articulation in this or that "language." Or, it could even be viewed concretely, in a material sense, as nothing more than a certain "neurological state," independent of the multiple representations in human language that might correspond to. There will doubtless remain the objection that ethnographers are primarily interested in understanding the other's culture, whereas the mentor is only incidentally interested in the student's cultural context as a means for understanding his or her learning. Informants are likely much less interested or compelled to learn the language or culture of the ethnographer than are students to learn academic language and culture. At any rate, analogies are useful not only in terms of the many parallels they suggest but also in terms of the questions they raise at exactly the points they begin to break down. such a state. In such frameworks, the intercultural principle of mentoring reduces to getting the translation right: As long as the translation is an adequate representation of the same actual learning, then the student's learning – in this or that representational form – ought to be transparent to the expert evaluator.[10]

In an interpretivist or constructivist framework, however, we would not assume a priori that there exists such an entity as the "actual learning," independent of its articulations, its representations, and its contexts. The mentor would not conceive of her intercultural work as arriving at the right translation in order to see through to the learning "as it really is." Rather, she would view the student's learning and her own expertise as always already mediated by language, as interpretations through the particular lenses of one's ever-changing contexts. Neither the student's learning nor the mentor's content knowledge would be seen as entities possessed, but as always emergent from dialogical interpretations and counterinterpretations. There would be no assumption of an unproblematic insider/outsider (or etic/emic) dichotomy – either the student manages to express "the same learning" in the mentor's language (imposition of the etic) or the mentor manages to penetrate the student's language and see "the same learning" in his terms (achievement of the emic). Nor would the mentor presume that she could "stand outside" of this dichotomy, outside of the dialogue, in order to judge whether a transparent-enough translation has occurred. Instead, she would view the mentor-student dialogues (including their uncircumscribable contexts) as "all there is," realizing that neither she nor the student can ever interpret the other's articulations entirely independent of their own locations.11 In this framework, we would ask, "[W]hat is it that your very body is screaming that no judge or legal scholar or feminist theorist of the state can know?" (Michelson 2004:11). But in asking we would also have to keep learning how to ask, recognizing that every failure "to see how native communicative patterns […] shape responses" leads to the asker misconstruing the meaning of those responses (Briggs 1986:3).

Question 2: What can mentors learn about ethnography as a kind of writing? The shift away from objectivism has also foregrounded ethnographic representation itself. "Above all, ethnography is now to be regarded as a piece of writing – as such, it cannot be said either to present or to represent what the older and newly discredited ideology of former ethnography claimed for itself: an unmodified and unfiltered record of immediate experience and an accurate portrait of the culture of the 'other.'" (Vidich and Lyman 1998:78). Many ethnographers have become highly sensitive to their uses of language for providing sound, value-laden, empirical interpretations. In fact, quite a few have experimented with the techniques of literary modernism, hoping to formulate adequate rhetorical modes that avoid suggesting to readers that their accounts depict absolute truths, but rather, rigorous, situated interpretations.

At the very least, most ethnographers now write in the first person, thereby foregrounding their own role in the interpretive process. Many situate themselves in the text explicitly by offering reflexive passages that consider their own role in constituting knowledge about the other, or by writing introspectively about certain subjective qualities of their ethnographic experience.

Should mentors, for example, follow suit and find rhetorical modes to foreground the narrative evaluation as a similarly partial, situated account of the student's learning? Should mentors write their narrative contract/course evaluations (CE) in the first person? Can mentors emulate the ethnographers by not writing evaluations so that they sound like "summaries" of "the learning itself?" What would such evaluations look like? Should they seek to summarize the mentor's interpretation of the student's learning and simultaneously offer a first-person account of her understanding of the grounds for such an interpretation?[12] Should a course evaluation or a credit by evaluation recommendation resemble an ethnographic monograph in the miniature? If so, might the fact that it is "miniature" pose other problems? For instance, how would mentors reconcile their production of relatively short narrative evaluations with ethnographers' production of the "thick descriptions" called mentors as opposed to the lone ethnographer-hero in the field?

Taking this issue of writing evaluations even further, some contemporary ethnographers maintain the importance of showcasing in their ethnographies the informants' interpretations of their own culture. Thus, we might also ask what role the student's interpretation of his own learning should play in an evaluation. At first glance, this might look like a nice way to "give the student a voice" or to "share power." Perhaps, but the logic behind such conclusions would be seen as hasty, or at least as too self-flattering, by some ethnographers who have considered it at length in their scholarship. Instead, one might claim that it is not a matter of sharing power, since power does not "reside" in individuals per se, but rather in institutional relations (only faculty are authorized to evaluate).

In this view, student self-evaluation is more accurately described as the mentor trying to herself attentive to the student's interpretation of his own learning. In an interpretivist framework, this means the mentor remains open and attentive even to other grounds for interpreting the student's learning, grounds that she might not even have conceived of, let alone bought into, beforehand. (They might arise out of the student's own cultural contexts and assumptions, for example.) In doing so, the mentor is not exactly sharing power, but she is welcoming the student's self-interpretations to potentially influence her own interpretations of his learning. This welcoming can potentially affect what her ultimate evaluation of the student's learning will be. And, if we view mentoring as an intercultural practice, then it is arguable that this method of welcoming further justifies or validates the evaluation.

This sense of "welcoming" in mentoring-as-heteragogy sends us to Derrida's philosophical notion of "hospitality." Following Derrida, we would need to ponder a distinction between inviting the student's self-evaluation into our own – of tolerating it – from its unanticipated, uninvited arrival, or visitation. "The invitation maintains control and receives within the limits of the possible; it is not thus pure hospitality, it rations hospitality, it still belongs to the order of the judicial and the political; visitation, on the other hand, appeals to a pure and unconditional hospitality that welcomes whatever arrives as impossible" (Derrida 2002:400).[13] It also sends us to Murphy's ecofeminist reading of Bakhtinian dialogism as promoting the concept of "anotherness, being another for others" (Murphy 2000:99). "[I]t is time to move toward a relational model of anotherness and the conceptualization of difference in terms of I and another, one and another, and I-as-another" (Murphy 2000:96). It echoes Papastephanou's (2003) notion of a democratic and

caring "pedagogical ideal of learning with and for the Other within and without" (401), of a post-empathy-based, post-Habermasian "symmetrical reciprocity." Might not the mentor's welcoming, upon its arrival, of the student's self-evaluation into her own authorized narrative, ensure the mentor's being another for an "other?" And can't we conceive of such hospitality as applicable across a broader spectrum of mentoring practices than simply those which are formally evaluative? Are we now, then, in the vicinity of thinking about mentoring "dialogue as cognitive love" (Herman and Mandell 2004:117-139)? Does not heteragogy presuppose allelagogy?

A Third Question

Already we find ourselves too hastily digressing from our original analogy between mentoring and ethnography and into analogies with other areas of academic engagement with (an)others. And, we find ourselves without sufficient clarification or explanation speeding through too many different conceptualizations of otherness. We might attribute this to our own impatience, but no doubt it is also due to the exciting yet daunting conceptual considerations that immediately come into play whenever one thinks about ethnography nowadays. After all, anthropologists have been calling into question even the notion of "the other" itself, citing not only the multiple ways that it has functioned to make ethnography complicit in the colonialist and imperialist domination of those who are labeled as such, but also the manner in which it draws attention away from contexts in which an other may not be so other after all. Let us conclude, therefore, simply by asking:

Question 3: How might the recent anthropological critique of the concept of "other" problematize the way mentors conceive of their dialogues with students? What are the implications of this critique for thinking about mentoring as heteragogy?

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Footnotes

[1] The “culture disciplines” might include parts of sociology and anthropology, critical theory, cultural studies, literary studies, linguistics, or folklore studies.

[2] or, “relativization,” depending on your epistemology – see Longino (2002:138).

[3] A better phrase than “justification” might be Longino’s “epistemic acceptability:” “The notion of ‘epistemic acceptability’ (akin to justification) incorporates both the traditional empiricist norm of justification by empirical data and the social norms applying to those discursive interactions constitutive of reasoning” (Longino 2002:136).

[4] It turns out that this position has been particularly well-suited to adult learners, especially those who are “full of college-level learning” but who best articulate this learning in professional or other non-academically-welcomed idioms.

[5] For simplicity of presentation, we have pared the mentoring process down to a one-on-one relationship. In practice, this translation may be facilitated in many different ways. For example, a mentor who has learned “just enough” about the student’s culture to recognize she has potentially creditable prior learning might seek a “Credit By Evaluation Recommendation” from someone much more fluent in that culture than herself. In other words, mentoring may require hiring an appropriate translator, not mastering the other language oneself.

[6] See, for example, the account given by Schwandt (1998).

[7] At this point we ought to confess that we are empirical pluralists: We do not assume a priori that there must be only one true or even one inherently "best" epistemological orientation for the study of cultures, let alone for the sciences in general.

[8] On ethnography as cultural translation, see, for example, Asad (1986).

[9] or a "Platonic" or a "Cartesian realist"

[10] See also Michelson (2004) for critique of this position.

[11] This also suggests that, for heteragogy, a critique is in order of the word "dialog," so often used to characterize mentoring. The philosopher Derrida states, "I prefer the word negotiation to the word dialog. It takes into account the relations of nondiscursive forces. […] The word [dialog] […] leads one to believe that, with dialogue, one will rediscover transparency and what is equivocal will be made clear. […] I am not speaking of a dialogical order that could function in other contexts but of an alleged ethics of dialogue" (Derrida 2002:32). In this sense, the dialogical process of mentoring as an intercultural practice would be have to be distinguished from the idea that dialogue in itself guarantees that mentors can "see through" to the students' "actual learning."

[12] Here, of course, we are speaking of the grounds in terms of the intercultural communicative processes per se, not in terms of the mentor's content knowledge.

[13] See also Derrida (2003:127-129) on the contrast between hospitality proper and the "conditional hospitality" of invitation and tolerance.

"No doubt, the basic pragmatism that typifies the attitude of most of our students (which we often bemoan) reflects a realistic appraisal of the role of our institutions in the lives of adults. Indeed, most of us, for whom college was a taken-for-granted ritual in a relatively set life plan, have probably never experienced the starkness of the connection between schooling and social position/economic survival as do the students with whom we work."

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 19, Summer 2000

Beyond the Sardine Hedge: International Mentoring and Metaphor Theory | By David Starr-Glass

Prelude

I joined Empire State College in 1983, teaching organizational behavior with our International Program in Israel. As a geographically and intellectually distanced new faculty member, I soon recognized that at least my corner of Empire State College rotated around two personalities: the late Ken Abrams and Alan Mandell. This recognition had nothing to do with institutional titles or organizational charts: it was an observed reality of presence, personality and vision.

Over the years, I have been delighted to work with Alan, in his role as editor of All About Mentoring and PLA Inside Out, and to publish in both journals. The following article was originally published in 2009, and I want to provide a short backstory regarding the article – a backstory that sheds little light on its content but more on its genesis. I want to highlight the three invitations that Alan extended: to consider what we do, to share a collegiate space, and to advance organizational wisdom.

First, Alan neither requested nor suggested this article: he inspired it. He created an environment that placed value on the work of collegiate colleagues. I immediately felt included in this environment and recognized the centrality of considering what I did as a mentor, of assessing the outcomes, and of growing. It was an environment in which exploration, experimentation, and reflection were expected. The featured article considers intercultural experiences, theories of metaphor, and speculations on how these might impact international education. Writing the article was a transformative process: the catalytic element in that process was Alan's presence, albeit distant. It was not so much writing an article as accepting his open invitation to reflect.

Second, Alan provided an opportunity to reflect on our practice, but more than this he provided vehicles (such as AAM) through which sharing was enabled. Personally, I have never considered AAM to be the institutional voice of Empire State College; rather, it seemed to represent the authentic, organic, and diverse voices of the collegiate community. Alan presided over this community, in which scholarly sharing was valued and diversity of opinion was encouraged. It was an accepting, energizing, and accessible space – a space to which I always enjoyed contributing. But, it was not naturally occurring: it was purposefully constructed and sustained by Alan's values, personality, and effort.

Finally, Alan extended a third invitation: to move forward together. There are many styles of leadership; here, the compelling force was the recognition that there was something beyond mentor, student, scholarly practice, and engaged learning – something that included these, but which was beyond them. Alan always made me conscious that I was not simply an isolated and distanced employee, but someone connected to a greater enterprise. We used to call it Empire State College. There was a purpose, a vision, and a mission that lay beyond the individual and which pointed to a richer, more innovative, and more fulfilling place of education.

I thank Alan for all that he has been and all that he continues to be. He embodies all that is virtuous in Empire State College and is unquestionably a mentor's mentor. I wish him much satisfaction, enjoyment, and fulfillment in the next phase of his life.

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… it is better to make a mistake that can be exposed than to do nothing, better to have any account of how metaphor works (or thought goes on) than to have none. Provided always that we do not suppose that our account really tells us what happens – provided, that is, we, do not mistake our theories for our skill, or our descriptive apparatus for what it describes. Richards (1936, p.115)

For many of us, to move beyond our ambient cultures and to engage in new experiences can be exhilarating, confusing, disorientating and profoundly enriching. It is not only that we encounter new perspectives or witness novel performances; rather, we are presented with the opportunity to reflect on what we are doing, who we are, and what we might become.

This essay stems from such a cultural cross border crossing: a trip to the southeast of Turkey in the summer of 2008. The initial objective was to gain insight into regional economic and marketing issues; however, being with Turkish friends in their local communities – exploring their thoughts, experiencing their culture and their sharing dreams – provided a rich and inescapable opportunity not only for reflection on Turkey but on the process and dynamics of the educational process in international contexts.[1] This essay examines intercultural learning experiences and the use of metaphor in organizational theory and suggests that ways of understanding metaphor provide valuable opportunities for enriching and deepening international learning.[2]

Of Fish and Flowers

We had driven from the bustling city of Adana overland to the busy port of Mersin, which lies on Turkey's southeastern coastline. We continued along the coastal road with Mediterranean on our left – darkblue rather than the Homeric winedark – and sun-baked pine forests on our right. It was a pleasant and relaxed journey with a number of stops to eat freshly cooked corn from roadside vendors and to buy groceries and supplies for the beach house. Occasionally, but unnecessarily, we all checked the position of the sun above the horizon. It was Friday afternoon and everyone knew that I had to reach the destination before sunset and the beginning of Shabbat. But the sun was still high and we had ample time to relax and enjoy the beauty of the journey.

We passed a cave where weary warriors had slept a magical sleep for centuries and woken to find their fame forgotten and their money worthless. We passed a castle on an island where a princess had lived in isolation, placed there by her father fearful of a prophecy that she would die from the bite of a venomous snake. (The snake unfortunately made it to the island at the bottom of a basket of fruit that was served at her wedding.) It was a beautiful journey through unfamiliar landscapes drenched in strong sunlight and redolent with the residue of thousands of years of living.

We left the cliff-hugging road, looped inland into a forest of fragrant pines, turned a corner and saw below us the bay where Sinan's family have their beach house. It's a perfect location: a deep bay shielded on all sides by the pine-covered mountains with the glittering sea stretching out to the horizon. At the head of the bay there is a community of glistening white houses: the spacious summer homes of 90 families. Interestingly, this is a collegiate venture. Faculty members at either the university of Çukurova or Ankara own all of the houses.

We started to unpack but Sinan made sure that I, as a guest, was quickly seated on the shaded patio looking out towards the sea with a glass of freshly brewed tea. As he hosed down the hot marble

flagstones and watered the garden, he told me that he was happy that the sardines had survived. The neighbor had watered them in his absence and he was sure that before long the sardines would form a beautiful hedge.

I thought I had misheard, but the word had been repeated several times: sardines. For me, sardines are little fish neatly and impossibly packed in olive oil. I looked out towards the sea and the boundary of his garden and noted a line of pale objects in the ground, each at the center of a small depression that had obviously been filled with water. There was a moment of incredulity – a strange jarring sensation that I was either missing something important, or incapable of comprehending the obvious albeit the improbable. My mind for some reason latched onto stories of indigenous North Americans showing the beleaguered Pilgrim Fathers how to plant kernels of maize together with a little rotting fish. Perhaps in Turkey it is the fish that grows and not the corn?

“Sinan, what are sardines?”

He looked perplexed, then pointed to a large earthenware pot that stood at the edge of the patio. Growing in it were bright scarlet geraniums; those ubiquitous window-box flowers that botanists pedantically insist are really pelargoniums (true geraniums have symmetrical flowers; those of pelargoniums are asymmetrical). Slowly, I undid the old connections and started to make new ones. The island of Sardinia has, or rather once had, shoals of little silvery fish swimming in its coastal waters and it was these fish that I knew as sardines. The island also is considered by Turks to be the place of origin of these beautiful scarlet flowers and they call them sardines.

I then saw with a clarity that had earlier escaped me, that the pale objects rising up out of their shallow mud-lined craters were indeed anemic cuttings of pelargoniums. In a year or two, with lots of water and a little luck, these tenacious little plants would undoubtedly form a beautiful hedge of fragrant leaves and scarlet flowers. We sat in the setting sun comparing floral maps. His sardines were my pelargoniums. His Wedding Gown Vine was my Bougainvillea (Ottoman brides, particularly of the sultan’s family, favored red or magenta gowns and veils). Jasmine, which was by then scenting the evening air, had a shared name.

Tea in Tulip-shaped Glasses, Oil in Tumblers

The point is not that plants, or fish for that matter, have different names. It is rather that what constitutes a name is embedded in social, historical and linguistic contexts and that these are not only unique to one culture but are not apparent to another. And if plants and fish are perceived and expressed in different ways it is obvious that abstract concepts, social behavior and accepted norms are even more deeply embedded and, from that perspective, rendered invisible and easily misunderstood by those standing outside this cultural matrix.

This was my first visit to Turkey and to render the invisible more visible, and to avoid possible misunderstanding, I had tried to prepare myself for the experiences that lay ahead. Fortunately, in Sinan, I had a keen and sensitive guide who advised me on suitable areas to examine prior to my visit. Sinan is a doctoral student at Çukurova University completing a degree in marketing. We met virtually. I was his peer mentor when he taught his first online course with the University of Maryland (UMUC). That mentoring relationship had been strong, invigorating and very satisfying for both of us and after it ended we decided to continue our growing friendship.

We decided that I should examine Ottoman history, looking at the rise and the fall of this dynamic and spectacular world stage player (Kinross, 1979). Interestingly, because I teach and mentor students from Central and Southeastern Europe, I had studied the complex and fragmented history of the Balkans (Glenny, 2001), where the Ottomans were always "on the other side" of the cultural and national divide. It was interesting to reinterpret the historical denouement in the region though Ottoman eyes. It also was exciting to re-examine the vestigial remnants of Ottoman society in my own city, Jerusalem, which was an outpost of the Ottoman Empire for more than 400 years until its fall to the British in 1917. I also examined the ebbs and flows of recent and contemporary Turkish history (Zurcher, 1997), including a study of the powerful and charismatic Mustafa Kamel Ataturk (Mango, 2002), whose image and enduring influence were constantly present during my visit. I also learned a little functional Turkish.

But such application only starts to take shape – or to take on a more vital shape and significance – when you sit in the warmth of the evening on a veranda overlooking a shimmering lake, drink tea from tulip-shaped glasses, and talk with erudite and insightful people who are themselves embedded in their social and cultural matrix yet able to reflect on it and allow a stranger to gain entry. Sinan's father, Nijat, is departmental chair of economics with extensive consulting and research experience. He also is a member of the European University Association team advising on quality issues in the implementation of the Bologna Process in European higher education. We talked about perceptions of reform and quality assurance in higher education. We talked about economics and transformative economies in particular. We spoke about politics, Turkish history, nationalism, the secular constitution and the present Islamic government. It was in these long, often animated, evening discussions that I sensed a growing appreciation of this country, its people, its history, and perhaps its future.

It was in Turkey – not in the Israel where I have lived for 25 years – that I went to a mosque for the first time. It was the incredibly beautiful Sabancı Merkez Camii, built in 1998 on the banks of the Seyhan River. The mosque is faced with glittering white marble: inside is a blend of stillness, color and an incredible sense of inclusive spaciousness – it was designed to accommodate 30,000 worshipers and is the largest mosque in Turkey. In traditional Ottoman style, it has an expansive central dome that seems to float on an intricate raft of intersecting smaller domes and arches. The exterior and interior of the building is breathtakingly beautiful and it was deeply moving to stand in its cool vastness with my friend.

But, like the thoughtful and enthusiastic guides that they were, my hosts were as interested in my culture as in their own. We searched for old synagogues in Adana and in the ancient city of Antakya, which was known as Antioch to the Early Church Fathers. In Antakya we found a solid iron door with a telltale Magen David, or Star of David, chiseled into the keystone of the archway. Beside the door, a notice told us that the keys could be had from Mustafa, who had a tailor's shop 50 meters down the street. But Mustafa did not have the keys. When there had been a synagogue bombing in Istanbul, it was felt that he might find himself in a compromised situation if he held the keys. Mustafa phoned around to various members of the synagogue but it was the summer and most of them were out of town, living in Istanbul or in cooler summer homes.

Eventually, Mustafa tracked down Aaron and – after a number of adventures – we met him at his brother's shop in the covered marketplace. Aaron's brother also was a tailor. When I entered his shop we spoke in Hebrew. He had spent six years in Tel Aviv before deciding to return to Turkey. Keys were produced and we went off to admire a 300 year-old synagogue that looked identical to

the richly carpeted and heavily cushioned Sephardic synagogues that you find throughout the working-class districts of Jerusalem. Aaron was delighted at this comparison. He set out four tumblers of olive oil with floating wicks and asked us each to light a flame and make our personal prayers. Sinan and his parents lit and so did I, praying aloud in Hebrew for the wellbeing and continuation of this little Turkish community. Aaron was moved, more so when I prayed *mincha*, the afternoon prayer.

These are the experiences that you probably can only have when you have guides who help you explore and understand the different assumptions and norms of your own society. But what do they have to do with international education, apart from a rather superficial excursion into a different country and a different culture? Before examining the possibilities that exist within international education, I would like to examine some theoretical issues regarding metaphor because if international education is about a displacement of culture and social context, metaphor is about displacement and subsequent realignment of images and semantic domains of reference.

Metaphoric Sense: The Celibate Groom and his Virginal Brides

The use of metaphor has a long history in many areas of study. Certainly, in my own area of study – management and organizational theory – the conceptual metaphor, which operates at the level of abstraction and idea, has been used to suggest new characteristics and properties of organizations that are, in a sense, latent until made visible by the metaphoric comparison. The metaphor is not a stylistic flourish, but rather presents a profoundly new way of grasping relationships and properties. Conceptual metaphors work by contrasting a source domain, which "consists of a set of literal entities, attributes, processes and relationships, linked semantically and apparently stored together in the mind"[3] with a distinct and separate target domain. Particularly powerful metaphors result when the source domain is rich in concrete attributes and associations, while the target is abstract, conceptual and difficult to map. This grounding of the ephemeral undoubtedly explains why metaphor has secured such a stimulating place in the theories of organizational analysts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Morgan, 1997).

"The metaphor is not a stylistic flourish, but rather presents a profoundly new way of grasping relationships and properties."

In other areas of study, for example, the spiritual quest or metaphysical exploration, the grounding of the ephemeral can clearly be seen to cause new and striking fracture lines that provide complex and exciting insights. For early Christian mystics, for example, the metaphor of Christ as a celibate groom encountering his virginal brides produced new, deeper insight into what it might mean to sustain a union with the Devine (Clark, 2008).

Conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) considers the general process of metaphor use and stresses the breadth of the conceptual domains that are brought together, rather than narrower lexical or literary ones. Currently, other theoretical approaches use conceptual metaphor theory as a ground while stressing unique differences such as the domain inclusion of thought, emotion and culture; the intensity or strength of conceptual contrast; and the interconnectedness and dynamic process of metaphor recognition and interpretation. In examining the potential and the power of organizational metaphor, Joep Cornelissen (2005) suggests that organization theorists

have often neglected the ways in which metaphors work and have failed to ground their work in a broader cognitive theory.

From his examination, Cornelissen suggests that two models can be used to understand metaphor: comparison and interaction. The older comparison model stresses comparative properties. The metaphor is not a stylistic flourish, but rather presents a profoundly new way of grasping relationships similarities that exist between the co-joined metaphoric source (say, "machine") with the target ("organization"). The elements present in source and target are assumed to be significant and pre-existing. The process of comparison stresses the similarity and connectedness of the co-joined domains. Elements lying outside the domains being compared are considered extraneous and not contributing to the effectiveness of the metaphor, indeed may tend to compromise it. The comparison model does not account for much cognitive research that suggests that the associated elements of the source and target domain are often not pre-defined and could not readily be predicted prior to the metaphoric association. It also neglects research showing that domain features, previously considered extraneous, often become relevant. It leaves unconsidered evidence that "salience imbalance" and the ability of metaphor to "rearrange the furniture of our minds" (Kittay, 1987) constitutes a dynamic system that forces new interpretations (Cornelissen, 2005). In the interaction model, metaphor is represented as an ongoing dynamic process in which the difference and similarity between source and target are irreducible to a literal meaning or pre-existing variation of that meaning. Metaphor processing begins with an examination of the generic structures associated with source and target. It continues with the selection, elaboration and blending of elements taken from both source and target domains. Dynamic blending, reappraisal of the underlying conceptual structures (particularly of the target), and efforts to make sense of the possibilities produced by the metaphoric tension all lead to hitherto unconsidered "emergent meaning." Emergent meaning, in the form of new ideas and conjectures, is then used to further explore and interrogate the target. In the interactive model, there is a dynamic interaction between source and target, sustained by the tension of the metaphoric juxtaposition. Metaphor is truly "beyond compare" because it sustains the salience imbalance, cognitive tension and "interpretive viability" that are reduced, or resolved, in figures of speech such as comparison, simile and analogy.

Three Paradigms of International Learning

International education comes into being for multiple reasons; however, these reasons should not be used to obscure the potential of the educational experience. In recent history, and particularly of America, international education was often suggested as a way of introducing students to difference, although the standard models (Leach, 1969) seemed fixated by the notion of location change; that is, defining international education in terms of changed geography rather than changed social or cultural exposure. Indeed, many American programs have created, and often retain, "cultural bubbles" (Cambridge & Thompson, 2004) preserving home culture and ignoring what is going on outside the window. More recently, driven partly by thoughts of diversity and more resolutely by marketing and financial imperatives, international education has not only meant American students coming to Europe, or European students going to home American programs, but America's institutions providing education for, say, European students in Europe.

International education brings together not only different cultures but also different actors and institutions. There is undoubted merit in preserving "bubbles" when they come to educational philosophy, curriculum design, standards of excellence, administrative detail, and a host of other

defining characteristics of the home institution. However, international education is not only about institutions. It also is about students and faculty, enriched learning experiences, exposure to otherness, and about pedagogic opportunities that were impossible and inconceivable in the home country.

Curriculum and subject matter also have an impact. The learning potentials presented in an international setting of chemistry might not be as remarkable as the opportunities for sociology, economics or business studies. I am interested in the educational potential raised by international settings from faculty and student perspectives. I am specifically interested in ways in which experience abroad can be used productively and creatively for my own business students. I suggest three paradigms that can be used to describe, and perhaps to redefine, the educational and pedagogic paradigms in international programs, and more specifically international programs that operate abroad. These paradigms can be represented as nonmetaphoric, comparison and domains-interaction.

The Nonmetaphoric Paradigm

The nonmetaphoric paradigm, or locational model, rests firmly on older understandings of international education which were fixated on displacement and location. These models see international education arising when students cross borders: UK students spending a year in an institution of higher learning in Madrid; Spanish students spending a semester in London. More recently, it also has meant Greek students studying an American curriculum at an American college in Athens. The student's cross-border experience is often seen as simply the move from the Athenian street into the American bubble. In such a model, life goes on largely unaffected within the bubble. The journey was to get inside, not through alien territory.

The nonmetaphoric paradigm also is a conservative one, retaining the original and defining culture of the institution. Nonmetaphoric models are institutionally dominated models, not lending themselves to student or faculty perspectives or experiences. These models not only conserve valuable academic and national identities, they preclude formal exploration of otherness. Student's experiences are effectively left unvoiced; contextual exposure is ignored. Cultural bubbles provide the best, and the worst, of home values. Concern about a cultural imperialism, or educational hegemony, is assuaged by the notion that the locals seem to have voted with their pocketbooks for that model and that that is what they will receive. It seems a validation of the glory and simplicity of educational capitalism.

Nonmetaphoric paradigms are literal and do not lend themselves to metaphor. Metaphor is unimaginable because it forces two domains into proximity, and here there is only one. Dramaturgically, this model gives the script with all of its nuances to the instructor: there is no room for extemporization, only for the adoption of that script. Likewise, power and authority are asymmetrically divided with little empowerment, or chance of empowerment, for the student. The locational model lends itself very much to the "sage on stage" pedagogical approach, where knowledge is privileged and students are reduced – sometimes with consideration, sometimes with expressions of benign concern – to empty vessels eager to be filled. Such a pedagogic stance seems to stem directly from the unquestioned locational aspect of the program. Knowledge, in a sense, is embedded within the institution and faculty often see themselves as agents of dissemination and replication of that conserved knowledge. While this is most apparent in the locational model, and its

nonmetaphoric paradigm, it may well be that the conservative pedagogic approach is simply an unquestioned traditional response.

Comparison Paradigm

Both this and the later to be discussed domains-interaction paradigm, embrace the duality of mismatched institution, student, location and culture. In that duality there is a suggestion, perhaps even more, of metaphor. The understanding of that metaphoric potential is guided by the selection of underpinning metaphor theory.

"International education is seen not in terms of national borders crossed but in terms of possibilities and potentials for education within different cultural, social, and economic settings."

International education is seen not in terms of national borders crossed but in terms of possibilities and potentials for education within different cultural, social and economic settings. All learning is deeply embedded within culture. It is often useful to tease out strands of that cultural matrix and appreciate how they have contributed to the creation, shaping and selection of knowledge. One way of appreciating this is to examine what might be considered an equivalent body of knowledge in another culture. Such an experience allows for not only the acquiring of new knowledge but affords a reflective glance at prior knowledge and how it has been embedded. In this pedagogic model the operating words are "compare and contrast."

The comparison paradigm looks for a presentation of local and home views of the subject under examination. Local perspectives and positions can be drawn from students and adjunct faculty. Accordingly, there may be more reliance on local adjunct faculty, who possess an awareness of the locality. Interestingly, in many international programs local adjuncts are drawn to the program because of its connection with institution nationality: many, for instance, may be expatriates or have earned their degrees in the institution's home country. Local student and faculty experiences and narratives are nevertheless taken from familiar social, cultural and historical contexts, and are recognized and used to inform the subject. Visiting faculty, from the home institution, have to have the flexibility to hear these voices and to draw out these experiences. They also have to be aware of the national context in which instruction is taking place.

Power and authority are more symmetrically shared in this model, with students recognized as having valid input. The resulting learning is constructed jointly. From a dramaturgical perspective, both instructor and students have scripts that differ and lead to revised roles and extemporization as attempts to reconcile lead to different emphasizes and new meaning: different performances are understood to co-exist. The pedagogical role model in this model is the "guide on the side," in which instructor views learning as a construction and encourages and supports student participation in that construction. The shift is from instruction to teaching. The comparison model rests on an assumed metaphoric connection in which learning strategies and the pedagogic goals are the target while metaphor interpretation is the source domain. The task is to more fully appreciate local and home conceptual domains within a discipline, looking for ways of comparing and contrasting.

Domains-interactive Paradigm

In this model the central conceptual shift in institutional and pedagogic thinking is that local and home understanding are both incomplete and not perfectly understood. Both home and local understandings of subject matter and curriculum have validity, but they also have different histories and specific evolutions. Yet by constantly looking for elements in one conceptual domain that might be suggested by the other domain, a sustained tension and dynamic of conceptual rearrangement and reconsideration comes into place. Both domains are seen as partial, at best, and their co-joining suggests new and more expanded consideration. Just as source and target domains are not considered static or predetermined, so in this paradigm we assume that the elements of knowledge that have been selected are themselves products of cultural embeddedness. The attempt is not to compare and contrast bundles of known elements but rather to use the tension between the two bodies of knowledge to suggest possible connections and uncover elements that were originally dormant or unrecognized. This model requires faculty, whether guides or mentors, to have a much greater understanding of both local and home domains of knowledge. This enriched appreciation of the subject matter results from faculty exploring the metaphoric territory through working with local guides, such as students and academics, and reflecting on the maps that are produced.

In the domains-interactive model, inclusion of student and adjunct faculty experience is required. There is a more symmetrical distribution of power and authority, and a pedagogic awareness of the required cocreation of knowledge. The instructional model is the “guide by the side;” however, the shift is perhaps more from teaching to mentoring with a growing respect for the inclusion and participation of all parties in the educational engagement. This model does not compare and contrast rigid knowledge sets; rather, it sees all knowledge sets as being the imperfect product of systems in which knowledge is socially and culturally embedded. The knowledge produced is dynamic, ever changing, and subject to paradigm revision. Essentially, the metaphoric juxtaposition of knowledge domains has emergent heuristic value. Obviously, the degree to which the domainsinteraction model can operate is limited by the prior knowledge, intellectual curiosity, and extent to which those engaged in the process consider novel knowledge and ways of understanding as evolving and emergent.

Dramaturgically, the scripts and roles are variable, interchangeable, and subject to constant revision and extemporization. There is no definitive, authoritative performance and each enactment potentially results in novelty, changing consensus and growing fluidity.

When the Sardine Hedge Blossoms

Sardine hedges continue to surprise and obscure the view for us in international education contexts, particularly when we cannot move beyond the literal and embedded meanings within our own cultures and societies. The challenge, opportunity and excitement of international education is that it allows not simply a changed location but a different social and cultural milieu. Foreign and international programs face a decision whether to duplicate the home model abroad or adapt to the reality of the context abroad – the so-called “cookie-cutter or adaptation” decision (Mathews, Rivera & Pineda, 2001). This may affect the form and the structure of the institution; it also may affect the curriculum and the educational context of the program. Administration and educational delivery are entwined and each influences and impacts multiple stakeholders. International education offers the possibility of engaging constructively with students to mutually enrich our learning and understanding. This opportunity, or challenge, is nowhere stronger when mentors engage across cultural divides, especially in international programs and contexts.

Sardine hedges need not necessarily astonish or block us from broader educational horizons: they are illusionary, the product of unshared communication. They blossom and fade as we become familiar with different perspectives and experiences of culture, society and economics. Perhaps, international education is about the cocreation of new landscapes and horizons for faculty, students and institutions; if so, the dynamics of the mentoring process seem acutely focused on such transformative ventures. Metaphors have no meaning unless we can choose to consider more than a single domain. Visions cannot emerge unless there is a deliberate, informed and respectful exploration of what makes us different, what makes us the same, and of what we never really understood about ourselves in the first place. International education – certainly when conducted by, for example, an American institution abroad – presents exciting challenges to move beyond our accepted landscapes of education and to explore new territory. International education is not a statement about changed location; rather, it is an opportunity to engage with otherness. In that engagement, considered perhaps through the process of metaphor, we potentially develop new understandings and new visions that undoubtedly enrich not only our international students but also the whole collegiate enterprise.

Endnotes

[1] I am grateful for the award made by the Empire State College Committee for Faculty Development that in part made it possible for me in to explore the changing patterns of economics and marketing in southern Turkey. I also would like to express my respect, appreciation and gratitude to Sinan Fikret Erk, who suggested the visit and to Professor and Mrs. Nijat Erk for their generosity and gracious hospitality. I would also like to thank the International Office of Çukurova University for their kindness, assistance and enthusiasm for all aspects of international education and institutional cooperation.

[2] I also thank Alan Mandell for his close and insightful reading of an earlier draft of this essay. As always, his comments were invaluable in revising the piece and any errors are my own. Once again, All About Mentoring provided me with a productive forum for the initial exploration of an immerging concern. A longer, scholarly review of the use of the dynamics of metaphor in the teaching of international business ("Teaching International Business Abroad: Paradigms suggested by metaphor theory") will appear in the fall 2009 edition of The Journal of Teaching International Business.

[3] Ê Metaphor Analysis Project site of the Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology (CREET), of the Open University, UK. Retrieved May 10, 2009, http://creet.open.ac.uk/projects/metaphor-analysis/index.cfm

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"The feeling of being completely embedded in language never goes away. Perhaps one of our abiding mentoring worries is not only what Gouldner referred to as our 'epistemological anxiety' (i.e. what knowledge can I call upon?...), but a more basic anxiety of discourse itself (i.e. how can we talk? What is public and what is private communication?). … Mentoring is about finding a way to make a common language with our students."

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 22, Fall 2001

Hand and Head: Making and Knowing in the Labor Studies Program | By Barrie Cline and Rebecca Fraser

Prelude: Barrie Cline

Though I could not say I'd known Alan Mandell well when asked to contribute to this collection, a striking familiarity emerged, as I perused the two issues of All About Mentoring where my contributions (and my collaboration with Rebecca Fraser) appeared. What struck me was a remembrance of Empire State, where long ago I was a student, as a place where I'd finally found a sense of belonging, hope, wonder and excitement about learning ... and later taught art with the Van Arsdale program. I was shown (at last!) that much of the knowledge I'd acquired in an unconventional working life, as well as deep hunches I'd formed, mattered – and mattered politically – particularly when co-excavated by wonderfully insightful and intuitive mentors.

Alan's passionate reminders about reciprocity in the mentoring/student relationship, the call to reflect deeply on what we learn from students, and the prompt to always probe the relationship between power and knowledge pervades All About Mentoring and created the perfect landing place for the work Rebecca and I were doing in interpreting the student exhibit, Breaking Divides. Inspired by Kristen Ross's take on the Paris Commune as a laboratory of political invention from the Communard's own words and experience, we endeavored (in all ways great and small) to break down the barriers to cultural and creative work, where no blue collar/working class student need apply.

The work of challenging the gatekeepers was and is refueled and replenished by the teaching and learning communities fostered in AAM as well as in our labor studies pedagogy at Van Arsdale. The continued commitment to co-discovery and co-creation of scholarship, of art, of political invention with our students, one that honors and probes different ways of knowing, is alive in its pages. Thank you, Alan, for the timeless and tireless spirit of generosity and inquiry imparted in these pages.

Prelude: Rebecca Fraser

Looking back to before my retirement, I most remember Alan's deep listening and authentic questioning and how he often asked the unexpected question or the question everyone was thinking but that only he articulated. Working with him on All About Mentoring pieces was a joy—he was so affirming of our work and, if he had any comments, they were to bring out the best in the piece.

I also remember visits to Alan's office, piled high with books and papers. It was what I imagine a rabbit's warren might be like—surrounded by all the things they love. I visited Alan's office mostly when I was chewing on an idea that might become a piece for AAM. Huddled in that filled-up space, we would talk, and Alan would ask the precise question to move the piece forward. I'm sure he did that for the article included in this compilation. And I have no doubt he will continue to do the same in all the days ahead.

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Introduction

In 2018, we launched the exhibit Breaking Divides at SUNY Empire State College's Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School of Labor Studies (HVASLS), presenting a compilation of the art and writing of rank and file trade unionists, construction workers who are students at the school, and those whose works embody its pedagogy.[1] The exhibit explores student's reflections about how class, race and gender intersect with their tradecraft and unionism. The original catalyst for creating the exhibit stemmed from reading Kristin Ross's (2015) book, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*. Her book concerned the 73 day "reformed society" that was constructed in 1871 by working-class Communards, where Ross described, through the voices of the Communards themselves, their goals for inclusion and shared public beauty[2] — what a federation within their ranks called "communal luxury." Aligned in this federation were writers and artists, painters and sculptors, etc., defined largely as those who produced works for contemplation; and **artisans**, *those who chiefly craft functional objects and who have come to be viewed lower in status than artists*. They saw communal luxury as constituting equity in educational practices and art that "spread art everywhere" (p. 53), and following the emancipatory teachings of educator Joseph Jacotot to urgently address "the world divided between those who can and those who cannot afford the luxury of playing with words and images" (p. 50). The Communards' address of culture by calling for a "communal luxury" has been the chief inspiration for our own creation of a platform that makes space for the words and images of working-class students at HVASLS.

Part of the HVASLS mission derives from Harry Van Arsdale Jr.'s belief that:

> *[T]he ability to think critically and to read and write at the college level are essential skills for all citizens of a modern democratic society. But especially for trade unionists. The Van Arsdale program is designed to ensure that trade unionists acquire the skills and knowledge required of them to be leaders at their worksites, in their communities, and their union. (SUNY Empire State College, n.d., para. 2)*

Van Arsdale's vision echoes the way that the Communards prioritized addressing the division between manual and intellectual labor by setting up education for boys and girls where trades education was required alongside philosophy and other academic pursuits for everyone, where one who "wields a tool can also write a book" (Ross, 2015, p. 42).

The result of such an education would level the playing field. No individual would ever necessarily be predestined to a certain kind of labor regardless of one's origin, while the educational structure would also bestow upon the trades — and the labor associated with them — equal value. These goals are evident in the HVASLS pedagogy. IBEW3 Local 3 mandates that apprentices go to college collectively (in classrooms, not online, if possible); therefore, they come to HVASLS to get that education, while they are also receiving training (for which they receive credit) at their Local's training center. Our courses are taught via a participatory pedagogy.

Therefore, the *Breaking Divides* platform was conceived to offer space for creative expression, as well as space for sustained moments of student reflection and dialogue from a distinct labor studies-informed perspective. The Breaking Divides exhibit explored the tensions between the academic and the vocational, head work and handwork, artist and artisan/craftsperson, as well as

the individual and the collective or communal. Inherent in these tensions is also the class divide and the idea of working toward creating equal access to the same luxuries those of privilege have. This work entails connecting the working class (our students from a variety of races and different genders) to institutions of knowledge (our college) and furthering artistic and literary creation. Hopefully, together we would be crafting and characterizing a political imaginary along the lines of what Ross (2015) has described as the ability to imagine what society could be, might be if inequality were abolished. In this article, we explore some of the unique contributions that our students/workers have made to this imaginative work, drawing out aspects of the pedagogy that prompted their creativity. We arrive at the belief that these contributions by students/workers offer an expanded understanding of the figure and workings of the artisan and writer. Though this may suggest an emphasis on student's own (or their trade's own) craft skills, we believe that our students' contributions ultimately point to a collective purpose, akin to the goals of the Communards in calling for a better quality of life for workers, for luxuries that are communal.

We chiefly touch on the pedagogies and student work from the following classes: College Writing for Workers (associate degree class), Educational Planning (bachelor's degree class), and Workers/Artists, as well as Public Art (associate and bachelor's degree classes, respectively). The pedagogies of these courses entwine and overlap with each other and express the mission of HVASLS.

College Writing for Workers: *Labor Writes*

College Writing for Workers is the first course required of our apprentices who will earn an associate degree; a common syllabus is constructed, and it changes every other year, following instructor and student feedback. Foundational to the syllabus is the current issue of the student publication Labor Writes.[4] The anthology serves at least two purposes: First, it provides students with examples of what their fellow apprentices can produce, in both writing and the visual arts; Second, it showcases the best writing of our courses, and as such, provokes discussions on many levels, inviting students to think ahead to courses and topics they will encounter while pursuing their degrees.

One motivation in creating the curriculum for College Writing for Workers is to assist these construction trade apprentices to become acclimated to the experience of being in a college classroom. Many of our students come to college with a great deal of both resistance and reticence.[5] They are pretty confident in the work they do with their hands (on and off the job), but they are not as sure of themselves sitting behind a desk, with a group of other mostly uncomfortable students. They may not have had good experiences in other colleges or high school and don't view themselves as students (or writers or artists, for that matter); after all, they chose a trade over college only to discover that the local union they've joined requires students to get a college degree.[6] One student, in his entrance essay, responded to the challenge by writing an apology for the essay he had written; he wrote, "I don't write, I work" (Fraser & Mavrogiannis, 2017, p. 167).

The writing assignments in the course, both formal and informal, are meant to engage students in what Mike Rose (2004) called "reflective practice" in his book, The Mind at Work. Reflective practice, according to Rose, is the act of stepping back to take a look at the work you have done, to put some critical distance between you and the work you've been doing. Rose specifically referred to the job site, and we use it to describe the reflection of the work of writing, reading, and

discussion, as well as the work (through their own writing and that of their fellow apprentices) that situates them socially and politically in the labor movement and the world.

Instructors of this first course have a challenging job, as they work to engage students in reading and writing assignments, to engage their minds in thinking about why they are where they are in these classrooms and on their job sites. Whereas the Communards were fighting the intellectualism that prevailed during that age, we, at times, encounter a pronounced anti-intellectualism in some of our students. We work with these perceptions to negotiate a beautiful form and function someplace between school and work, namely pieces of writing that are expressive of both the individual and the collective.

Educational Planning: Reflective Practice

Rose's (2004) *The Mind at Work* is a central text in our Educational Planning course. Ed Planning is a required group study for our bachelor's degree students; the course is designed to help them create a degree program and to introduce them to "labor studies." These bachelor's degree students spend time reading and discussing the "tension between" or the "intersection of" the academic and work, as well as other essays and articles about the current economic situation with unions and the building trades. By the end of the semester, students will have written rationale essays that explain why they've designed their degree in the way they have, why they've chosen particular courses over others, and perhaps most importantly, why they think it is important for a worker to get a college degree.[7]

Students look at how Rose examined a number of occupations — from waiting tables to hairdressing to carpentry and electrical work — and the implicit and explicit intelligence that is needed to accomplish these jobs successfully. Rose teased out the skills necessary to do a good job, to feel pride in one's work, to value the work of others. In a section of student Karen Hansen's (2013) rationale essay, which is part of the exhibition as a large poster, she applied this concept to her job when she delineated those skills, used in just one day:

> *I had to combine teamwork, cognitive reasoning, attention to detail, past acquired memory of jobs completed, proficiency of tool handling, special engineering, acquired knowledge of electrical hardware and wiring, tricks of the trade, reflective reasoning, sensory perception, concentration, alternative problem-solving, systematic figurative expression, personal integrity, safety for myself and others, and time management. (p. 30)*

Rose (2004) broke down the mind/body division that is pervasive in our culture and certainly in the ways in which we often judge whether a job is "good" or "bad." As construction workers, our students internalize the stigma for "only" working with their bodies and not engaging their minds in their work. This stigma is further extended by the gradual devaluation that has taken place in Western culture of the functional work artisans or craftspeople do, as compared to how so-called "high" culture values the individual achievement of artists. Rose illustrated the fallacy in this dichotomy throughout his book, and perhaps most especially in his chapter titled, "Reflective Practice," where he watched apprentice electricians do their work and then step back and take a look at what they've done: Is it plumb? Does it look "pretty"? Are the wires arranged in an orderly and attractive fashion? Rose pointed to the aesthetics of the work these junior electricians (and in other chapters, carpenters, waitresses, hairstylists, etc.) performed.

In pointing to this aesthetic dimension, Rose raised the notion of being an artisan on the job, and our students are eager to provide examples, from pulling wire to bending and laying pipe. Over and over again, they say that doing this work is "an art." To do it well brings about a sense of pride that is shared by fellow workers who are participating in the pull perhaps, or those in the vicinity who witness the pipe bends that are "pretty." One student explained it this way: "Like especially running pipe and [making] bends and going certain angles. ... The electrician that's doing it is like a Picasso because they're taking pride [in] their work" (Anonymous, personal communication, May 2018). Sometimes students talk of this good work in terms of leaving their signature behind — not an actual signature, but a mark of work that has been done with care and with respect for those who will follow and open up a panel and see an orderly arrangement of wires, for example.

Head and hand, mind and body start to come together for them as they reflect on their practices as students/workers.

A Way of Knowing

"They don't know about bruised hands, blistered feet. ..."
— John Parente, "The Artisan in the Worker" (2018)

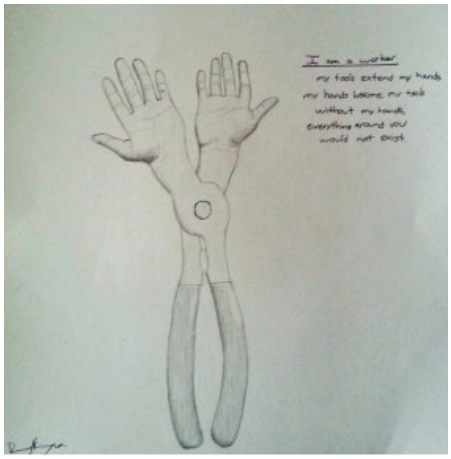
Similar to Rose's (2004) argument and returning to the working-class Communard's priorities for re-elevating the status of the artisan, much of the HVASLS writing/art pedagogy is built upon the belief "that laboring bodies harbor an epistemology, a way of knowing and understanding the world that comes out of the physicality of work" (Zandy, 2004, p. 3). Janet Zandy acknowledged the risks of being reductive or romanticizing this very physicality in scholarly writing, but decided the risk is worth it (as we do) to address "the deep and unacknowledged resistance to working-class experience in the academy, the persistent elitism that delimits knowledge and the study of culture" (p. 4). And in fact, she made a strong point that her writing in Hands, "seeks reconnection of the metaphorically dismembered working hand to the whole body … the intended tone is cautionary, not celebratory … I am testing new forms, using collage and juxtaposition, story and analysis, as tools to penetrate the wall of bourgeois cultural assumptions." Always concerned about colonizing her subject, she instead offered "a process of recovery and retrieval, a struggle for reciprocal visibility, for sustained rationality, for humble witnessing" (p. 2).

The first event to which Zandy (2004) was a humble witness was the accident of "Mrs. C" whose hands were crushed and dismembered in a manufacturing accident. In telling the bit of the story of Mrs. C that she could conjure up, she was memorializing those lost hands, as was done on the cover of an OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) pamphlet where Mrs. C stood holding out her arms without the hands. Both the telling of the story and the picture on the pamphlet stand as witnesses to the violence of work, and the violence that can happen to hands at work. Two of the artworks in our show, Donald Turner's (2017) Reverse Saw and Danny Ferreyra Nguyen's (2014) I am a Worker also stand as a testament to the integration of the hand, the work, and the violence to the hand merely by working with one's hands. Zandy (2004) pointed out how much our hands can tell us about a person — i.e., the difference between the soft hand with clean, trimmed fingernails versus the calloused hand with dirty and rough fingernails.

Turner (2017), in his piece, pointed out the violence to hands by making the handle of his saw the blade, shiny and with sharp teeth, and the saw itself an ineffectual but beautifully polished piece of white cedar. Working with this saw is impossible, just as repetitive work with any tool can lead to injury — cuts, callouses, even loss of limb as illustrated by Mrs. C. Reverse Saw speaks on many levels, not only about potential injury but also about OSHA regulations on the job, and the way in which they are not always sufficient to protect a worker's hands and body. Donald Turner has written of the piece in an undated email, "Tools can cause irreversible damage to our bodies, but it is what we do to provide for our families and live the life we want. Sometimes because of this we enjoy our later years with a bad back or bad knee." One student also pointed out that the saw "eats away at the person as much as it does the work at hand" (remark from an art class in the summer of 2018).

Donald Turner, "Reverse Saw," 2017. Photo provided by Barrie Cline and Rebecca Fraser.

Danny Ferreyra Nguyen, on the other hand (literally and figuratively), has drawn a picture of his hands coming out of the handles of a pair of pliers, the tool most used by electricians, the tool used so often that as Nguyen points out, they "become" a part of the worker's body. In a recorded discussion of the exhibition, a student made the point that electricians use pliers "as an extension" of their bodies (Anonymous, personal communication, July 2018). And Nguyen says in the text next to his drawing that without [his] hands, none of the things around you (walls, electricity, plumbing, etc.) would exist. He points to two aspects of the hands at work.



Danny Ferrerya Nguyen, "I Am a Worker," 2014. Photo provided by Barrie Cline and Rebecca Fraser

The first aspect is their very necessity and how hands become one with tools, so that there is implicit, deeply embedded knowledge in those hands and the way that they work with the tools. This is, in part, the epistemology that Zandy (2004) referred to — the knowing in the body of the worker. And second, related to this first point, is the absolute necessity of the tool/hand connection, the flow of information that goes from the worker's body/ mind through the hands to the tool and vice versa, the flow of information that comes back through the tool to the hand and on to the body/head. This is something Rose (2004) also discussed in delineating the intelligence of people who work with their hands and their bodies and a variety of tools. In discussing his mother's work as a waitress, Rose explained how she came to know the exact weight of a tray, and the exact place to balance that tray on her arm, how to carry multiple cups of coffee without spilling the hot liquid during the trip she made to her next table. Carpenters come to know their saws (as Turner points to in his sculpture) — the balance of them, the weight of them, how to use them efficiently and properly. This is knowledge that is built up over time and with experience.

"We learned how to improvise, strengthen some other muscle, deeply embedded memory. …"
— John Parente, "The Artisan in the Worker" (2018)

According to Rose (2004), "Knowing is visual, tactile, practical." Rose made a connection between the work of a surgeon and that of a carpenter — namely, to "complicate easy distinctions between abstract and concrete knowledge, what is seen and felt is freighted with meaning, and abstractions about physiology or pathology are useless unless embodied [emphasis added]" (p. 151). Rose also quoted a physical therapist, who like the surgeon, the carpenter, the electrician, the artist, remarked, "You need to get a sense in your hand" (p. 153). Rose went on to explain that good use of a tool sends information back to the hand. When the students first encounter this phrase in the Educational Planning class, there is a great deal of discussion about how true this is, how awkward they are with tools until they learn to listen to them, to hear what they are saying.

Shantar Gibson, "Pliers and Money," 2013. Photo provided by Barrie Cline and Rebecca Fraser

Shantar Gibson's *Pliers and Money* (2013) complicated this notion of mind and body working together by reminding the viewer of the economy behind those pliers, the electricians' essential tool.

Public Art Class: A Seat at the Table

"I lift my pipe-bender this time with a different approach I'm Miles Davis on Air guitar Can't ignore the need to make it button, stronger than any chemical, yet modest and subtle We have an eccentric vigilance to make it plumb and level Everything we make with our hands is beautiful and useful."
— John Parente, "The Artisan in the Worker" (2018)

The art classes expand on the role of the artisan in public culture, situating students' own tradecraft within it while examining the historical and economic roots of the artisan/artist divide. As the Paris Commune had sought to overcome the division between manual and intellectual labor by prioritizing combining both into integral education for all children, so too do the art classes seek the reappraisal and elevation of artisan skills — as conceived internally by workers in the field, as well as in a more public-facing way. For Shantar Gibson, gaining proficiency with her pliers asserts that this ability — in the hands of a woman of color — can become a powerful vehicle for the "overlooked and underrepresented voice." These skills have allowed her "to rise above …. and manifest that which does not discriminate. ..." For Gibson, who is a practicing artist, the artisanal skills she practices have also become a "unique opportunity" to express herself as an artist (personal communication, February 2013).

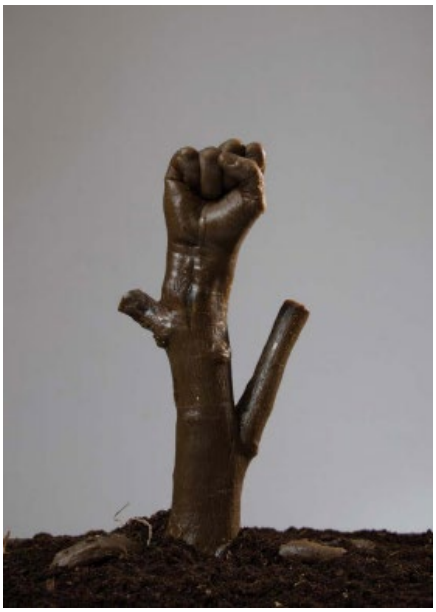
In detail, students determine that which they consider constitutes artisanal labor on their jobs, including feats of "big picture" systems thinking that responds to discrepancies between architect's designs and the actual guts of the building; as apprentice Jasmine Spencer (2014) noted, "What happens when [the architect's] visions fall short of the reality" (p. 90)? Students are asked to reevaluate the value of their work and challenged to give form to their ideas. Discussions that follow reconsider the beauty and value of function, the individual as well as the collective labor involved.

Robert Gouldsbury, "A Seat at the Table" (2016). Photo provided by Barrie Cline and Rebecca Fraser

For example, *A Seat at the Table*, made by student/plumber Robert Gouldsbury (2016), utilized his plumbing skills — to both call out official Art (with a capital "A") culture for its exclusionary practices and to stake out a space, a seat, for (organized) worker power. In contrast with art practices with their emphases on individual authorship and keeping with an artisan's ethos, he detailed to the class how he made the work step-by-step. He has recently pointed out what he terms an interesting "duality" of the double shadow of the chair in his photograph, claiming its status as both "Art *and* a functional piece" (personal communication, October 2018), thereby calling for equal visibility and recognition.

Still another example of claiming space for artisanship, while further connecting it to issues of equity, came in the form of a project by student Scott Demel (2013), then a Local 3 apprentice in the art class. Reflecting on the history of post-World War II socioeconomic development in the city, Demel created a series of photographs of conduit bends he admired. Each was accompanied by a written response to the public art classes' study of structural racism and classism in urban planning:[8]

When Robert Moses started tearing down tight communities for his view of his illustrious highways, he started to aid the machine. When he ran his highways out to Long Island so that Levittown could be reached with ease, he aided the machine. …



Paul Allen, Untitled (2017).

But what is this machine, you ask? The machine is the lack of life. …

Life is not working all day and seeing your family briefly before you must go to bed and repeat this insane cycle to only live on the weekends. …

However, life always has a way of breaking through the machine. Like the graffiti artist tagging one of the bridges created by Robert Moses — the rebellious nature of the graffiti is a sign of life poking through. Graffiti artists can take pride in the quality and placement of their art. In the eyes of the graffiti artist, the graffiti is a sign to forget your bridges because you cannot take our pride. Even though many neighborhoods were destroyed by the bridges, they are now [a] canvas to show that your machine will not prevail. (p. 38)

Demel connected the collective artisanal labor of his and his fellow workers (running conduit in "the machine") to the coded "sign" of graffiti as he termed it, and as a "life force" of youth of color in response to its violence:

Much like the pride taken from graffiti work is the pride in a good conduit run. … Most of the time, you don't know who ran the conduit. It is as anonymous as graffiti on a bridge. But like graffiti, people have their own ways of running conduit so certain people know who ran it. … The attention is to detail and precision. The math that is behind excellent concentric bends always gets my attention. The way that I could see eight, 10, even 12 ¾ pieces of EMT flow bend after bend, perfectly spaced, gives me hope. Hope that even on the job site, in the heart of the machine, life still prevails. Pride can be taken in something that will be covered up by a wall. Pride is taken in knowing other people will see your work before it is hidden behind [S] heetrock and think 'wow that's nice.' This pride is a part of life, which the machine will not take from me or from society as a whole. (pp. 38–39)

Solidarity

"Who can teach comradery or brotherhood?"
— John Parente, "The Artisan in the Worker" (2018)

Demel's (2013) assertion of faith in the creativity of the artisan is less concerned with the larger public appreciating the conduit bends than with his fellow workers taking notice. Asserting this collectivity as a sign of life breaking through the machine posits solidarity as yet another possible feature of the artisan identity. This is related, as well, to the general invisibility of workers and with building trades (especially electricians and plumbers) and the invisible beauty of their work; it gets covered up by Sheetrock or runs behind walls and above ceilings.

Jaime Lopez (2012) began an art essay writing about craft and ultimately points to the collective power of workers — all workers — combined. In *Craft, Art and Unions*, a piece in the show, Lopez

concluded, "As a predator separates his prey, then conquers the weakest, these big money influences create legislation in the government that separate[s] the most powerful weapon we have, strength in numbers" (p. 51).

John Parente's (2018) long-form poem, quoted throughout this essay, focused on the sacrifices it takes "to hold a union card" in terms of such qualities as Local 3's training, skill, work ethic, camaraderie and brother/sisterhood. Yet he repeatedly returned to the even more collective "*value of the working class*." Invoking Rose (2004) specifically, he equated the skill of the electrician with a hairdresser and reminded us that the worker (not just the tradesperson), "is this maestro, a director, a composer." Finally, by the end of his poem he does lay claim to being an artist while also concluding his writing with a shout out to "*all workers: 'the working class' because we work it all out, may not have it all together but together we have it all*" (p. 51).

"We the rank and file 2013, united by the work that lay ahead, divided by the fear of losing. Our power is in defying this tradition." Hana Georg, Self-Portrait at Work, 2013.

Ultimately, collective work and being organized are valued on par with individual craft skills.[9] As Stella Fafalios (2010) stated in a letter to her union brother, "We must stand strong together" (p. 88).

Like Parente, some of our students recognize their own potentially expert status as artisans. Works in the exhibition (both art and writing) illustrate the collective and extremely physical labor construction workers perform together. The artisan's physicalized way of knowing (or as Rose (2004) put it, "the wisdom of heavy lifting" [p. 162]) includes instances of embodied solidarity. Some students describe repeatedly putting differences aside, working through differences rather, as a distinguishing characteristic they perform in their often perilous work. Carpenter student Stephanie Lawal has likened this process to a "ballet," with people from all trades whom you may not like or share political beliefs with: "You are responsible for each other's bodies … and you make it work" (personal communication, 2014).

James Oliva, Iwo Jima, 2011.

James Oliva's (2011) *Iwo Jima* is another work in the exhibit that gave form to this sentiment. It resonates with students visiting the exhibit, both for its intense physical collectivity, as well as for the sculpture's skillful reuse of mongo, or leftover copper wire. Oliva, who produced this work before joining the armed services, stated that he wanted to express his deep feeling for the humility and teamwork he'd witnessed amongst his brothers and sisters in the union before he left for his tour of duty.

Communal Luxury and the Exhibition Platform: A Conclusion

The ways that students have enriched, expanded, and politicized the figure of the artisan as described here points to the value of an exhibition populated with texts, forms and ideas that have emerged after a sustained immersion in the HVASLS program. The exhibit itself posits the breakdown of an institutional barrier that asserts cultural work is only the domain of established intellectuals and artists. This divide is further breached if this platform fosters the growth of a community of workers/ artists/writers.

As HVASLS colleague, Richard Wells (2019), stressed in his recent essay, "Teaching Austerity," it is of great importance that the kind of educational practices embodied at HVASLS — and the resulting student work — extend beyond the classroom, beyond school, and onto the job site and further, particularly in the political moment in which we find ourselves (pp. 17–18). Such an extension challenges both cultural and ideological assumptions that show up in class inequality, and the divisions of head/hand, union/ nonunion workers, individual/collective identities, as well as aesthetic/functional purposes of both art and writing. These educational practices seek to break through "entrenched hierarchies and divisions" as the Commune did, particularly of who can afford to play with words and images (Ross, 2015, p. 50).

Ross wrote: "When that division is overcome, as it was under the Commune [or as it is conveyed in the phrase 'communal luxury'], what matters more than any images conveyed, laws passed, or institutions founded, are the capacities set in motion. You do not have to start at the beginning; you can start anywhere" (p. 50). We have aimed to represent our students as people whose capacities have been set in motion. In fact, in this space and these pages, amongst other offerings, they have contributed to a reframing of artisanship that not only enriches the term with respect to labor studies but also creates an invitation for the wider public to revisit their own misconceptions of who construction workers are. The invitation to fellow workers to contribute to the political imaginary with their own writing, artistry, and artisanship, to not only start anywhere — but venture anywhere — is also created in these spaces. We speak against the way these student/ workers have been "consumed" and look toward their future cultural production, using — for example — hand and head, individual and collective, men and women, black, brown, white, etc., as well as union and nonunion all together.

Notes

[1] With thanks to a SUNY Empire State College PILLARS grant.

[2] Ross stated, "Beauty must flourish in spaces shared in common and not just in the privatized preserves … fully integrated into life" (p. 58). The Communards also prioritized that the federation of artisans/ artists have control over museums, decreeing that none should get any more funding than any other, refusing the imposition of hierarchies of any sort.

[3] International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

[4] Labor Writes is our annual anthology of student writing and art, which is used as a text in College Writing for Workers. The publication can be found at https://www.esc.edu/news/ magazines-journal/labor-writes/.

[5] See colleagues Szymanski and Wells (2013) "Labor Studies: Redefining a College Education" for analysis of this resistance as a "market based calculation" and the unique role labor studies can play as a means of empowerment in the ever-increasing corporatization of a college education.

[6] Students without associate degrees are required by their union to get an associate degree. Those with associate degrees can choose a 20-credit program or to pursue a bachelor's degree.

[7] Countering the resistance to college mentioned earlier, student Patrick Meyers writes in the Breaking Divides exhibit, "… [K]nowledge is power; life is not just about making money." Again see Szymanski and Wells (2013). One student quoted therein stated, "For me college is a way to do the critical thinking I'll need to accomplish moving my family out of poverty" (p. 67).

[8] Along these lines, the exhibit features three texts about the High Line by students Ardam Antonetty (2015), William Cawley and Brandon Kai Chung written for The Political Economy of New York class as they aptly describe the "look but don't touch" ethos of a place that at one time "aid[ed] the working class and the city" but now serves "no practical use other than allowing someone to charge triple the amount for prime real estate" (p. 61).

[9] See fellow colleagues Szymanski and Wells' (2016) Blue-Collar Classroom: From the Individual to the Collective on the kinds of dangers posed by binding skill to wage levels posed to the collective power of workers.

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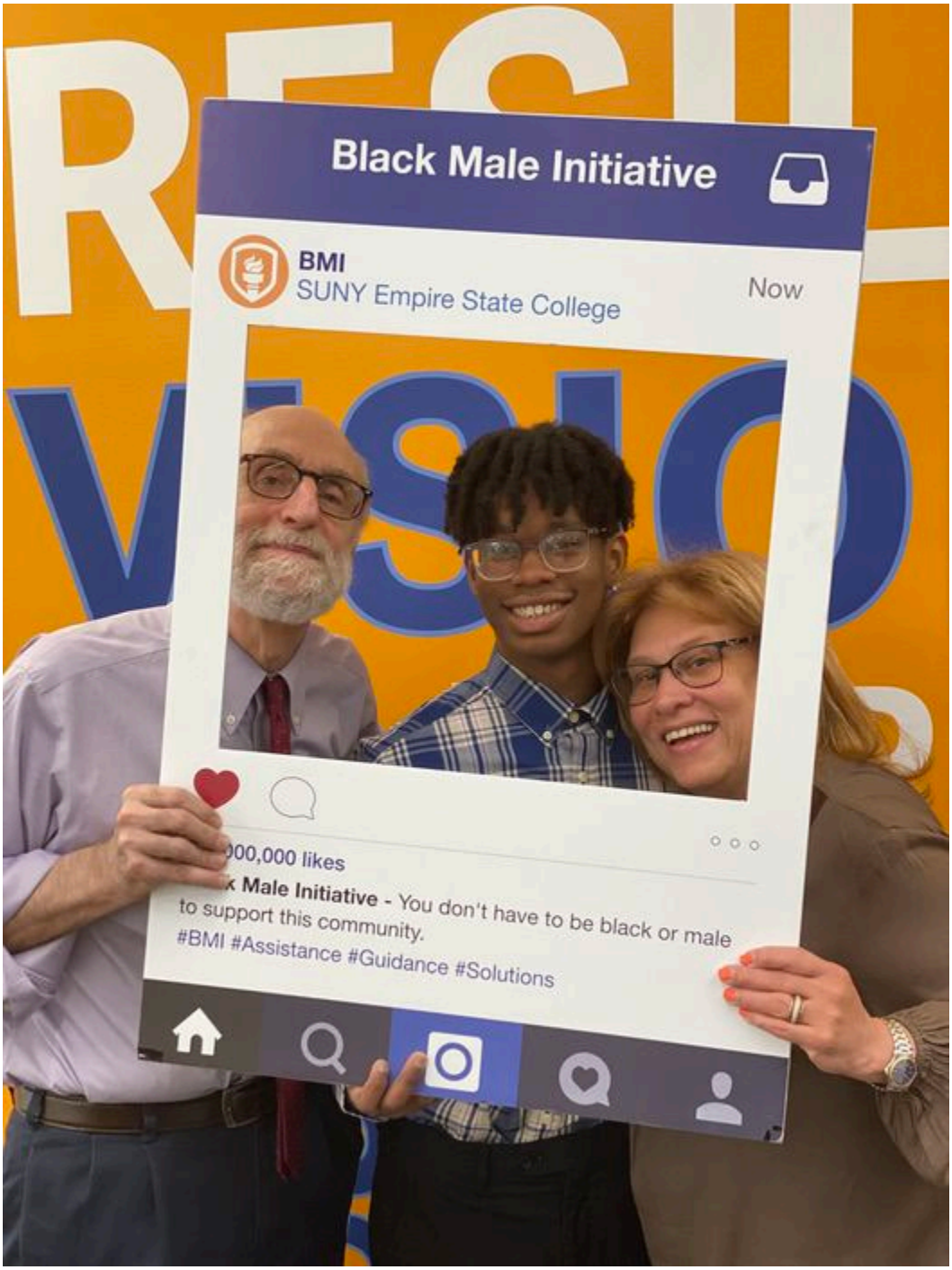
Mentoring and/as Social Activism



Alan Mandell posing for social media in support of the Black Male Initiative.

Alisoun's Daughters: Gender, Transgression and Experiential Learning | By Elana Michelson

Prelude

By the time I got hired by Empire State College, in 1981, I had learned to play verbal football with the best of them. I had come from a world of left-wing rhetorical ostentation where glibness was prized, where knowledge was a weapon, and where successfully shouting other people down was considered a victory. I had learned to be good at it. I didn't know any better.

Growing up, I'd been raised – all too often, the hard way – alongside male intellectuals-in-training who cut their teeth on girls like me. By sixteen, they could shut down any discussion by denouncing the speaker as a counter-revolutionary. By eighteen, they had read Chapter One of C. Wright Mills and could pretend to have memorized all three volumes of Capital. By twenty, they had devised a dozen ways to seize the verbal upper hand and never to have to play rhythm guitar behind Lenin.

Once hired at ESC, I found that there were plenty of folks at the college for whom, like the boys of my youth, communication was a competitive sport. Trade union was my mother tongue, and I'd been hired by the Labor College in its bad old days. My students were professional negotiators who understood the implications of the "contract" in "learning contract." (Three papers? Let's demand one and settle for two.) And my colleagues were masters at it. (What? You think there's another way to do this? Who do you think you are, Big Bill Haywood?) Feeling right at home, I settled into an environment in which being nice to each other was optional and thinking before speaking was rare.

But then, as I slowly got to know people across the college, there was Alan.

Alan and I have now worked closely together for 30 years. We flew around the country doing workshops on PLA for the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL). We led workshops in Canada. We helped organize conferences in the UK. We edited two books and an issue of a journal. But I have never stopped marveling: how does he do it? How does he tell someone in a crowded room that what they've just said is silly, but in a way that makes the person feel seen and embraced? How does he listen quietly at an endless-seeming meeting and then gently say the one thing that ties it all together? How, when the rest of us careen off the walls in outrage at some latest administrative dictum, does he just nod sagely and say, "Interesting"? I have never heard him utter a curse word. I have never heard him raise his voice. I have never stopped learning from him.

Because, of course, the lesson is simple, even though I was never a good-enough student. That thoughtfulness isn't a competitive sport. That you learn more from listening than from talking. That kindness is revolutionary. That wisdom is a by-product of love.

Alan, thank you. I cannot imagine what my career, or my life, would have been without you.

Original Article Published in Issue 28 of All About Mentoring (2004)

Note: Elana Michelson, the 2003 recipient of the Susan H. Turbin Award for Excellence in Scholarship, delivered this talk at the All College Conference in March, 2004.

One of the things I have come to understand in both my scholarship and my work with our students is that the short sentence "I know" is an autobiographical narrative as well as a knowledge claim. So I'm going to start with a bit of my own intellectual history. I started out in college and graduate school having fallen in love with medieval literature. The Middle Ages was a strange infatuation for a New York Jewish red diaper baby in the 1960's, and I've never quite unraveled all the psychic threads that took me there. In any event, I didn't get far as a medievalist. Instead, I began teaching writing in the Union Leadership Program at the Labor College. From there, I was sidetracked from composition to mentoring union leaders in degree program planning and portfolio-development.

The work that I have actually ended up doing as a scholar has been located in what we at the college call credit by evaluation, specifically the question of what it means to "learn from experience." That question, as I have tried to tease out over the years, emerges from a series of prior questions. How is that some knowledges - and some knowers - are given legitimacy and not others? What is the relationship between the subject and object of knowledge? What is the relationship between epistemological authority and other forms of power? Who judges whose knowledge? And on what basis? In whose interest? At whose expense? Those questions have taken me at various times into reading feminist theory, postcolonialism, the critique of the Enlightenment, science studies, queer theory, and theories of situated cognition. And now, the wheel having come full circle, as it were, I am writing a book named for one of the pilgrims in The Canterbury Tales, a middle aged cloth manufacturer named Alisoun whose favorite activities are sex, gossip, travel and self-justification.

Image of Alisoun, Wife of Bath, from original All About Mentoring Article

From the point of view of medieval Christian doctrine, Alisoun - the Wife of Bath - is utterly outrageous. She has been married five times and grown wealthy trading marital favors for control over her husbands' businesses. She lies when it suits her, treats pilgrimages as a pleasant form of packaged tourism, and happily excuses her sexuality on the grounds that "Venus yaf (gave) me my lust" (III:611). Yet she has no hesitation in challenging venerable textual authorities on the grounds that her life has taught her to know better than such preeminent authorities as St. Paul and St. Jerome.

As a medieval set piece, Dame Alisoun is the incarnation of a long tradition of patristic and clerical denunciations of women: garrulous, greedy, scolding, hungry for both money and pleasure, and happy to fight the war between the sexes using either seductiveness or talk. At the same time, as a member of the new middle classes, she has rights of property, ownership and contracts that had become commonplace among the bourgeoisie but that were denied to women in medieval common and canon law (Carruthers 1979). As a woman claiming agency in a highly gendered game of power, as a commodities manufacturer among the feudal estates, and as a loudly opinionated layperson in

an environment still dominated by the Church, Alisoun of Bath is a transitional figure. She is both a medieval cliché and, in effect, English literature's first modern. And the first word she utters in The Canterbury Tales is "experience."

One of the things I have been attempting to trace in my scholarship is the invention of "experience" as a foundational move in the emergence of the modern subject. I believe strongly that how we "learn from experience" is not simply a question of cognitive theory or theories of adult education. Rather, it is a question of understanding the forms of personhood enabled and required by liberal capitalist societies and thus a question of culture and politics. I want to argue that "experiential learning" as such is the product of a particular social and intellectual moment that is personified by Alisoun of Bath. In contrasting experience and "auctoritee" and in insisting that "Experience, though noon auctoritee/ were in this world, is right ynogh for me/ to speke" (III:1-2) Alisoun represents a particular historical moment in which "experiential learning" is an insurgent and transgressive claim.

This afternoon, I want to start with the Wife of Bath as the prototype of the transgressional experiential learner who represents a threat to the ideological and social status quo. But then I want to trace the way in which this threat is tamed so that, in the intervening centuries, "experience," or, rather, the claim to "learn from experience" becomes the new authority. I am going to sketch a good bit of history as briefly as I can, because I also want to raise the question of what this has to do with day-to-day life at Empire State College and what some of the implications of our practices are. Finally, I want to raise the question of how and under what conditions the claim to have "learned from experience" might regain its insurgent and transgressive Alisoun's Daughters: Gender, Transgression and Experiential Learning power. I should say from the start that I think I have some partial answers to most of those questions, but that I do not know the answer to this last one.

In the famous Prologue to her tale, the Wife of Bath lays claim to experience as both a corrective to received truth and an alternative authority. Churchly dogma can say what it likes - that the sole proper use of the genitals is "for purgacioun of uryne," for example - but experience "woot (knows) wel it is noght so" (III:120 124). This not only changes the nature of evidence but also the site from which knowledge can be generated. It is not so much that Alisoun - or Chaucer, for that matter - holds this or that heterodox opinion; rather, what is being reflected here is a new relationship between personal experience and belief. Alisoun's most radical statements are not about sexual license - the Middle Ages could easily accommodate sexual license. They are the claim that "I am expert in al myn age" (III:174) and that "I woot (know) as wel as ye" (III:63).

In insisting that her own life experience provides a corrective to the authoritative texts of Christian doctrine, Alisoun is echoing a broader debate concerning knowledge and interpretation. This is a period of rebellions against both religious and civil authorities: the Great Schism, the Peasants' Revolt, the uprisings to depose both Edward II and Richard II, and, perhaps most significantly, the Wycliffe movement for vernacular translation and lay access to the Bible. Chaucer is writing at an historical moment in which hegemonic ideologies no longer seem to adequately account for people's experienced lives (Leicester, 1990; Knapp 1990). The Canterbury Tales present a variety of individuals holding opinions in contradiction to each other, and the meaning of their tales, like the pilgrims themselves, can no longer be prevented from "wanderynge by the weye" (I:467). This more fluid marketplace of ideas, as it were, is both cause and effect of a second form of fluidity: that of the marketplace itself. As a cloth manufacturer, Alisoun is a participant in the most highly developed capitalist industry of the day, the one that, by the late 14th century, has moved furthest in the

direction of wage labor and a monied economy (Carruthers 1979). What this allows is a subjectivity less "fixed" in and by the medieval social hierarchy. Greater mobility of social status is matched by greater freedom of movement. The fluidity of money matches the fluidity of thought. Seen in this regard, Alisoun is not only championing the rights of her gender, but also those of her class (Paterson 1983).

At the same time, it matters that Alisoun is a woman. In placing the claim that one can learn from experience in the mouth of a female character, Chaucer inscribes "auctoritee" and "experience" as another set of gendered Western dualisms in terms of which knowledge has traditionally be authorized: mind and body, reason and emotion, objectivity and subjectivity, and in the case of the Christian Middle Ages, eternity and history (Michelson 1996a). I have titled the book I am writing Alisoun's Daughters, not only because I am interested in women's knowledge (which I am), but to tease out how knowledge gets legitimated or marginalized for all of us variously gendered beings. By "daughter" I mean the state of being marginalized within - or in rebellion against - epistemological power relations, being subject to the (male, or white, or European, or middle class, or social scientific, or academic) gaze of power of those who claim, as Bell Hooks has written, "to know us better than we can know ourselves" (Hooks 1990:22).

The Knowing Subject

Historically, the use of experience as an alternative authority must be understood as both an epistemological and a political innovation. It is a product of the period in which the individual was being born as an autonomous, rational subject and in which the modern relationships among experience, reason, knowledge and individual liberty were being formulated, initially in Chaucer's day and more fully in the course of the Enlightenment. The knowing subject and the democratic subject not only emerge simultaneously, but are in many ways creations of each other. The right to argue for individual truths becomes foundational to claims for the full range of bourgeois freedoms, from the right to private property to the right to overthrow the king.

Foucault (1979) famously argued that the development of internalized norms - and the categorizations and measurements with which to enforce them - was the underside of the political and judicial framework within which the bourgeoisie arose. While every society has had ways of controlling the body, the management of inner experience became crucial at a point at which the threat of violent coercion was being replaced in some contexts with internalized standards of discipline and self-control. It becomes reason's task to fit "man" into the economic and political order. The relationship of the mind to the unruliness of experience is essentially a power relationship, in which the ability of reason to exercise control mirrors political authority (Michelson 1996b).

In many ways, the key to that internalized power relationship becomes the management of experience. First, experience and reason are set apart as first and second-order activities. According to John Locke, for example, experience is the foundation of all knowledge. "Whence has [the mind] all the materials of reason and knowledge? To this I answer, in one word, from experience" (Locke 1964 [1689]: II, I, 2; emphasis in original). At the same time, for all his valorization of experience, Locke imposes a chronology in which experience, like the female, is seen as a passive resource that must be acted upon (Michelson 1996b). Second, the new forms of experiential knowledge are based on the careful distinction between experience and reason and on closely managing the algorithms for making knowledge out of raw experience. Experimental science, of course, is one obvious

example. Utilitarian economic self-interest is another. More broadly than that, and consistent with it, are new forms of personal and social identity based, not on the unchanging status of birth and blood but on propriety, self-ownership, and the careful distinction between having experience and having the ability to learn from it. Experience has won the battle with authority, but at a price.

What happens to Alisoun's daughters in the meantime? As experiential learning, in the form of enlightened economic self-interest and experimental science, becomes the new authority, the insurgent voice that Alisoun represents becomes subject to new constraints and regulation. The new experiential learner is inscribed as a particular kind of human being, an emphatically male human being, who claims a place in the new world order by vanquishing the irrational and disorderly. It is a nice move. Having been marginalized for centuries through Church dogma as being less capable of virtue, women become associated with irrationality at precisely the moment at which virtue is being replaced by reason as the new ideal.

“On various fronts and across a number of centuries, an extraordinary amount of attention has been placed on excluding different categories of people from the ranks of ‘experiential learners,’ distinguishing between those who can and can’t make meaning from their own experience, and then denying people economic and political rights based on their supposed inability to interpret their own experience.”

The move, in effect, is as follows: now that it is laudatory for men to learn from experience, not only they can, but they are the only ones who can. In the rise of experimental science, "a Canterbury tale" becomes synonymous with an old wives' tale to mean a silly superstition with no experiential foundation or evidence. Thus, Galileo invokes Alisoun's old nemesis, St. Jerome, to dismiss "the chatty old woman" (Reeves 1999) who would presume to practice philosophy or science. Robert Boyle holds his experiments late at night to ensure that women cannot attend (Haraway 1997). The case of Johnannes Kepler is perhaps the most ironic. Kepler claims that "untutored experience . is the mother who gives birth to Science as her offspring" (cited in Reeves 1999:347) while defending his own mother from the charge of witchcraft by calling her a silly and ineffectual old woman who is much too powerless to be a witch.

On various fronts and across a number of centuries, an extraordinary amount of attention has been placed on excluding different categories of people from the ranks of "experiential learners," distinguishing between those who can and can't make meaning from their own experience, and then denying people economic and political rights based on their supposed inability to interpret their own experience. Robert Boyle's writings, for example, eliminate nearly everybody. Only leisured gentlemen of wealth were seen to have the credibility to take part in experiments; women were too dependent, workers too servile, merchants too self-interested, and Catholics too crafty to be trusted witnesses (Shapin 1994). With the emergence of democratic government, the denial of political rights - the withholding of the franchise from women and workers, for example, and the appropriation of the non-European world - was similarly justified by the claim that those whose rights were being denied could not learn from experience. Women's greater emotionality precluded a reasoned understanding of the world and would play havoc with the deliberations of public life

(Gatens 1988). Members of the working classes were children in need of instruction, not adults who could learn from their mistakes (Vicinus 1974). Africans could not make inferences based on experience and observation and thus were incapable of governing themselves (Masolo 1994; Mumbime 1988). Arabs were too backward to understand their own best interests or else too degenerate and lazy to try (Said 1978). A series of social practices arose for the management of the unruly experience of the "Other:" anthropology for the natives, sociology and scientific management for the working class, and medicine and psychiatry for the three closely related categories of women, homosexuals and lunatics.

In one sense, then, the claims of experience that were once foundational to radical changes in the world have come to serve the opposite function. Where once Alisoun's insistence that experience was "right ynogh" was an act of epistemological insurgency, the algorithms we've inherited for making meaning out of experience serve quite conservative functions in the world. They allow us the insights of science, to be sure, and I am not underestimating the importance of that. But they also constrain us as social beings who struggle to make our own experience fit into stable truths and social identities. One might characterize the Enlightenment project as first stealing Alisoun's best lines and then creating a world in which it was again possible to shut her up.

Bringing It Home

Empire State College was founded in a tradition of adult learning that can be traced through the Enlightenment, Romanticism and liberal humanism to the humanistic psychology of the 1960s and early 1970s. While that tradition has evolved over the years, and while this college was founded at a moment in which that tradition was pushing the educational envelop in many ways, our practices and assumptions still have the marks of their origins. We practice a form of experiential learning that presumes:

- an integrated self that, in the proper environment, can explore and articulate its own learning and be empowered in and by the process; and
- a philosophy of learning that holds the unit of learning to be the individual, the organ of learning to be reason, a process called self-reflection in which experience comes first and learning is a second-order activity.

The ideological foundations of Empire State are an interesting and rather contradictory jumble of assumptions concerning, on the one hand, the radical possibilities of "experiential learning" and, on the other, a tendency to cast those possibilities in terms that are more than comfortable to the social and epistemological status quo. The "adult learner" of mainstream U.S. practice is a motley blend of John Locke's rational, self-aware knower; Rousseau's noble savage; Dewey's democratic citizen; and Maslow's authentic, self-authorizing self. If you read Malcolm Knowles (1974), for example, experiential learning is cast in terms of individual choice, self-awareness, freedom, rational self-interest, good old American knowhow and a disembodied knowing mind. If you read Jack Mezirow (1991), you find rational self-reflection and dialogue as the basis for both legitimate experiential learning and the practice of democracy. Moreover, the terms under which experiential learning is legitimated at Empire State College are the same paradoxical terms of the Enlightenment and liberal humanist knower. Students' learning must be the product of individual reason and something we own as owners of ourselves. At the same time, this knowledge must be "transferable" to and meaningful within the knowledge-practices of the mainstream. We "admit" experience, in both senses of the word, but the paradox is that we then

require that experience to be packaged appropriately. Our students thus become subject to the power-effects of the academic gaze. To steal a good line from Simone de Beauvoir, one is not born a student, one becomes one.

Let me use as an example one of Alisoun's daughters who might well be sitting in one of our offices, having just come through a wrenching losing battle for custody of her children. We ask her what she knows that might serve as the basis for credit by evaluation, and she tells a horrific story of her battle with the legal system, tears running down her face. What would we tell her when the conversation came back to the question of credits? We would say, compassionately to be sure, that, to be accredited in an academic context, knowledge has to go beyond the self. Has she read anything about the legal system, perhaps about the double standard for working mothers, or about current trends concerning gender, sexuality and the law? Does she have the broader view? Has she run workshops, perhaps, for other women who could learn from her experience? Moreover, can she separate her rational understanding from the morass of her rage and pain and grief and from the physical sensation of being torn apart when losing custody of her children? We would not say: what is it that your very body is screaming that no judge or legal scholar or feminist theorist of the state can know? And we would probably not ask her - or each other - how the subjugated experience of that daughter of Alisoun could be claimed as an alternative knowledge-base and thus a form of intellectual and social insurgency. We would suggest, implicitly or explicitly, that she distinguish something called "learning" from the totality of what she has been through, and we would make those distinctions through the same binary categories that once marginalized the Wife of Bath: public versus private, reason versus emotion, creditable - and the pun is important - and unaccreditable.

Alisoun's Claims

I must say that I am more than a little torn about talking about this. I think that suspicions concerning the assessment of experiential learning have always been an undercurrent in the college. Some of us have long thought that it is a second-rate practice, something we do to give adults a leg up in getting degrees and fine for things like computer programming or accounting, but with very little legitimacy in liberal arts fields. As Generation X faculty are finally coming into the college in larger numbers, most of you are coming from traditional graduate programs and have come of age in a world in which buzz words such as "access" and "relevance" are no longer very much in the air. Many of us are happy to leave CBE to the assessment professionals and get it off the table as an academic function. All of us have our favorite anecdotes about the sometime shoddiness of our assessment practices. I am afraid of giving ammunition to those of us who, for any and all of those reasons, find experiential learning less than interesting and perhaps even less than respectable.

But I also want to raise these issues because, as many of us know from our scholarly work, Alisoun is at it again. If the insistence that we can learn from experience is at the heart of the world the Enlightenment made, it is also at the heart of the ways in which the meanings of that world are being contested. The claims of experiential learning have again become central to the struggle for a redistribution of social and economic power and epistemological authority. Contending views of what and how we "learn from experience" (Fenwick 2000), the re-examination of the relationship between "reason" and the body (Grosz 1993); and attention to

the politics of knowledge suggest that the meaning of "experience" is again at the center of a widespread and deeply felt debate.

First, greater attention to experience has been claimed both by women and by a variety of cultures as foundational to their particular "ways of knowing" (Gilligan 1982; Collins, 1991; Masolo 1994). In opposition to masculinist and European-normed epistemologies that value abstract observation and technocratic potency, alternative epistemologies also acknowledge the emotional and embodied qualities of knowledge and hold personal testimony and shared experience as epistemologically valuable.

Secondly, the experience of disenfranchised groups has again been used as a corrective to forms of knowledge produced within the social institutions of the powerful. One important aspect of the women's movement, for example, has been to reclaim the knowledge available from "our bodies, ourselves." Similarly, anti-racist and postcolonialist scholarship has challenged the anthropological construction of "primitive minds" in which "for too long our experiences have been told by others, our reality has been claimed by 'foreign' authorship" (Jansen 1991:5). Standing their ground as agents of knowledge, those who have been marginalized by Western knowledge practices are again making Alisoun's claim.

Those claims, to be sure, are not uncomplicated because we are less naïve these days about notions of unmediated access to "raw" experience. Whether we put it in terms of Althusser's ideological state apparatuses, Lacan's unconscious as a displacement of consciousness, or a host of other materialist or postmodernist notions, a lot of people seem to be agreeing these days that, 2,500 years of philosophy aside, we cannot know ourselves. Experience is preconditioned by the mediating influences of language, ideology, structures of power, and received understandings of both self and world.

Caught Between Poles

I find myself caught between two alternating poles that I understand are in some ways mutually exclusive. On the one hand, I want to participate in reaffirming the subjugated knowledge made available through the experience of life in marginalized social categories. On the other, I accept the debunking of any naïve beliefs concerning an authentically experiencing self. There are times at which I am more attracted to or swayed by one of these poles than the other, but it is certainly problematic to hold both views at once. I am thus trying to tease out how "experiential learning" can regain its aura of insurgency and possibility even if we don't take for granted the authenticity and reliability of the experiencing self.

What I have noticed is that there also seems - across many 20th century intellectual perspectives - a kind of hankering after a transgressive space in which experience, or something like it, can stake its claim. What is posited is not so much an authentic self innocent of history and power, but an excess, a residue of something left over that cannot be held captive by social order. It is a space in which transgressive experience can reside. That space is variously called the unconscious, carnival, border-crossing, hybridity. It is a liminal space in which binary categorizations break down into a kind of epistemological cross-dressing. It is a space that cannot be tamed by reason, that is not fully transparent to itself, and that cannot be accounted for through notions of socialization and hegemony.

Interestingly, this notion of an untamed space is still associated with Alisoun, that is, with the female, and with feminist critiques of binary logic and the "mastery" of reason. It is what Emma Goldman meant when she said "If I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution."[3] It is what Audre Lorde (1984:110) meant when she said that the master's tools will never demolish the master's house. It is what Judith Butler (1991) means when she says that gender is a kind of performance art and that there is something interesting left over between the acts. It is what Luce Irigaray (1985) means when she says that woman is the return of the repressed, offering a subversive, erotic boundarilessness in which inside and outside cannot be distinguished and that patriarchical discourse cannot represent or contain. It is what I mean when I say that I want Alisoun back, and not just because I have fallen in love again with the Middle Ages. "To speak as a woman means to undo the reign of the 'proper' - the proper name, property, propriety, self-proximation. It means to evoke rather than designate, to overflow and exceed all boundaries and oppositions" (Grosz 1989:132.) It is to say, outside of stable meanings, with Alisoun, that experience, though no authority were in this world, is right enough for me to speak.

Notes

[1] All quotations are from The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (1957) F.N. Robinson, (Ed.), second edition. Cambridge, MA: Houghton Mifflin.

[2] Chaucer's own view of the Wife of Bath has long been debated by critics, with her various characteristics and assertions read as so much evidence of his view. While I agree with those who argue that she should be read as an aspect of the contentious social realm of the 14th century and not as a sinner within Christian typology, I am less concerned with taking a position than I am with using the terms on which it rests. As Peggy Knapp argues, "The issue at stake is not what Chaucer intended, but how texts interact with the social formations within which they function" (1990:17). The critical debate itself is itself the mirror image of the Tales as what Knapp calls a "boundary text, one whose environment holds more than one configuration of power contending for preeminence as the fundamental way for its society to see life" (8).

[3] There is some controversy about whether or not Emma Goldman ever actually said those words. I, for one, hope she did and am content to believe she said them. The world is better for having the utterance, even if apocryphal.

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"Mentoring at ESC has involved the student and faculty person in a relationship in which the answer to the question: 'Who knows what about what and based on what?' is not immediately known."

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 16, Spring 1999

My Creative Process | By Raul Manzano

Prelude

"My Creative Process," the piece I contributed to All About Mentoring, issue 56, holds a deep personal and professional significance for me. At the time of writing, it was a reflection on my journey as an artist and educator, a journey that was and continues to be deeply intertwined with the ethos of Empire State College, now a university. The institution's foundation was built on the idea of challenging the conventional norms of academia, much like how my creative process has always been about stepping outside the traditional boundaries of art and intellectualism.

In his editorial to that issue, Alan eloquently captured this spirit by highlighting how the college questioned the entrenched power dynamics within academia, particularly the role of the professor as the sole authority on knowledge. This resonated with me because, like the institution, I have always felt like an outsider, never quite fitting into the theoretical stereotype. My creative process, as discussed in my piece, has always been about embracing this outsider status—about venturing into the unknown, experimenting, and embracing the possibility of failure as a pathway to innovation.

Reflecting on my relationship with Alan, I recall he once said to me, "Raúl, I know you, but I don't know you," a statement that marked the beginning of a deeper mutual understanding. Over the years, our exchanges—whether about art, exhibitions, students or broader inquiries—have been a testament to the importance of dialogue and open-mindedness, qualities that Alan embodies. His ability to listen and offer impartial perspectives has been invaluable, encouraging me to continue thriving and pushing the boundaries of my work.

Looking back, the creative process described in the article is not just about making art; it's about continuous learning and transformation—values that both Alan and Empire State University have championed. Today, as I mentor students, I carry forward these lessons, helping them to embrace the unknown and understand that creativity is a journey, not a destination. In this way, the piece remains as relevant now as it was then, a reflection of a shared commitment to fostering innovation and challenging the status quo.

Original Article Published in Issue 56 of All About Mentoring (2024)

Raul Manzano.

At the All-College Conference in April 2021, a session called "Creative Expressions: Visual Arts" offered colleagues an opportunity to describe their individual works. Colleague Raúl Manzano provided these reflections on his "creative process."

For some artists, creativity requires a great deal of isolation, concentration, self-determination, and dedication. The proper studio facilities are also conducive to the artist producing the work envisioned. This environment away from the mundane world is essential for the stages of creativity to flourish and materialize the idea,

the process, and the product (Figure 1). As an art practitioner, I treasure my own studio space because I can reflect, develop, and grow. When all these elements come together for me, there is no limit to what I can create. In this essay, I will share my approach to and process for creating my paintings, what informs me, and my habits.

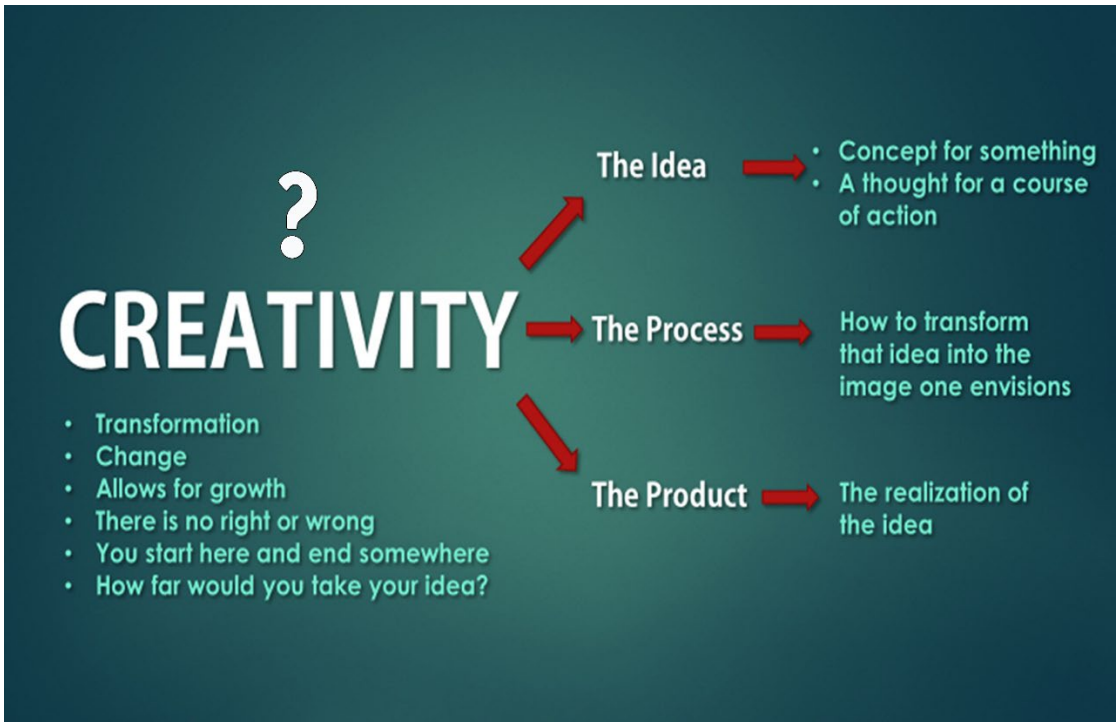

Figure 1

Where do my inspiration and thoughts come from? Is there a message implied in my work? Or do I paint for leisure? All these variables are important as they provide content and context for ideas and establish my routine. For example, I look at the news and social media, read newspapers and magazine articles, write notes, take photographs, and observe everything around me. Each one of these sources may provide a spark that leads to an idea and then a project.

Once I have an idea for a painting, I start developing a concept by doing thumbnail sketches in my sketchbook, sometimes on post-its, pieces of paper, or whatever may be handy. Then, I put all these thoughts into a drawing that I use to create a smaller version of the painting on a canvas. This gives me a visual representation and a sense of what the painting may look like. Other times, I may choose to work directly from the final drawing. When I need references for my images, I ask friends to pose for me or I photograph myself, as I did for my paintings Fearless as shown in Figure 2, Grieving in Figure 3 and Black Lives Matter in Figure 4. For the final sketch of the painting Black Lives Matter, I combined traditional drawing practice and Photoshop. I took a selfie holding a baking pan, which became the statue's tablet, and used Photoshop to design, add color, and write the text on the tablet as well as superimpose the statue's face over my face to get the proportions and the effect I sought.

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Practice and research are my rituals, a process I learned early on during my art formation and have continued to exercise. This approach helps me clarify ideas as well as add or remove information before I begin the actual work. Changes also may occur during the painting stages since other thoughts may emerge during the process. Although this method may sound too academic and less experimental, the results are rewarding, for I can see how an idea evolves, changes, and grows. Furthermore, the process instills habits and techniques in my artistic practice, and it serves to document my work.

I take photographs on my iPhone during a painting session or at the end of the day for review. Often, the camera picks up areas the human cannot discern. This tool has been useful to create more accurate images. I also look through a handheld mirror and/or turn the painting upside down to see it from different angles where distortions are sometimes subtle to perceive.

Inquiry and common sense play integral roles in my process of creativity. Ideas sometimes go far beyond the original intention, opening opportunities for artistic exposure and scholarly and commercial recognition. For example, my painting, Grieving, was selected for the media publicity announcement and exhibition catalog cover for the "Unprecedented: Art Responds to 2020"- juried exhibition I participated in at the View Center for Arts and Culture in Old Forge, New York, in 2021 (see Figure 5). Another example of this creative process from idea to final product is shown in Figures 6 and 7 for the poster at my virtual exhibition, "Our America! — ¡Nuestra América!" at SUNY Empire State University in celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month in September-October 2021.

Figure 5

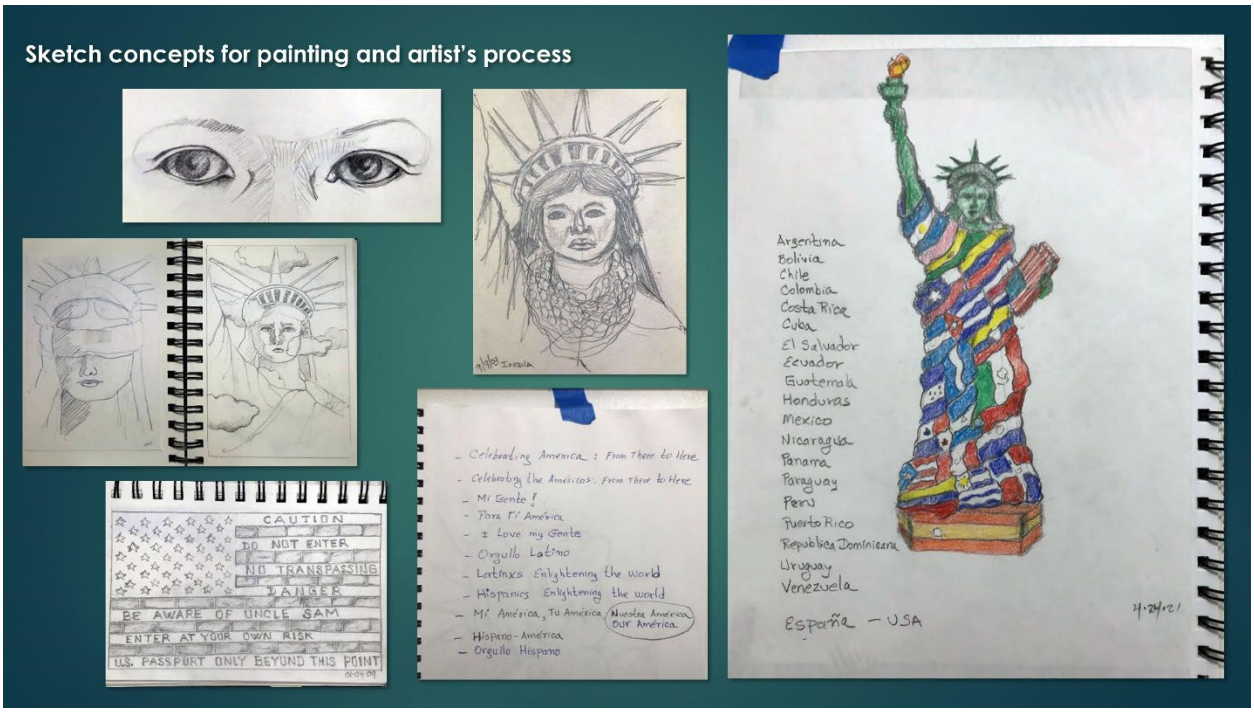

Figure 6

Figure 7

Naming a painting is also part of the creative process. Having a concept title in mind helps me visualize and organize my ideas. For this, there are different ways I arrive at a title. Most times, I title a painting when it is finished. My preference is a short name or even one word, but that also depends on the meaning or purpose of the painting. Other times, I scribble notes and make a list of possible titles based on the subject. This process is similar to doing quick thumbnail sketches. I find this process valuable as thoughts can escape the mind quickly. If I don't have a title for the painting, I write potential titles when the painting is finished and then do an elimination process until I arrive at the proper title. I also ask friends what the painting should be titled. If they don't come up with any options, I share my list with other folks to see if those titles appeal to them. During the pandemic, I did a survey via email with the help of my colleague, Dr. Lisa D'Adamo-Weinstein at the live virtual presentation of *Creative Expressions*. Viewers were asked what the title of the painting should be. They received a visual image and information about the painting. Participants submitted titles and the title was selected via a survey based on the higher number of votes. I find titling a painting essential because it reflects the process that went into the work and adds meaning and

content for audiences. Moreover, a title gives character and identity to the artwork. I believe leaving a painting untitled feel like a parent leaving his or her child unbaptized.

Even though I enjoy creating realistic images, painting to me is more than rendering a picture. Painting is a medium of communication. Moreover, painting implies knowledge of history, how the world was shaped, and what techniques and how they developed throughout the centuries. This artistic discipline dates to early civilization. Art historian Henry Sayre (2010) stated, "The emergence of La Pittura ["Painting," a 15th-century figure] announced that painting was finally something more than mere copy work, that it was an intellectual pursuit equal to the other liberal arts …" (p. 220). With this approach in mind, I seek to create art that provokes thought and encourages social change. Social change brings awareness to people's rights, self-empowerment, and education.

"An artist must be able to resolve uncertainties through trial and error to formulate results because the pattern of doing something consistently is what gives me pleasure in the outcomes. However, not every idea will turn into a masterpiece. Nonetheless, the learning experience and discoveries of the process of painting are priceless since they lead to other innovative and creative notions."

While artists have different methods and styles for their creative work, having a habit or routine helps organize the thought process and the development of a concept even if the results are different from the original idea. This is what makes creativity unique. An artist must be able to resolve uncertainties through trial and error to formulate results because the pattern of doing something consistently is what gives me pleasure in the outcomes. However, not every idea will turn into a masterpiece. Nonetheless, the learning experience and discoveries of the process of painting are priceless since they lead to other innovative and creative notions. This is what energizes my creative process. Creativity not only provides artists (and non-artists) with positive intellectual pursuits. It also transforms the human soul, mind, and spirit to a higher level of consciousness and joy.

Notes

--See the "Unprecedented" exhibition at https://www.viewarts.org/exhibitions/past-exhibitions/unprecedented-art-responds-to-2020/.

--View Manzano's virtual SUNY Empire exhibition at https://www.esc.edu/our-america/.

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"The Struggle to be Critically Conscious": Two Mentors in Conversation | By Frances Boyce and Shantih Clemans

Prelude: Frances Boyce

I am honored to contribute to this collection commemorating Alan Mandell (the mentors' mentor). In the early 2000's, college graduation rates disaggregated by race were published for the first time. It showed that students of color were afforded access to a college education but few left with a degree. There was a call for economists to investigate the reasons behind this outcome. This transformed my career and research as I shifted to focus on educational attainment equity for people of color. The most challenging part was it required me to discuss race and bias publicly for the first time in my life. As I made this transition, I had my village which included Alan.

The article I wrote with Shantih Clemans was the first non-data driven piece I had written regarding race. As an economist, I used data to prove the veracity of my points; for this article I expressed my thoughts and beliefs. Shantih and I reflected on teaching cultural competency and diversity in the workplace to students who were not the same color as ourselves. We based the article on the format from Breaking Bread, by bell hooks and Cornel West. The result was an open, honest discussion of two women of different races and sexual identities. It was the first time I openly shared my thoughts and opinions in writing.

I discussed my experience teaching a course on biases encountered in the workplace to many students who had not had this issue. One of the biggest hurdles in teaching this course is the notion that "I am not biased" or "I treat everyone the same." Unconscious bias occurs in the prefrontal cortex of the brain; it is a basically a mental shortcut to make decisions. It is a process that happens so quickly there is no conscious awareness of it. I had the freedom to express my beliefs that deep personal introspection and sitting with discomfort are required to combat bias.

The article Shantih and I wrote represents the kind of interesting collaborations that Alan found exciting and facilitated in All About Mentoring. It was in this publication that I was given the opportunity to expand and grow.

Alan also invited me to participate in another project: Access, Identity and Power in American Higher Education. It was a webinar series with eight speakers that spanned two years. The response piece I wrote, "Equity is not Sameness," afforded me another opportunity to discuss my perspectives on power and knowledge. I could touch upon my work and research in the use of credit for prior learning as a tool for degree attainment equity. This series demonstrated Alan's commitment to addressing issues that can be uncomfortable and creating space for those discussions.

I would be remiss not to mention the Keep-Mills grant my project partner Cathy Leaker and I received for our Women of Color Prior Learning Assessment workshop series. Alan urged us to apply and the funding allowed us to run the workshops and pay our writing coach for another academic year.

Alan had many critical roles at Empire: All About Mentoring, CMLAI, the Keep-Mills grant and has used all of them to highlight issues of racial inequity and bias. They became platforms for me (and many others) to express our full identities. To Alan a heartfelt thank you.

Original Article Published in Issue 47 of All About Mentoring (2015)

This article is the result of a conversation we had about our perspectives and experiences on race, racism, privilege and identity in the practice of our mentoring and teaching at SUNY Empire State College. This project also is about collaboration and the power of dialogue.

Frances Boyce (left) and Shantih Clemans (right), 2015. Photograph taken by Jared Stone-Rigg.

Deciding to Talk

Shantih Clemans: Frances and I had gotten to know each other a little bit over the last year and connected around talking about the complicated subjects of race and racism, particularly how race as a construct comes up in our teaching and at the college. I had recently read the book Breaking Bread, by bell hooks and Cornel West (1991). It is a conversation where a black man and a black woman talk about what it means to be a black intellectual. hooks and West don't necessarily agree in this book; that is the point of it. I liked the conversation format and wanted to do something similar with Frances. I was really interested in talking openly and honestly about a silent subject: race. I wanted to talk to Frances, a woman of color. I am a white woman and I thought Frances and I could learn from each other. I also wanted to expand the discussion to include other aspects of identity. For example, I am a lesbian and Frances is heterosexual. I wondered how we experience these two identities in our teaching and mentoring.

At the same time, I was teaching a study group, Cultural Competency in Human Services. Week after week, I was struck by the complexity of my role in this class – a white woman mentor – nearly all of the students in this group, and almost all of my students at the Brooklyn Unit, are women of color, mostly from the Caribbean. I wanted to talk about the dynamic I strongly felt of being the "white person in power" in a room of women of color who do not necessarily experience power in their everyday lives. I also wanted to talk to Frances about her experiences teaching what I thought were mostly white students. I wanted to know what it was like for her.

Frances Boyce: The reason I wanted to start this project stems from Shantih's project on mentoring in groups last year. This was a reassignment through the Center for Mentoring and Learning where Shantih interviewed mentors about teaching and mentoring practices, struggles and challenges. [Shantih's report can be found at http://cml.esc.edu/programs/ CML_reassignments_2013_2014.] As she interviewed me, this unusual intersection of our teaching became clear. We are in different areas of study but teach a similar topic: in Business, Management and Economics (BME), it is the Diversity Management study, and in Community and Human Services (CHS), it is Cultural Competency. One important addition to this context is that we both teach the topic to students who are primarily different colors from us. I was eager to have this conversation because discussions on race and how to teach topics of diversity can be uncomfortable. I felt that both Shantih and I could sit with any discomfort and have a deep conversation. In many ways, racial issues can imply judgment; to step back from that takes practice, commitment and a sense of security in the conversation. In my opinion, to move toward a world with less bias, each person must be deeply introspective and honest about his or her bias. I do not believe there is ever a moment when I say I am not biased because the work to be without bias is ongoing.

We decided to have a planned conversation with the hope that our talk would lead to a more honest dialogue about identity and mentoring. We talked on the phone and recorded the conversation. Shantih then transcribed the recording and we both reviewed it and pulled out parts that seemed especially meaningful. We also reflected on what the conversation meant to us.

Our Conversation

S.C.: It's very nice to have this conversation. I was thinking of a question from the book *Breaking Bread* by bell hooks and Cornel West (1991). bell hooks asks something like: "What does it mean to engage in a collaborative process?" I got the idea that we are sort of doing the same thing. Maybe that is a good way to start our conversation. I was thinking one of the reasons why I wanted to have a conversation and write this article was that mentors don't talk enough about differences, especially race and gender, as these factors influence us and our teaching. I think we are on to something.

F.B.: I agree with you completely. I don't think we talk about race at all in a comfortable way. It is complicated to talk about.

S.C.: I was thinking about teaching Cultural Competency to a group of mostly black women students as a white faculty member, and you teaching your diversity studies as a faculty member of color – maybe our experience as women are different; maybe similar. What is hard and what is easy for you in teaching Diversity Management?

F.B.: I think the things that are easy for me are areas where I am part of the dominant culture. So when it's religion, because I am Christian; sexual orientation, because I am heterosexual. It's those areas that are easier in the conversation, because there is no concern about my interpretation, because I am dominant or that's the perspective of the student. When is it easier for you?

S.C.: I think that it is interesting when you say that, when we talk about heterosexism, as a lesbian, that is when it is really hard. I am not in the dominant group anymore. I always come out to my students … not in a big way, not like making a big announcement, but I may mention my partner, my kids, that we are a two-mom family. I notice that my students are hesitant, they may feel homophobic about something, they are unsure about their feelings. I always feel that fear in my gut, that the students will not want to say something honest, or they will say something hurtful and heterosexist, forgetting that they may insult me. On the other hand, I want them to be honest; I don't want them to protect me. I think they don't want to talk about "white people this" or "white people that" with me in the room, as their teacher. I would not say that it is uncomfortable per se, but I am conscious of it. They are afraid of being honest about white people because I am there.

F.B.: I think it is a really difficult thing because I have a race that is not readily identifiable, so there are times when we get to discuss the Asian population when the students can see clearly that is not me, that is not my race, so they loosen up a little bit. But it is really challenging to get to the point where they feel comfortable, and I always talk about the fact that we all have biases, even if we think we don't, we all do. So I have started using a YouTube video on the neuroscience of implicit bias [available at https://www.youtube. com/watch?v=kzz5Ae-Jq0s#t=47], so it sort of takes away the judgment and lets people see that it is this chemically ingrained response in their brain. This is my first term using it. I am hoping that eases some of the tension in saying what you are.

S.C.: I think a similar thing happened in my study group this term. Many of my students toward the end of the term talked about what they got out of the study. Students overwhelming said, "as a black woman … I never thought I was racist, I never thought I had biases against gay people …" or whatever, but they learned how to identify their biases through being in the study group and I thought, "That's great!" As hard as it is, I thought, that is really great.

F.B.: It is interesting because I had one student last term, a black woman, and she recognized through the course that she had been biased toward one of her co-workers, and she had this incredible emotional response because she knows what it is like to be treated with bias, and realized that she had treated someone else in that manner. And what came to the student is that she would like to design her research project around what happened here. The student went to the woman (her co-worker) and said, "Would you be OK if I did my research project on our experience?" The co-worker agreed and the end result was really interesting.

S.C.: What is the research assignment that your students in this study have to do?

F.B.: I want them to research a group they know nothing about. They need to understand the biases and prejudices of that group. In this example, it was a Hindu woman and this student did not know anything about the Hindu faith, or about the prejudice they face or anything. This actually was a beautiful thing, because the Hindu woman said to my student: "Let me introduce you to my faith … so you can get an understanding. …" Even how children are named in that faith is very important. It was really an incredible moment for me.

S.C.: That is really amazing! I really appreciate hearing that. It sounds like this student had an aha moment. Do you require your students to research a group that they know nothing about?

F.B.: Yes.

S.C.: In my study, I require an interview but I have not been brave enough to say, "You have to do something you know nothing about," so many of my students interview someone they know, someone who is the same or different, Next time, maybe I will say, "You have to interview someone from a group you know nothing about." I like that idea.

F.B.: Generally, I don't pick topics for my students. I like students to go through the process of picking out a topic on their own, with my help, but sometimes a student will say something and I may say, "That is something for you to research and we will discuss further." There have been a few times … part of it is that I don't fully step out of my human response and I am thinking, "What you just said is really a problem. And it indicated that you have some things that you don't understand." I think this is one of the reasons why people don't explore what their biases are; they don't recognize they have them.

S.C.: I think you are right. In CHS, there really is an emotional component in identifying one's biases. It is painful, for me and for the students. Some students don't want to go down that path or they are not in the right environment where it is going to feel safe and supported, so I am not surprised that people don't recognize their racism; it is painful.

F.B.: One of the things that I feel I am trying to show students is that people in general make so many decisions about people's careers and lives and people are making these decisions based on biases, and you are affecting somebody else's life, whether they get a job, whether they get a promotion, whether they get a raise – it can lead to so many other things.

S.C.: There are so many parallels to something that you just said. Many of my students in CHS are working in substance abuse, working with families, working in shelters and we talk about similar things – not so much about hiring and firing, but about how their biases are going to influence how you work with this client, whether you provide service to this family who walked in the door, your assumptions about what this person needs. One's biases really do affect how someone is treated in employment or the services they are getting. I see a lot of parallels.

F.B.: It is really interesting because one of my students also from last term is a white woman who is on public assistance and she talked about her experience going into the waiting room of the public assistance office and how people looked at her like, "Why are you here?" Because she looks like the stereotypical, "We think you should be fine" person – she is white, she is blond, she's got blue eyes, and "she should be fine." She had a really different perspective on things. And she was really stunned; it was really interesting how she approached her project.

S.C.: That is interesting: so she had privilege in one way and invisibility in another way. How the subjects of human diversity and cultural competency are addressed in our respective areas of study is something Frances and I discussed next. We had a lot of similarities and differences. Perception is impactful and pervasive in all types of human interaction, whether the interaction is in a business setting, social service or personal, the first impression impacts behavior. There are many studies that demonstrate discrimination in hiring practices. The wage gap for women is openly discussed. However, in teaching business, the discussion of diversity is isolated in one study. It actually impacts many areas of business.

S.C.: Does BME require diversity studies?

F.B.: Yes. It is driven by the industry. In 2000, when they did the census, we learned that the demographics were shifting and there would not be enough white men graduating from college … to fill all available jobs. So you need to start to train your upcoming workforce on how to deal with a diverse workforce. Diversity is there, but because it is a response to the changing demographics of a changing population.

S.C.: In your mentees' degree plans, what are some examples of studies they take in BME to fulfill that guideline?

F.B.: Basically it is either Diversity Management or Diversity in the Workplace.

S.C.: In CHS, we have six guidelines and it was only recently that "Diversity," as a separate guideline, was added. I always have students figure out a specific study. I am happy to have this requirement, but I also want diversity content to be infused in everything. Do we assume studies are all from one perspective? Maybe, but it shouldn't be.

F.B.: It is interesting. One of my colleagues said to me: "If you don't understand diversity, you don't understand how to do your job." She was actually the first person who was reading the Derald Wing Sue books (Sue & Sue, 2012) and saying, "You should actually take a look …" because cultural diversity has implications everywhere.

S.C.: Yes! The way that I have taught diversity, whether it is right or wrong, I don't know, and you and I have talked about this – that it is more about the student, it is an internal process that happens

through being self-aware and recognizing your own biases. It is not, "Oh this group does this, and this group does that." Seeing the internal transformation that can happen – and it does not always happen – but that is something that will hopefully stay with the student.

We talked extensively about self-awareness. It is through that struggle for self- awareness of our biases that leads us to a deeper understanding of who we are and the people around us. There is a quote from Breaking Bread that makes sense to our conversation: "That the struggle to be critically conscious can be that movement which takes you to another level, that lifts you up, that makes you feel better … " (hooks & West, 1991, pp. 16-17).

The idea is that one must struggle, but through that struggle you grow as a person. The previous section is framed around the belief we share of the importance of self-awareness. Without that, it is difficult to recognize biases.

Diversity is an important aspect of student learning and what we think about as mentors. It is crucial to students to know that mentors believe they can be successful at college. For marginalized students, that may be more impactful due to the level of microaggressions they experience in everyday life, and the subtle interpreted messages that higher education is where the student belongs.

Our Conversation Continues

F.B.: It is interesting. I think a lot about prejudice. We have always looked at prejudice and thought we have to fix other people. I don't believe that. You have to look inside yourself. You have to be brutally honest about your words and our actions and about how you go forward. I used to call it "passive racism" because that was just a term I gave it, but reading about implicit bias, this is what I meant, and sort of seeing neuroscience to back it up, and this is what I am talking about. Now there is a word that goes along with what you were thinking.

S.C.: I think that the "Women of Color" PLA [prior learning assessment] project is one of the first things that you and I talked about. It was really interesting when you talked about the fact that it is really is so important for women of color to do PLAs. I did not know then that women of color who do PLAs are more likely to graduate. It was really exciting. Because of that conversation, I have been encouraging my students – who are all women of color, as we know – to do PLAs. I really feel that because of you and Cathy Leaker [associate dean, Metropolitan Center] and your collaborative project, my eyes were opened to how meaningful the PLA process can be. Just having a mentor say: "Have you thought about PLA?" And the student saying, "Me? I don't have anything to offer." It was an interesting, eye-opening experience for me.

F.B.: Cathy Leaker and I started this project, "Women of Color: Valuing Experience, Identifying Learning" in 2011. One of my biggest issues and challenges personally doing the project was that I did not have an adult vocabulary or an academic vocabulary to talk about race. I moved to an all-white town when I was 7, so I had sort of this stunted vocabulary about race, and that had to sort of evolve and grow. And actually realizing and figuring out a way to articulate feelings about race, there has actually been a lot of research done. I was just busy with other things. One of the things I have been thinking about recently is that one of the reasons I think doing PLA is so impactful – and I don't have anything to back it up, it's just an idea I had – is that we are looking at people who are coming to the college who didn't think they would fit in an academic setting. They didn't have the feeling they would belong, and you have an academic person saying, "I think that knowledge you already have is college-level and worthy of college credit" – I think that helps them feel more

connected to the college, more connected to the idea that they are part of this. When you talk about how much it costs to do PLA … how much does it cost to change a person's view of themselves?

S.C.: That is priceless.

F.B.: Yeah. We have seen some women come back to us. It has taken them maybe longer to do PLA, but part of the reason is because they felt empowered in other areas of their lives, they came back and said, based on the PLA workshop series saying: "I went out and got a new job, because I wasn't being treated well where I was working."

S.C.: I don't think we always see the results. There can be things that happen down the road, for example, students also learn self-confidence and the ability to go after something else. So are you going to continue to do the project?

F.B.: Yes. The problem is that we don't have time to write and go to conferences and do the project. There is just not enough time to do it all. Our conversation moved to related topics of gender and sexual orientation.

S.C.: One thing we did not yet touch on in this conversation is gender: maybe we view the colleagues who are women a certain way, maybe we perceive them differently for being women, how talkative they are, how strong they are. I am always conscious of gender issues in the college.

F.B.: Yes, among the women. I notice that people do not respond well to a strong female voice. Even women don't always respond well to it.

S.C.: Women are often the ones challenging any notion of feminism; it is often the women who are threatened by this.

F.B.: I ask my students, "Are you a feminist?" And when they say no, I say, "Let's Google what that means" and I have them read the definition and I ask them what part they disagree with.

S.C.: I do the same thing. I ask my students: "What part of women's equality do you disagree with?" I really feel not wanting to identify as feminist is connected to students feelings that if they love or even like men, they can't be a feminist.

F.B.: Yes and it means "If I am a feminist it means I am a lesbian." And that connection is made and people think, "Oh no there must be something really wrong if people think you are a lesbian!" So they think you should be fearful of this and you better say you are not a feminist.

S.C.: It is really rooted in our broader culture.

F.B.: This is an area where I can say, "You are stepping away from everything that will benefit you so someone won't judge you. I ask my students: What would happen if somebody judged you for being a lesbian?"

S.C.: Yes, exactly. Even in this last year, in the Cultural Competency study that we talked about in the beginning of our conversation, my women students had to read bell hooks, so many of them selected hooks' (2004) book, *The Will to Change: On Men and Masculinity*, and they loved it. However, it struck me as noteworthy that all of the women wanted to read about changing men and it wasn't so much direct fear of being thought of as lesbian – that did not come up directly – but I think the students felt more connected to challenging notions of patriarchy because they are more

connected to men and male culture in their families and their lives. As women, they are part of a patriarchal cultural.

F.B.: Yes, this goes along with my thinking on prejudice: people feel we can fix other people, but it is much harder to look at yourself.

S.C.: This conversation was great, Frances. I really enjoyed talking to you.

F.B.: I loved it.

Reflecting on Our Conversation

After we each read the transcripts of our conversation, we wrote a reflection on what the conversation meant to us and what our reactions were to reading the conversation in its transcript form.

F.B.: As we discussed the challenges we face teaching these studies, I felt a strong kinship with Shantih. While the challenges we face are different, the need we each feel to empower students to address the difficult issues is similar. We had the opportunity to share ideas on engaging students. In reading the transcript, I was struck again by the openness of the conversation and the feeling that this was just the beginning. We touched on so many areas that I felt we could explore in more depth.

S.C.: I was excited before Frances and I spoke. I also was a little nervous. Even though talking about race is something I do often (and certainly something I think about all the time), I was conscious of the ease in which I can talk openly about this subject and of my privilege as a white woman. I also asked myself if I really do engage in open conversation about race or do I just think or hope that I do? During the conversation, I felt an immediate connection to Frances. I also was careful to stay open to our different perspectives and experiences, as well. I knew right way that we had tapped into themes that are not often spoken about between mentors, for instance, racism, bias, and especially a white woman and a woman of color in open conversation about identity.

Closing Thoughts

We see this as both a beginning of a longer conversation and something powerful and meaningful in and of itself. Talking together across difference is powerful.

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Continuum of Support: Development and Implementation of a Postgraduate Mentorship Program at the Black Male Initiative (BMI): A Very Brief Practice Discussion | By David Fullard

Prelude

I consider myself blessed and highly favored by the powers that be to have had the opportunity to work closely with Dr. Alan Mandell for over 25 years!

Alan Mandell looking at a birthday cake for David Fullard.

When I first arrived at Empire State College in 1998, Alan was one of the faculty members responsible for hiring me to replace Dr. Jane Dahlberg. As you know, the learning curve here at Empire State University is steep and often quite complex. To address this, I adopted Alan as my personal mentor. As time went by, I discovered that my selection of someone to learn from and emulate could not have been more perfect.

Alan and I have shared students over the years. I've always felt secure in pairing my students with Alan, since across the board, these students have reported the same thing over and over. They state that Dr. Mandell made them feel comfortable and at home. Most important, though, was that they all stated that they felt respected by Dr. Mandell. Ultimately, they said that they were able to learn more than they expected from Dr. Mandell. Feeling comfortable, feeling at home, feeling respected: these are the characteristics that enable a student to learn and to learn deeply.

As I have noted, the learning curve here at Empire State University is steep and often quite complex. Over the years I have called upon Alan to explain certain things to me about the college and about pedagogy that, I believe, has made me a better educator. One of the things that fascinates me the most about Alan is his ability to always make time for someone who needs help. No matter how busy he is, you're never ever turned away. Alan, despite being one of the hardest working people at Empire State University, will always make time for you. Like the students, I have always felt deeply respected by Alan. I value not only our collegiate relationship, but I deeply value my friendship with Alan.

Dear Alan, although you are retiring from the university, I will continue to call on you for guidance. I deeply appreciate our relationship here at the university and will value it for the rest of my life. I feel incredibly fortunate to have benefited from your wisdom and guidance since I first arrived at Empire State University, and I hope to carry your legacy forward.

Godspeed to you. Enjoy your retirement. And please continue to take my phone calls and respond to my emails!

I love you like a brother.

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A Continuum of Support

David Fullard.

So, we have mentored our students competently, overcome the historically high dropout rate for this group, and gotten them to the point of actually graduating, thanks to the unique support provided by the various facets of the SUNY Black Male Initiative (BMI) and Fortified Classroom programs at Empire State College. Is this where it ends? Does the relationship end? Does the mentoring end?

For us it doesn't. Although the majority of our students are employed, they are not necessarily in an upwardly mobile career. Now that they have graduated and possess a newly minted degree that was earned through blood, sweat, and tears, it is now time to move to the next stage of development in our social justice model of providing services to students who historically have been underserved, by creating a new Post-Graduate Mentorship Program.

A Post-Graduation Continuum of Support

The next step, as I see it, is to expand our social responsibility and social justice initiatives to include ongoing mentorship post-graduation. This expansion of our overall initiatives involves providing standard career and professional development practices such as assisting students in developing a *professional résumé* and enhancing their *speaking and interviewing skill set*. But we go beyond that, to support graduates in not merely obtaining a job – any job – but rather focusing on developing a career path that has a route to advancement. Through their experience in BMI, and by taking advantage of various facets of the Post-graduate Mentorship Program, these young workers can envision and create an employment trajectory with progressive growth, not just take a series of dead-end jobs.

"The next step, as I see it, is to expand our social responsibility and social justice initiatives to include ongoing mentorship post-graduation."

Indeed, we have taken professional development support a step further. Currently, we are reaching out to Fortune 500 companies, smaller private companies, civil service, as well as non-governmental organizations to tell them the unique story of BMI and the Fortified Classroom. I was quite surprised that many people were interested in hearing about the success of African-American students and were willing to assist them in not just finding a job but starting a vocation with potential for upward mobility. These organizational connections will allow BMI/ESC to make positive, effective referrals to match graduates with career avenues suited to their skills and interests, while providing employers with a trained and talented work force. Even when such referrals do not result in immediate employment, opportunities for *interviewing practice, résumé development, and professional networking* will provide ESC alums with much-needed experience in a supportive environment, able to break down the encounter afterwards with their BMI post-grad mentor and learn from the engagement.

Through both group seminars and workshops as well as intense individual one-on-one mentoring, newly minted graduates are able to work with trained faculty and members of the Black Male Initiative in a safe and dynamic environment. Some of these mentor-mentee pairs may be *continuing relationships* built during the student's time at ESC; others may be *new connections* developed through this unique initiative. BMI Post-Grad Mentor group workshops can focus on specific career issues such as the above-mentioned résumé and interviewing skills, as well as other issues such as asking about pay rates, raises, and benefits. Other group seminars can address complex cultural issues, such as *how to handle intentional or unintentional racism in the workplace, relations with difficult colleagues or bosses, professional etiquette, how to redress unequal pay, being passed over for promotion – or fired – and more.*

"Evidence suggests that mentoring is critical early in adulthood and/or during important life transitions…having the guidance and support of an experienced person can help [mentees] make a smoother transition." (Booker & Brevard, 2017) This ongoing mentorship program must involve training for paid, professional faculty mentors, enabling them to create true "high-touch" connections and open communication with a manageable case load of mentees, following the Fortified Classroom where "everyone involved shares… contact information with [mentees] so that when [they] have issues, they can actually call anyone of us… they know that it's available… that makes a big difference, so the support aspect is critical" (Burkart, 2022). Mentor relationships have a much higher rate of efficacy when mentors have more time available to meet with their mentees, and training on how to provide interpersonal support and guidance beyond basic academic or career advising (Booker & Brevard, 2017).

The Mentor Connection Starts Early—and Goes Both Ways: Teaching Students to Develop Mentor Relationships

Empire is noted for its focus on undergraduate mentoring, and as noted above, there are many studies showing the importance and effectiveness of mentoring on student success. However, the responsibility for developing the mentor-mentee connection is not solely on the school or individual mentors; students, too, can learn how to deepen these relationships. This is a wonderful role for juniors and seniors to train freshmen and sophomores, as well as for returning alumni to share specific tips on ways to improve connections with their professors – and how those connections have continued beyond graduation.

Crucial steps which students can take to enhance contact with their mentors include:

- Going the extra mile (demonstrating an interest in the subject matter, showing up to meet with the mentor during office hours, completing all assignments);
- Knowing the individual (learning about the mentor's area of study, publications, and interests; get to know them outside the classroom, independent study, outside events);
- Letting them know who you are (expressing your own interests and challenges, without overstepping boundaries of sharing inappropriate personal details); and
- Reaching out (striking up a conversation, sending an email, making a call, even mailing a holiday card is a way to kindle – or re-kindle – a relationship with a mentor).

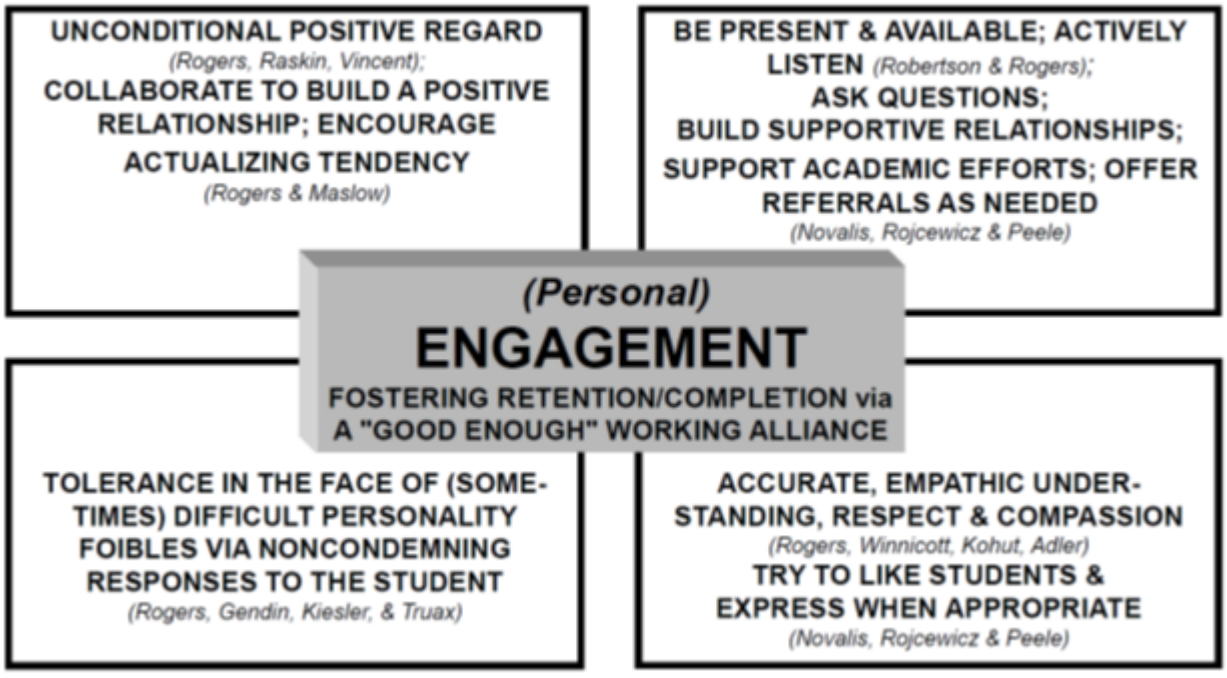
If these relationships are built and tended, a former professor can become "a role model, a friend, a mentor and someone [to] continue to learn from post-graduation – [even] someone to [give you] relationship advice." (Glass, 2013)

Training Faculty in both Undergraduate and Post Graduate Mentoring

There are many skills that the mentor needs as well. To enhance both college-level and post-graduate mentorship, faculty benefit from extra training in building and maintaining effective mentor relationships with their students, to ensure success in school and beyond. ESC already provides robust support for undergraduate mentoring, focusing on the qualities of the Ideal Educator in the BMI Fortified Classroom (Fullard, 2021), including:

- knowledge and thorough command of content area;
- proven teaching skills and abilities;
- the ability to form a strong working relationship with the mentee; and
- the temperament, demeanor, and presentation to work with mentees effectively.

While mentoring alumni who have entered the world of employment may focus on new topics that arise in the workplace, a successful mentor still requires these qualities to develop an effective connection with their mentees. Ongoing training in the principles of positive Personal Engagement (Fullard, 2019) benefits all mentors, helping to enhance their relationships with mentees, both current students and graduates.



Professional mentoring relationships also benefit from certain skills and structures, such as:

- Developing appropriate qualifications and characteristics to be an effective mentor, (relevant experience, commitment, ethically and culturally responsive).
- Developing a written mentorship agreement that spells out both mentee and mentor roles and responsibilities, timelines, and clearly articulated goals.
- An involved mentor documents the content of meetings and progress towards goals, providing useful ongoing and summative feedback to the mentee.
- Maintain mentorship relationships through regular (if flexible) scheduled contact, including electronic contact (e.g., phone, e-mail, videoconference, text).
- And mentorship relationships respect both ethical principles and legal regulations, including confidentiality, privacy, and personal boundaries. (NASP, 2021)

Many people who provide mentoring services to students and graduates find that the experience is as enriching for the mentor as it is for the mentee, personally, professionally, and practically. "Provision of support benefits mentors as well through career enhancement, professional growth, and a sense of giving back to the field… [and] such efforts may qualify for continuing professional development credits toward renewal of a credential…" (NASP, 2021)

Continuing Support

Many studies and anecdotal reports note that mentorship from a faculty member is "the single most important ingredient of college success… having a faculty mentor who encouraged their goals and dreams more than doubles a graduate's odds of being engaged in their work and thriving in their well-being throughout their lifetime." (Busteed, 2019).

The connection which is created during the college years – based equally on making students feel cared about as well as challenged academically – often continues into the years after graduation. Not only do students receive the benefit of this support while they are in school, and residually upon graduation: when mentorship is genuine, they stay in touch as the years go by. Nearly half (46 percent) of students who have a strong undergraduate mentor connection report that they have seen them within the past three months, and almost three-quarters (71 percent) say they have communicated with their mentor in the last year. (Busteed, 2019).

The new BMI Post-Graduate Mentorship Program aims to harness and direct the power of ongoing mentorship by establishing a robust outreach program to contact graduates and invite them back to campus to re-connect with their mentors and professors in person. This would only enhance the continuing support and positive impact of the mentor-mentee relationship.

An Ongoing Relationship

Like a marriage or a friendship or any other intimate connection, there is no forced termination date to a genuine mentor-mentee relationship. While contact with an academic advisor or classroom professor may be designed to end at the conclusion of study or the attainment of a degree, the mentor relationship can – and should – continue into graduate study, internship, and professional career development.

First of all, if there were any doubt about the sincerity of the mentor's interest and concern for the mentee, this continuing personal involvement proves the validity of the connection which was initiated during the years of college study. The mentor's ongoing availability, interest, and involvement in the mentee's growth – and help dealing with any challenges which may arise – shows that their connection is more than a mere job obligation on the part of the mentor.

Second, professional mentorship in the form of guidance, coaching, counseling, and referrals, is valuable to anyone in the developmental stages of their career. Mentoring can complement administrative supervisory relationships, providing "emotional support and serving as a protective factor against burnout, [helping] with time management, establishing professional boundaries, identifying or changing a career trajectory, managing relationships, and fostering professional skills and competencies, as well as creating a foundation to become supervisors or mentors in the future." (NASP, 2021)

> "It is very important to provide appropriate training and pay for faculty mentors, rather than subject yet another generation of Black workers to the indignity of providing unpaid and undervalued labor."

Furthermore, this new BMI Post-Graduate Mentorship Program provides an opportunity for graduates – who may have "missed the boat" to start building a close mentor-mentee relationship while still in school – to *establish a new connection* with an understanding, experienced, academic professional who can provide guidance with both career and personal issues. Having someone who can provide a listening ear at any stage of our lives has deep intrinsic value. For BMI grads, working with someone who has shared cultural and career experience, and who also has relevant professional mentor training, is even more beneficial.

Guidance from Someone Who Has Been There

This shared experience is particularly important during times of fraught racial tension, as over the past few years. At Florida State University, Black faculty sent an open letter to Black students, expressing profound empathy: "[W]e see you and feel the racial battle fatigue, grief, and frustration that you are probably feeling… We recognize the toll institutional and structural racism can take on your motivation, as well as mental, physical, and spiritual health… We know that you are balancing all of this while striving to thrive in your academic programs… we are committed to doing our part in addressing this wherever and whenever we can" (College of Social Sciences and Public Policy, 2020).

There are many challenges to increasing the number of Black faculty to match the percentages of Black students on campus, much less in the general population. "The consequences for the lack of a diverse faculty, especially Black professors, can be detrimental for generations of students… more intentional efforts need to occur to fix this unspoken gap between Black students and Black professors" (Stoudemire, 2021). When representation is too low, these scholars are often overburdened by feeling obligated to take on excessive mentoring and committee work rather than pursuing their own scholarship and publication. There are intense demands on Black professors to lead diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives "without compensation, on top of their already

disproportionate duties mentoring students of color, and often without their recommendations being adopted" (Flaherty, 2020). Worse still, these extra efforts are not considered for tenure and promotion, leaving these overworked professors even farther behind on the academic treadmill. It is very important to provide appropriate training and pay for faculty mentors, rather than subject yet another generation of Black workers to the indignity of providing unpaid and undervalued labor.

Having a diverse staff is valuable not only for the "important role faculty of Color can play in addressing the needs of students of Color" but also providing all students with increased intercultural competence, "successfully interacting with others without forfeiting or ignoring the core self… better prepared to navigate an increasingly multiethnic nation outside of higher education" (Madyun et al, 2013). There is a broad range of scholarship on the value of having Black Faculty and counselors to serve as role models, as well as providing and understanding ear based on shared experience with students.

Examples of negative campus experiences for Black men abound: "Black men have often been perceived to possess oppositional attitudes towards college attainment… have to endure microaggressions rooted in racist and gendered stereotypes [such as] the 'dumb jock' or the 'at-risk student' with a propensity toward criminal behavior…[which] can lead to low self-confidence, isolation, and academic failure" (Best Colleges, 2020). However, increasing faculty diversity and providing support groups such as BMI can turn this around: "Black men must be in learning environments where they are supported by teachers and given the opportunity to openly share their fears, worries, and concerns… Research indicates that when Black male students have access to a Black teacher, dropout rates fall… Having a space where they can connect and meet like-minded peers and acquire leadership skills is essential for their academic and personal success…" (Best Colleges, 2020).

This level of unspoken shared understanding is even more valuable as students move into the workplace. While the involvement of a caring mentor is valuable to everyone, BMI members in particular find it is reassuring to speak with another black male professional. Who else will understand and has faced the subtle but ubiquitous racial discrimination, bias, and assumptions on the part of work colleagues, clients, and bosses? This is always hard to deal with, whether intentional or unintentional, confrontational, or conniving, "in your face" or behind your back.

These can include outright ethnic and racial slurs and insults… to implied if unspoken beliefs on the part of others that they benefited from affirmative action programs and "don't really deserve" their position or "didn't really earn" their degree… to being mistaken for an orderly or an admin or court security rather than being the doctor or professor or judge that they are… to being treated dismissively when they speak up to contribute to meetings and papers. It is helpful to young professionals to realize that their mentors have faced the same – and worse – and come through to develop a position of respect and authority despite such social and cultural opprobrium.

The BMI Post-Graduate Mentorship Program can address overt and covert issues of racial bias, preference, and discrimination in group workshops as well as in sensitive one-on-one interactions with a trained mentor who has been through similar experiences. Realizing that you are not alone and having support and guidance from someone who has been there is truly priceless and can help graduates with adjustment issues in the workplace.

Encouraging Supportive Partnerships and Passing it On

Along similar lines, there is a long-standing (if finally waning) convention of the "exceptional minority" both in academia and in business. Trained mentors who have professional connections with peers in their field can serve as role models for their mentees, encouraging and supporting them to form collaborative bonds with other black males in moving ahead, rather than viewing them as competition for a limited slice of pie.

This works against the old trope of "crabs in a barrel," with each person trying to pull down his fellows in the fight to get ahead, based on the idea that there are a limited number of positions available to people of color. Mentors can help mentees focus on a new future where there is room for more than just one black high achiever in a department, company, field, and to change the motto to "a rising tide raises all boats." Indeed, simply showcasing the supportive relationships between mentors and their colleagues, or mentors and graduates, demonstrates the validity of this to current students.

The BMI Post-Grad Mentorship Program can provide graduates with the practical experience of supporting others, by inviting them to come back and meet with current BMI members at ESC. Alums can partner with mentors as a source of encouragement, confidence, hope, and inspiration: "If we did it, you can too" – yes, it may not be easy, but it's worth the effort. Through informal presentations and building connections with current students, Alums can share their challenges – both setbacks and triumphs – to show undergrads what they have to look forward to.

"These alums can also describe and demonstrate the value of the connections they have maintained with their own mentors, and how they did it, encouraging students to develop and deepen their connections while they are still on campus.."

These alums can also describe and demonstrate the value of the connections they have maintained with their own mentors, and how they did it, encouraging students to develop and deepen their connections while they are still on campus. Graduates can share how this highly functional post-graduate mentoring helped them to develop a career path with opportunity for growth, promotions, salary raises, and concomitant increases in authority, responsibility, respect, and recognition in their field. These living success stories can voluntarily return to talk to new students as credible messengers who can speak about what both BMI and the Fortified Classroom did for them – and serve as role models for prospective students who may be on the fence about involvement in these programs.

Of course, during this visit, the graduates themselves get the opportunity to visit in person once again with their own mentors. While they may have remained in touch by phone or email or text with each other since graduation, there's nothing like sitting together, going out for coffee or a meal, and sharing their latest life and professional experiences with each other. This "high touch" connection is most effective in person, getting to know each other, who we are and why we're here. There is nothing quite like seeing and experiencing each other through in-person, face-to-face meetings, where the student has the mentor's undivided attention, support, expertise, and mutual collaboration.

Though let it be said: if we have gained nothing else from the pandemic lockdown, we have learned that we can get together with others virtually no matter where they are, so even if alums can't visit in person, a videoconference can go a long way to inspire connection. There are times where "high tech" has to supplement (or even replace) "high touch." Having virtual conversations keeps us involved and opens up these events to those who are challenged by distance, time, schedule, or travel constraints. Technology can allow them to continue to contribute to – and benefit from – this new initiative. While "high touch" is always preferable, we should be grateful for the "high tech" option when needed (Burkart, 2022).

Moving Forward

To sum up, putting the BMI Post-Graduate Mentorship Program into place will benefit everyone. Graduates will enjoy the support of an experienced mentor in navigating professional and personal challenges, and the opportunity to share their experience with current BMI and Fortified Classroom students. Mentors will have the pleasure of sharing their experience and guiding the next generation to achieve their career potential, while receiving training and compensation appropriate for their efforts. And current students will have the opportunity to learn from returning alums what how to develop and deepen their own effective mentor relationships while still in school, with the understanding that this connection and support will follow them into the future, to enrich their lives beyond the university.

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Responding to Students and Social Change Through the Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship | By Ruth Goldberg

Prelude

Nine years ago I had an Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship Award. Together with filmmaker Anna Barsan, I worked on a year-long media activism project.

Nine years ago? A lifetime.

For many years, my office was down the hall from Alan Mandell's. It has been my incalculable good fortune to be mentored by Alan, among other dear colleagues, as I became a mentor myself. The warmth and enthusiasm with which Alan mentors is a model of the relationship of dialogue, trust and mutual respect within which learners may grow and evolve.

Certainly, the Imperatore project would not have happened without Alan's encouragement. I remember talking through it with him from the beginning. There was a lot to learn about the changing world of media activism. How could we learn collectively? What might be possible? What if … ?

Alan said yes to everything, even as the proposal for the year became increasingly ambitious. Most importantly, he encouraged me to understand that, as with any learning, it was impossible to predict what was going to happen during the year ahead – the project was going to change and evolve. Could we stay open to listening to our students and to each other and to the learning itself?

In this, among many other ways, Alan has always encouraged us all to understand the college as a learning community in which seeing ourselves as learners – open to experimenting and to making mistakes – is vitally important to any work we propose to do with students.

And just as we ask our students to reflect on their learning as an integral aspect of the learning process, Alan is always encouraging us to reflect on our own learning as well.

"Can we count on a little writing about the Imperatore for AAM, Ruth?"

In reflecting on the Imperatore project for All About Mentoring, I wrote about a moment in the community forum when a panel of activists had asked everyone to state their preferred gender pronouns.

Alan had written to me after the forum. The event had been bumpy. I had bronchitis and could barely speak. There were some technical glitches. But Alan saw past them: "This was a valuable night," he wrote. "It was valuable because, for me, for sure, this was a glimpse of a world of experience and media-making that was close to entirely new. It was intimate and important and all of us began to get a sense of fears and feelings and ways of being in the world that are part of our world but that often we miss."

Now, nine years later, we all announce our pronouns in our email signatures. Important progress! And yet, Alan would also be the first to wonder about (and beyond) the limitations of such gestures. Beyond stating our pronouns – or any finite, progressive intervention – how can we, as a community of learners, commit to going further and learning more about each other's diverse experiences and

needs? It is a "Mandellian" question, to be sure: probing, heart-centered and complex. The kind of question that Alan encourages us to ask and keep on asking.

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Ruth Goldberg (left) and Anna Barsan (right), 2016.

In 2013, I applied for the 2014-2015 Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship in partnership with Anna Barsan who is an adjunct instructor in the Metropolitan region. My training is in cinema and cultural studies. Anna is an activist media-maker. Her ongoing documentary web series "SIGNIFIED" (http://thisissignified.com), chronicling the lives of queer-identified artists and activists, has received generous support from the Guggenheim Foundation Media Conservation Lab. She works in the SIGNIFIED media collective, along with media-maker Jessie Levandov and producer Sam Tabet. (Anna's work was featured in All About Mentoring, Issue 46, Winter 2015.)

Goals, Objectives and Intended Outcomes

At the Metropolitan region we offer a wide range of media production study groups in digital filmmaking, screenwriting, editing, cinematography, documentary production, web series production, film history and visual communications. In the Imperatore Fellowship proposal, we designed a year-long experiment with new film and media production group studies and opportunities that would train and engage students who are interested in working in the fields of community-based media activism and digital media production.

We also created opportunities for students to work on a large-scale collaborative social justice project. In designing this part of the work, we had several distinct goals that were linked to both the college's institutional commitment to civic engagement, social justice and social responsibility, as well as the specific objectives of the Arthur Imperatore Community Forum Fellowship. Our goals were to:

- facilitate and improve student access to advanced professional training and experience in all aspects of film production and media activism
- create an immersive experience for students in the fields of filmmaking and media activism, under the guidance of artists and activists who work as professionals in the field
- foster a collaborative, teamwork approach to media-making • train committed, socially-conscious media-makers
- complete the first phase of a digital mapping project in three parts that would serve as a strong example of opportunities in film and media-making at SUNY Empire State College

- create sustained public awareness of the important student achievements in film and media studies at ESC
- identify and reach out to new populations of prospective media arts students who we are not currently serving, and who may not know what we have to offer.

We divided this work three concurrent yearlong efforts:

Part One: Outreach

a) Throughout the year we reached out to local media production organizations that work with young people in New York City to explore the opportunities for ongoing relationships, in order to bring in future populations of media students who we have not served before.
b) We reached out to local film and media organizations and production companies in order to create new internship opportunities for our film/media production students.
c) We reached out to organizations in the field of media advocacy in order to create lasting relationships with the college and opportunities for students. One such partnership was with the annual Allied Media Conference in Detroit, where we brought two student media-makers to present their work at the end of the year. We have established an annual trip to this important and cutting-edge conference as a new credit-bearing residency activity that will be open to all ESC students.

Part Two: Production

A group of Metropolitan region students worked on a new media advocacy project over the course of the 2014-2015 academic year. The students began by studying visual communications and representation with me, and the history of independent media activism and social media-driven political movements with Anna. Students then collaborated on the SIGNIFIED collective's ongoing community-based interactive digital mapping project, "Queer Coordinates." The idea behind this part of the project was to give students a sense of how a working artists' collective functions, as well as engaging them in new media advocacy efforts utilizing digital mapping technologies.

From our original proposal:

"Surveying will consist of identifying public spaces, media, organizations, and historic events to be included on the map. Students will gain skills in archival research, examine open-sourced mapping tools available on the Internet, and will gain hands-on experience in building sustainable community relationships with organizations and individual participants.

Working in partnership with the SIGNIFIED production crew, students will assist SIGNIFIED in compiling additional visual material to be included on the map to include interviews, photographs, and video documentation of public spaces of resistance around the city. The mapping project seeks to create a digital tapestry of historical information, social movements, and agents of social change .By utilizing technological mapping tools that are free for public use, Queer Coordinates will disrupt a hierarchy of access that often excludes civil society from collaboratively documenting public space."

Photograph of Anna Barsan (left) and Jessie Levandov (right), presenting the web series, SIGNIFIED, 2016

Responding to Students, Responding to Social Change

A year passed between the moment when we submitted the proposal and the beginning of the Imperatore Fellowship year. In that year, the urgent national dialogue about race and the social movements that emerged in response to police killings of unarmed people of color in 2012-2014 influenced the direction of the project. In our different study groups, Anna and I each found ourselves teaching different aspects of the history, theory and practices of media activism and race and representation right at the moment that heated public debates ignited during that year of explosive social protest across the country. It became clear that the project would need to expand, adapt and respond to what was happening across the country and to what was most urgent and pressing to the students who were working on it.

In September 2014, the mapping project swung into production, and the students who collaborated learned a great deal from working with SIGNIFIED and from coming to understand one model of collective mediamaking, but they learned the most from designing their own individual mapping projects as parts of the whole. Influenced by the historical moment in which this work occurred, the student media-makers shifted the direction of the mapping project with their investigations into the intersection between public space and the health and wellness of their communities. Given the freedom and authority to pick their own topics for their work on the mapping project, the student projects all focused on the complex relationship between race, surveillance, resistance and public space in the Metropolitan area.

The student projects ranged in emphasis and in scope, from looking at abandoned school buildings in specific neighborhoods and tracking how educational resources are allocated, to mapping sites of racially charged violence around the city, to looking at unequal access to green spaces in different communities.

Part Three: Dissemination

One of the goals of the project was to create a stronger bridge between the experience of being student media-makers to becoming professional media-makers working within a global community of practitioners. In the design of the project, students were given the opportunity to present their work in three different professional venues: at a new media festival, at a professional conference and at a community forum.

Panel of media activists at the Arthur Imperatore Community Forum.

The students first presented their work at CultureHub's Refest: Art and Technology Festival in New York City in December 2015. They participated in the "Surveillance Salon," at which they presented their individual projects with tremendous poise and eloquently fielded questions from the audience (http://howlround.com/livestreaming-thesurveillance-salon-curated-by-anna-barsan-atthe-art-technology-festival-refest).

ESC student Travis Del Valle presenting his digital mapping project at CultureHub.

The project then traveled to the Allied Media Conference in Detroit in June 2015, with the SIGNIFIED collective and two of the student participants. The students found the experience of meeting with and interviewing other media activists in Detroit to be inspiring and transformative, and the trip advanced our goal of helping to launch students into the professional world and into a networked community of supportive practitioners.

This project culminated in a public forum at the Clemente Soto Vélez Cultural and Educational Center in New York City.

The community forum brought together media activists from several different media advocacy groups, including Janisha Gabriel who is the founder of the "Speak My Name" project (http://www.speakmyname.org/). There were media-makers from "Streetwise and Safe" (http://streetwiseandsafe.org/), a group that advocates for LGBTQ youth of color, accompanied by their partners in the "Global Action Project" (https://global-action.org/). And, of course, the members of SIGNIFIED were there. There were screenings of three advocacy films, followed by a panel discussion on the state of media advocacy. The three films were quite different, but all focused around creating an awareness of the vulnerabilities of particular at-risk communities based on race and gender identity.

ESC Student Paulette Bellins presenting her digital mapping project at CultureHub.

I was proud that the community forum brought together activists from several different communities and welcomed them into our ESC community. I was also very pleased that there was an ESC event out in a public community setting. I think that we should do much more of that in the communities that we serve.

I was particularly happy that the forum offered the ESC community (as one colleague put it) "a glimpse of a world of experience and mediamaking that is very new to many people. It was intimate and important and all of us began to get a sense of fears and feelings and ways of being in the world that are part of our world but that often we miss."

Holding the Adinkra symbol for justice, images from ESC student Bianca Jones's digital mapping project presentation.

At the community forum, the moderator of our panel opened up the Q&A period with sensitivity to the diverse gender identities of all present by asking anyone who raised their hands to speak to please state their names and their preferred gender pronouns. I can think of no better or more emblematic example than that "pronoun moment" in characterizing a year that was full of a growing awareness of how much there is to learn as allies and as educators in a rapidly changing world.

The Imperatore year was a tremendous learning experience for me. I had the time to try new things, to experiment in my teaching and create new opportunities for our students. I was able to step back and assess what is working in our film and media training and what still needs work; what kinds of students we are serving well and the kinds of students who we could serve better. I was able to explore new approaches to teaching media activism and to help students to begin to position themselves as professional mediamakers. For me, this was time and money very well spent. Thank you, ESC!

Teaching, Mentoring and Activism in an Age of Trump | By Himanee Gupta, Lisa Parkins and Anastasia Pratt

Prelude: Himanee Gupta

This particular piece grew out of a panel I helped organize for an All College Conference following the 2016 election results. Before that election took place, I had been planning to travel to Washington D.C. for "round three" of a teaching activity I had come to call "Live from D.C." The activity was all about teaching history-in-the-making via the inauguration of the U.S. president. I would post/e-mail/text/tweet reports about the inauguration from D.C. itself, and students following my updates would respond. I first did this in 2009 when the historic moment was the inauguration of Barack Obama as the first African American as president. I repeated it after Obama's re-election in 2013 and began making plans almost immediately thereafter to do it again in 2017 to mark what I anticipated would be the inauguration of the first woman – Hillary Rodham Clinton – as president.

Only, it was not. The person elected to the position amid a rise in white nationalism was a man regarded as least fit to be president: Donald Trump.

I considered dropping my plans to teach that inauguration live. My then-spouse told me that going would be unsafe and could be seen as an endorsement of Trump himself. I ultimately decided to go for the sake of my students and because this was still history, even if it was not a history I liked.

I knew a bit about some of the teaching Lisa and Anastasia had done around political protests, music, and social media. I also was aware of the activism another one of our colleagues had been doing in helping to organize transportation to D.C. for a January 21, 2017 women's march that was quickly being put together in reaction to Trump's chauvinism. I thought sharing our ideas would make for an interesting discussion about teaching and learning and reached out. Happily, they agreed to join.

Alan was among those who attended our session, which I recall taking place on a Friday morning, on the last day of the conference at a time when many typically had checked out and were heading home. I was pleased and touched that Alan attended and, in some ways, not surprised. Because Alan was like that. Always present, always listening attentively at as many public presentations at our college events as he could manage.

He emailed us later that afternoon, encouraging us to share our teaching experiences on the inauguration via All About Mentoring. That invitation also pleased but did not surprise me. Because Alan was like that. Always encouraging us to share our teaching and learning experiences.

I first met Alan in 2010, a couple of weeks after I joined the Empire State faculty, at an annual gathering that my then home center – the Center for Distance Learning – held. I was struck by his discussion of mentoring as the art of listening and of a connection he made between listening (seen perhaps as a passive act) and activism (a more active engagement with transformation, or what might be regarded as social justice). A few weeks later, I saw a copy of All About Mentoring lying on a table. I picked it up and, as I read through it, I wondered if I might someday be able to contribute to it.

Of course, the answer was yes. Because All About Mentoring; Scholars Across the College; the Institute for Mentoring, Teaching, and Learning; and the Center for Mentoring, Learning and Academic Innovation all were products of Alan's desire to share, listen and learn from each other. His projects became our projects, bringing us together. At a place as decentralized and dispersed as Empire State, we needed – and still need – ways to come together.

Prelude: Lisa Parkins

Alan Mandell's career as an educator embodies Empire State's original, inclusive, radical mission. He fully understands the transformative power of the mentor-student relationship. I have a strong image of Alan at work. At the Hudson Street location, walking past his office – desk piled high with portfolios and papers – I see Alan engaged in conversation with a student. He's "leaning in" to the sacred process of teaching and learning. Taking in Alan's attentiveness, I get a teacher's rush, thinking to myself, "This is what we're here for – individualized, student-centered learning."

I got to experience Alan in action at Metro Center's monthly meetings. Back in the day, all the faculty and professionals gathered in the usual classroom. Seated around a large rectangle of folding tables, our coffee-fueled conversations sometimes turned thorny. But Alan's comments always offered an intellectually rigorous reflection of process and structure that was at the same time warm-hearted. While I don't remember a specific example, I do recall that when he spoke, Alan would open the door to a new perspective, engaging us about an issue in a way that we hadn't previously thought of. He looked at the problem up, down and sideways, drawing on his deep well of knowledge about learning, mentoring and administration. Alan had a way of synthesizing all that had been said and then took the conversation to a new level.

I believe in Alan's vision of mentorship and student-centered learning. In my 2018 article that appeared in All About Mentoring, the wonderful, important journal that he edited, I attempted to convey the challenges and rewards of teaching an in-person group study, Pop Music and Social Justice, in Spring 2017. Trump's ascendancy to the presidency and the Women's March prompted intense classroom exchanges and impacted how I framed our exploration of protest songs and social movements. We were living history and the students knew it. Like Alan, I "leaned in" to the opportunity of the moment. I utilized our investigation of musical artists who made a difference to inspire agency and the spirit of activism in my students. Their final project, a collectively-created song, "Tell Us the Truth!" was a rallying cry to "bring the sound up."

During the pandemic, I started teaching Pop Music and Social Justice as a virtual group study. COVID-19 led to major changes in how we teach. In Spring 2025, I will meet online with a new group of students. Once again, we'll investigate the history of protest songs while reflecting on the state of our democracy. I'll "lean in" to the teaching and learning process to ignite the creative spark in each student. Alan would be the first to say, "Change is inevitable." While we don't yet know how AI will transform education, as mentors, we are charged with grappling with change while preserving the institution's core mission and values.

Alan's vast contributions to Empire State University will live on. We are all the better for his profound legacy.

Prelude: Anastasia Pratt

Since Trump's first bid for the presidency of the United States, the culture of education has changed enormously. Everyone seems to feel entitled to say whatever they want, whenever they want. And, while the freedom- and Constitution-loving part of me approves, the educator in me worries: What happened to civil discourse?

In my own courses, I find myself pushing students to evaluate their source materials, to think before responding, to read their colleagues' words carefully and reflect upon them before beginning their responses. It seems that the best antidotes to the "say anything" movement are to ask intelligent, probing questions and to think carefully.

At SUNY Empire, we have long been blessed by the voice and presence of Alan Mandell, who has always urged us to do those things: to listen thoughtfully, to respect speakers and their experiences, to respond carefully—often by repeating what the other said in order to verify understanding, to build a shared space, and to move forward together. Sometimes, I hear the honorable Dr. Mandell in my head as I'm navigating a particularly difficult conversation thread … and my classes are better for it.

*They are also better for the plethora of student viewpoints and experiences. While I don't adore seeing political viewpoints that are entirely antithetical to mine, I *do* appreciate it when students from any place on the political spectrum can clearly articulate their beliefs, use credible evidence to support them, and respond to critiques or disagreements from their fellow students with reason and respect.*

Striving for those safe spaces for real and open conversations, it seems, has let us move forward together in courses focused on modern American history and public history. So, too, as acknowledging, from the start, that we cannot talk about history without getting political.

I do hope that these practices were part of my teaching toolbox before this piece was written, but I know for sure they have become ever more important since 2016. Beyond holding myself to the same standards in every forum, I can help my students to become better citizens of the world through listening, conducting research using credible source materials, respecting others, and responding only after completing those steps. Each of these will be part of my work within every classroom from this point on …. and I hope to hear the good Dr. Mandell's voice in my head, urging me on, the entire time.

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Introduction

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

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

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

The following pieces from mentors Himanee Gupta-Carlson, Lisa Parkins and Anastasia Pratt share teaching experiences tied to the presidential election and inauguration, and the protests that emerged in the aftermath of Trump's 2016 victory. These reflections grew out of a dialogue that they, with Residency Specialist Lori McCaffrey, initiated at the March 2017 All College Conference in Saratoga Springs.

History As It Happens

Himanee Gupta

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

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

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

- Gain a real-time experience with a historical event.
- Get to know public history by immersing themselves in it. Washington, D.C., January 2016
- Think critically about their own roles within American politics.

Washington, D.C., 2016. Photograph by Himanee Gupta.

The Election

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

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

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

Planning

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

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

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

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

How Students Responded

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

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

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

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

Post-Inauguration Reflections

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

Washington, D.C., 2016. Photograph by Himanee Gupta.

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

Teaching Pop Music and Social Justice

Lisa Parkins

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

We were about to investigate the history of issues and events that could – even in a less polarized political climate – be upsetting to my students. I looked around the room: this was a culturally

diverse group. Seasoned performing artists sat alongside those who were interested in activism and social justice; a few were there solely to fulfill SUNY General Education credits. I took a deep breath and said, “Let’s listen well, keep an open mind, and be respectful of one another.” Students nodded and smiled. The tension eased. Meanwhile, I made a mental note to be vigilant about maintaining the classroom as a space in which students could share thoughts and feelings about the news as it unfolded. Still, I sensed that we were heading into difficult emotional territory.

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

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

After our thorough exploration of these research activities, it was time for creativity and activism. I presented several documentaries: *Gasland; The World According to Monsanto*; and *The Empire Files: The Tyranny of Big Oil*. My goal was to facilitate each student to develop an aesthetic response to recognized threats to air, water and food safety in the form of poetic Washington, D.C., January 2016 lyrics. I guided the class through a series of free-writing exercises. Students were asked to identify resonant visual metaphors in their writings. We explored ways to amplify and extend these images in poetic form. Then, students were invited to develop a character that personified nature at risk. The class responded with songs in a range of genres: a rhythm and blues ballad; a St. Louis blues number; a catchy funk tune and more. Those new to the creative process shared their poetry and spoken word responses. Each student’s offering received constructive feedback from classmates and from me. And each student was resoundingly applauded for his or her efforts.

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

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

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

For the final project, students were given the option of writing a research paper or collaborating on a social justice-themed song. Steven Van Zandt's 1985 "Sun City," recorded by Artists United Against Apartheid, served as inspiration for a new song, "Tell Us the Truth!" Students contributed verses and a bridge section, together with a repeating refrain. The last meeting was devoted to developing an ensemble performance of "Tell Us the Truth!" Musicians in the class, performing on piano, electric guitar and tenor saxophone, came up with a solid arrangement; another served as vocal arranger. In rehearsal, students with little or no performing experience were encouraged to join with the "pros" in song. By the end of the session, this ensemble delivered a spirited rendition of "Tell Us the Truth!" (see Note below).

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

In teaching this study, I felt it was crucial for me to maintain my awareness of current events in order to better facilitate class discussion. Throughout, I tried to keep my own political views out of the equation. At times, animated dialogue escalated – these conversations were intense. In the development of social movements, a potent aesthetic response to an issue or injustice has often served as a catalyst for political and social change. Today, protest songs and activist art in other mediums can bear witness to these turbulent times. This postelection teaching experience has

deepened my commitment to convey to students that art is seldom made in a vacuum, and to provide them with the sociohistorical framework and practical skills to fully articulate their truths.

Note

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

Reconciling the Personal with the Political

Anastasia Pratt

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

> "Knowing the damage they have done to each of us, a culture of mentoring tries not to lend further weight to the myriad hierarchies that permeate contemporary society. Rather, we devote ourselves to smoothing out inequalities and dampening competition, whether this is between administrators and faculty, faculty and support staff, faculty and students, faculty among themselves, or students with each other."
>
> Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 25, Spring 2003

III - Memory, History, and Change

At the Metropolitan Center, (from left to right): Gohar Marikyan, Justin Giordano, Alan Mandell, Lucy Winner, Tom Grunfeld, Steve Tischler, Raul Manzano, Bob Carey, Lear Matthews, Bhuwan Onta.

On the Eve of Retiring from SUNY Empire State College | Miriam Tatzel

Prelude

If you come across Alan Mandell engaged in conversation, or if you are fortunate enough to be the one having the conversation with him, you'll notice that he finds what you are saying to be very interesting. Maybe later on you'll wonder, how come Alan didn't say much about himself. I've experienced and observed that Alan is more interested in what the "other" has to say than he is in talking about himself. Alan makes you feel like you have important and meaningful things to say. You're delighted to be found so interesting and attention-worthy. Under this benevolent reception, a kind of alchemy occurs, and you become indeed more insightful and articulate. I don't mean to suggest that Alan never talks about what's on his mind, but it's his style to draw out the other.

I can see how Alan brings this aliveness to students. His comments and responses deepen their conversation. He offers alternative ways of looking at a topic, for instance, without you feeling that your views were rejected or disparaged.

We all know that Alan in fact has a lot to say, and we have listened to him often, during the give-and-take of meetings and as a presenter at conferences. He speaks softly, slowly, seeming to think it out as he goes along, and the listener gets drawn into the process. We perk up when Alan speaks, for what he has to say will often bring up new ways of seeing, provocative angles, and clarifying perspectives. I reflect, in contrast, that I have too often felt that I needed to speak up and get my point in quickly in order to he heard. So I marveled at how his cadence and tone made the listener pay all the more attention. We are enriched by his erudition, his roots in sociology, his deep immersion in education and learning, and his connections with the arts. We've seen much of all this in his editorship of All About Mentoring.

Over the years as editor, Alan enabled All About Mentoring to be a showcase for the work of mentoring and the creative strivings of the Empire community. With each new issue of All About Mentoring we turned to his opening editorial, always a worthy and apt read. My response to these editorials often took the form of "Alan keeps the faith" and "I don't know how he does it." Alan's editorials were uplifting even as we were adapting more and more to standardization and the combination of traditional education and new technology.

I must say something about Alan as a mentor, harking back to where I started. Other mentors have remarked on what creative work the students he works with do. Otherwise "ordinary" students seem to become a little more extraordinary. I'll share an anecdote of what I recall a student saying about three mentors the student worked with. Ask Mentor A a question, and A says "Get out of my office" (in a jovial, friendly style). Ask Mentor B a question, and B tells you everything you want to know and more. Ask Alan a question, and Alan makes you answer it yourself.

What's next for Alan? I remember the time when he returned from a sabbatical and he told me that he learned how to put up drywall. I'm a crafty, DIY sort myself, and that adult learning project made an impression on me.

So Alan, go.

Original Article Published in Issue 47 of All About Mentoring (2015)

Miriam Tatzel, 2015.

I joined Empire State College as a mentor in September 1974. In February 2015, I retired. As you can imagine, Empire was a big part of my life for so long a time, and now it was about to be over. From time to time during those last months, I jotted down thoughts about what I was experiencing.

The Last Term

Fall 1 2014 is the last time I am working with students as a mentor. I want it to be a good ending. I am pleasantly surprised that I am still finding ways to improve my work with students – a better way to give feedback, new types of assignments and trying to have a personal connection with each student. My thoughts automatically project into the future. I have ideas for courses, new readings to share, I'm enthusiastic, and then the trajectory comes to a halt. I need to savor this last term.

Some very good things have happened. Although few students signed up for my Consumer Psychology or for Topics in Political Psychology studies – a disappointment – for the few who did, I enjoyed what they had to say and I think we enjoyed engaging with one another. A master's final project brought me back to a former interest in fashion. How good it felt to revisit my interest in clothing and the mix of the social and historical meanings. One Consumer Psychology student took it upon herself to review all the transitions of her youth and adulthood and the types of consumption they triggered – I was blown away. I find I am feeling tenderness toward my students, maybe especially the ones who are in over their heads.

I feel good about leaving at the top of my game, as I think of it – good about my student work, and good about my creative work. For my last sabbatical, I had the opportunity to put together a volume on consumer well-being, for which I was editor and an author (Consumption and Well-Being in the Material World, 2014: Springer). That work, in turn, led to a series of presentations that have been well-received. A capping delight was to see the photo I took in the ESC calendar, January 2015.

These last months, I am cleaning out my files. When I arrived here after four years at Hunter College (CUNY), I kept my reading notes and the assignments I created. I continued to use some of those materials, certainly when I started here, but even up to this last term. What do I take away from all my creations now, when there is no future where I envision needing these materials? My files bring back memories, no surprise there. More surprising are all the notes and activities I made that I don't recall at all. I hate to see all this effort and creation just gone. So for the time being, I am culling. For example, I am consolidating the many versions of Consumer Psychology contracts from several decades (why didn't I write down the year on any of it?). With somewhat of a heavy heart, I've been pruning the files of my "early" graduates from before the year 2000. The first 25 years. The process feels kind of funereal.

Are we there yet? Come December of that final term, feelings of nostalgia for my life as a mentor are giving way to impatience. Another month and still so far to go. Students are not finishing on time and degree programs are in limbo. But the work really is winding down and I can taste freedom.

The Beginning

It was the spring of 1974 when I heard about a new alternative college. My interest was piqued. It was time for me to leave Hunter College and I wanted to find a place more in tune with my educational philosophy. Then I saw the ad for a "mentor" in Rockland County. This was for me. It was mentoring that drew me to Empire State College: working with students one-on-one in student-centered, self directed learning, integrating experiential and academic learning, and seeing the interplay of theory and practice. It also was timely for me and my husband, Ed, to leave the city for a more countrified setting with our one-year-old daughter.

My job interview was in the basement of the library at Rockland Community College in Suffern. I met with a small group of mentors who were creating "New Models for Careers," a pilot program that built upon students' work experience. I was to be one of two new liberal arts mentors forming the Lower Hudson Unit. Together with the New Models program, an associate dean and two support staff (one of whom was Bessie Walker, still with our unit in Nanuet), we set about pioneering a new college. In time, the Rockland Unit was joined by units at SUNY Purchase and New Paltz, and we became the Hudson Valley Center. I was there at the beginning of the center, and now with the upcoming restructuring, I seem to be there at its end.

ESC and I

I have had the chance to be part of a bold educational enterprise across nearly a half century of history, and I was even a small player in its unfolding. But I don't have much to report about my current involvement with the institution. Since even before my 2012-2013 sabbatical, I had been withdrawing from collegewide activities. Once upon a time, I was in the thick of things. I was chair of this and that, I coordinated and I convened. A reassignment to do research on retention led me to some eye-opening and inventive analyses. I co-chaired (with Marjorie Lavin) the 1999 Institutional Steering Committee for Middle States re-accreditation. Now I am watching from the sidelines. It's not that I don't care; it's that what happens in the college is no longer on my plate. It's for those who are moving into the future. Mostly I wonder, will this college, as conceived, keep the spark going?

Lifelines

In many ways, Empire has been a lifeline for me. In one obvious sense, the money I earned supported me and my family – no small matter – and will continue to do so in retirement.

Empire also has been a "lifeline," like the line across my palm. My time here encompasses my own adult development and learning. This is where I matured in my two professions: as an educator and as a psychologist. My professional development has been nurtured by ESC. Just as students were able to be self-directed in their learning, I could be self-directed in mine. It's amazing when I look back at all the interests over the years that I was able to actualize through learning contracts and study groups. My students were co-learning with me. Between my work with students and the reassignments and sabbaticals I had, I developed areas of expertise, especially in consumer psychology.

My colleagues from all over the college and notably at the Hudson Valley Center meant so much for my quality of life. Working together has been stimulating and often fun, and we formed personal relationships. I have made close friends. We started careers together and we retired; we watched

our children grow up and we saw grandchildren arrive. We have moved through our lifelines together.

And then there is the lifeline of my family. “Baby Emily” was one year old when I started here. Recently, she pointed out that I have been at Empire all her life. Our second daughter, Claudia, was an Empire baby. And Ed has been the mentor’s assistant, in many ways devoted to helping me to meet the demands of the job and covering for all the travel time away from home. Our family life has been entwined with Empire State College.

Possible Selves

One of the concepts in positive psychology is that of “possible selves.” When we think about the future, especially during times of transition (“liminal states”), we imagine various scenarios for our life and the different “selves” we may become. The research supports the helpfulness of this kind of projection; it can give us a sense of control and of regulating our life. I’m in that liminal state and feeling the possibilities, but they are nebulous. People ask me what my plans are, as if they expect I have lofty ambitions. And yet, in a way, it is ambition I am retiring from. I’ve joked and said that what I want is my second childhood. But I return to a more adolescent query: Who am I?

Self-perception theory proposes that we infer our inner states by observing our behavior.

What I observe about myself is that I like being up and about, on my feet rather than sedentary. No more desk job! (I put off writing this piece in favor of painting the basement, building a stone wall, organizing my photo files – almost anything). I am happy when I’m puttering around. And being a frugal, resourceful and DIY type, I get a kick out of making, fixing and repurposing. Over the past years, I saved up projects “for when I retire.”

Being a consumer psychologist, I ask myself how this transition is accompanied by consumption. My wardrobe comes to mind: less office wear, more leisure wear and work clothes. Will I have a new persona? An older one for sure. I’m getting a new car, like a graduation present. Now that I have more money to spend, I find there’s little that I want or need. I’m not much interested in travel and I like eating at home. I’ve had a long-term (unrealistic and impractical) desire to buy property and fix it up, or perhaps even to build a house. Now maybe there is a way to have property near my daughters. I want to spend time with my grandson.

With some thought to future possibilities in my career as a psychologist, I am integrating my files from Empire with my files at home – a sizable organizing job. I observe about myself that I take on organizing tasks with enthusiasm and patience. Perhaps I will write articles, maybe in political psychology, a newish direction. Maybe I’ll be a blogger. Maybe I won’t want to write at all.

Notes from a Reformed Literary Drill Sergeant | By Steve Lewis

Prelude

As a rule, I quit writing several times a year. I mumble. I pout. I scowl. "I quit!" It's all for show. The next day I always climb the stairs like a Sisyphus and boot up the computer.

I only quit teaching once, though. And it wasn't for show. On a frigid afternoon in early 1982, I was nearly despondent driving over the frozen Hudson because most of my AP kids (my moonlighting job) hadn't absorbed my brilliant analysis of "Othello" and did miserably on an impromptu quiz. Then that night at a group study with my adult learners at Empire State College (my day job), I was assaulted with some of the most bizarre interpretations of "A Doll's House" that I had ever heard. They hadn't gleaned anything from my smarty-pants lectures. And all that was prelude to arriving home to a call from an English teacher at the high school saying that one of my kids hadn't been doing his homework. A teacher's nightmare.

That evening, I grudgingly acknowledged that I was an abject failure as a teacher. And I quit teaching. For real. I muttered ungrammatically, "I'm done!"

But in the sleepless hours after midnight, while I revisited my multiple failures, I remembered the patient advice Alan Mandell that I had fended off two years earlier when I was first hired at Empire State College … and struggling with what it means to be a mentor. He didn't yell at me, didn't demean me, didn't fire me. He gently, insistently, kindly showed me how to appreciate the multiple ways that people see the world; how to honor the experience that each student brings to every conversation; how to write a meaningful learning contract and a narrative evaluation that was more a learning tool than praise or punishment.

Although it took me two years to understand Alan's brotherly arm around my shoulder, I was transformed that morning … as a mentor, father, husband, writer, human being.

I swallowed my arrogant pride with my morning coffee and quit teaching. In effect, I tore the phony patches off my tweed coat and quit telling everyone what I thought they needed to know. Then headed to my office in Highland with a compelling desire to open doors.

And for the next 42 years, I have followed Alan's example every time I walk into a classroom, imagining myself as something akin to being a well-rewarded doorman (minus the epaulets and stripes down the sides of the trousers): I have opened doors with a smile for seekers who want to rub elbows with thinkers and artists of every kind; offered them seats at the table; listened intently to their stories and offered stories of my own in return; asked far more questions than I have made declarations; and responded, as best I could, to the ones coming back at me. And when they have been ready to move along, I have tipped my hat and hailed them a cab.

Always as I imagine Alan would.

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Overheard recently at The Bakery in New Paltz: "That (expletive deleted) professor doesn't understand that I'm taking three English classes, two other courses and I'm working part time. I mean, how can I possibly do all the reading, get some sleep and still have a life?"

Steve Lewis, 2008.

Maybe it was the Costa Rican dark roast, but upon hearing that plaintive wail, I was sucked up into some kind of H.G. Wells' vortex, calendar pages flipping backward like in 1940s movies, and moments later dumped in creaky, cranky overheated Bascomb Hall at the University of Wisconsin, 1966 … eyelids drooping, head listing, my unshaven chin slowly falling to my chest moments before whiplashing upright to the sound of my name, "Mr. Lewis … ," only to find that the professor was referring to Sinclair, not Steven.

That term I had enrolled in "The American Novel," (nine novels plus …) "Shakespeare's Histories" (10 plays plus …) and an unforgettably forgettable Scandinavian Literature course (six novels, six plays, lots of characters named Lars), plus two nonEnglish courses I frankly didn't care about. Indeed, I remember now that one of my first insights into understanding the concept of literary subtext was the realization that it wasn't humanly possible to read everything assigned to me each semester.

And so I also remembered how I "managed" the subtext that term – and the ones to follow: skimming, Cliffing, cramming, scamming, copying and – the English major's best friend – BS-ing my way through too many of those insulting (to the authors) passage identification questions, those insulting (to the students) multiple guess questions, those wearying compare and contrast essays, those bogus end-of-semester 15 page research papers that were returned, if they were ever returned, with a letter grade and a two-word comment scribbled in red.

Which was when I willfully stopped time traveling (and eaves-slurping on the caffeine-driven conversation at the next table) and for the first time in a long career in education did some basic academic accounting: during those halcyon undergraduate days my English classes would normally assign 8 - 10 major works of literature. At a reading rate of 25 - 30 pages an hour (the pace for careful reading enjoyment, not scholarship), it would take me 12 - 15 hours to read the typical 400 page literary novel – just once – and that wouldn't include the associated critical material – or the work on the five page paper due in a few weeks – or the midterm – or that big term paper due at the end of the semester – or the final – or even the three hours of lecture each week. That adds up to a conservative 20 - 30 hours per week per course. And that's before I would begin work on four other courses taught by professors, each of whom clearly operated on the principle that theirs was the only class I was taking. And did I mention that I had a part-time job washing dishes at Mama Brava's on State Street – and had a girlfriend with the exotic name of Sasha?

So what did I do with all that "learning"? Well, the shame of it is that I learned my lessons well, went on to grad school and emerged a shaggy-behind the ears English instructor. And in my formative teaching years before I came to Empire State College (via lots of Freshman Comp and American Lit survey classes, creative writing workshops, a gig as an AP English instructor), I, like any well-hazed fraternity hazer or a beaten survivor of boot camp, continued the cycle of abuse by assigning more reading and writing for my poor students than any adolescent could hope to accomplish in two or three years in a monastery. Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa.

It's tempting to look back at my time as a literary drill sergeant and call it academic machismo, but as it seemed to have known no gender bounds, machismo works just as well. And as the exasperated coed at the next table reminded me, very little has changed in our English departments over the past 30 or 40 years.

Nor, it seems, is it substantively different in other disciplines. In fact, I observed similar kinds of workload mistreatment when my son Danny was a history major in Madison and once had to write five research papers due after Thanksgiving; when my daughter Addie, who barely survived an Exercise Science major at Penn State (which of course left no time for exercise), found herself taking 24 credits per semester in her first year in chiropractic school; when my son-in-law Jeffrey barely survived the standard issue sleep deprivation foisted on first-year law students. To quote my pal from Ecclesiastes, "Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

Which brings me back to the bloodshot-eyed coed at the next table. Or, better still, the bleary-eyed adult students we see daily at Empire State College trying to juggle jobs, children, relationships, a miserable war, a sinking economy, global warming – and everything else that goes along with being an adult learner in this already tired old new millennium. I can't begin to tell you – well, yes I can – how grateful I was that I stumbled into a college where real learning is valued over the appearance of learning. And yes, my gratitude has grown contract by contract, CBE by CBE, unique student by utterly unique student along the ever-challenging way.

Over nearly two decades as a mentor at this "college without walls" my students have taught me – one by one by one – that the more realistic and thus moderated the assigned workload, the more engaged and more receptive they will be in the learning process; and the more interesting, thoughtful and original the work I will receive from them in return; and, in turn, the more elevating and engaging will be my job.

Yet, at the risk of being labeled an academic cream puff (I've been called much worse), I worry that as this college moves inexorably toward the look and feel of a traditional walled institution with our grades, our terms, our newly emergent confusions between teaching and mentoring, and our mind bogglingly insistent quest for consistency (about which the aforementioned Sinclair had a few good words to say), we will leave ourselves vulnerable to being imprisoned in a similarly abusive culture.

Before that happens, perhaps we need to sit down with our center colleagues, roll up our sleeves, put on the visors and do the real world accounting. How many hours per week should we reasonably expect a student to spend on one of our studies? How long should it take in real world hours to read any text or passage and understand the material? What is the actual function of an

assigned essay and how many words/pages should it really take to demonstrate that learning has taken place? How many hours, days, weeks should any student schedule in a busy life to work on a research project in order to emerge with something of true value, not just the same old shuck and jive that the student at The Bakery was going to submit to her (expletive deleted) English professor?

> "There is an understandable worry about spending time on something like what we at Empire State College have called our "core values." Many are concerned that such conversations can be pushed to a plane so far from the day-to-day realities of mentoring, that we might congratulate ourselves on the mere words we have struggled to agree on, even while we remain uncertain about the quality of our everyday teaching practices or about the direction of our institution."
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> Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 28, Spring 2004

From “Before the Beginning” to Emeritus: 50 Years at SUNY Empire State College | By Al Lawrence

Prelude

The college was still locked down from the pandemic in late May 2021. But I had received permission to enter my office and clean out 39 years of files and books in anticipation of retirement. I had graded my last papers, said “good-bye” to colleagues online, passed the torch to a new associate department chair and, with some relief and some trepidation, ended a long association with Empire State College as a student, adjunct and full-time professor.

Then came an email from Alan Mandel with one more assignment. He wanted me to write a retrospective of my experiences with the college for All About Mentoring. How could I say “no” to Alan? Alan, who embodies Chancellor Ernest Boyer’s original notion of the college: a mentor who respects what independent learners have already mastered and gently guides them to reach new horizons and an enhanced understanding of the world in which they live.

For as long as I could remember, Alan was a mentor’s mentor and a mentor to mentors. In every meeting, every All-College presentation, every chance he got, he leaned forward in his characteristic way, paused and sotto voce reminded his colleagues of the college’s mission to recognize college-level learning from whatever source it is derived and to encourage new knowledge in creative and innovative ways. His notion of this kind of academic freedom for students and mentors to create degree programs tailored to their individual needs and goals was sometimes too idealistic for even the greatest free-thinkers among us. I remember when I was promoting to the faculty the idea of a new Area of Study in Public Affairs, he said something like, “Ideally, I don’t think we should have any areas of study or concentrations. Students and mentors should just reach into the sky and come up with whatever program that makes sense for them.” He was right, of course. If only we lived in an ideal world!

In late May 2021, I was looking forward to a summer free of all work responsibilities for the first time in my life. His invitation to write the All About Mentoring piece wasn’t exactly welcome. I hate the term “closure,” but that’s what writing it turned out to be for me: a way to encapsulate my 50 years of exposure to a unique institution – one last goad from the mentor’s mentor to remind us all of why we are here.

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Al Lawrence, 2021. Photograph by Zoey McAllister.

"I've been involved with Empire State College since before the beginning," I've often told my colleagues. In 1970, I was a young newspaper reporter with an associate degree in journalism, covering campus news, which consisted primarily of anti-war demonstrations and student takeovers of university administration buildings in protest to the presence of Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) programs.

But one day I was assigned to interview SUNY Chancellor Ernest L. Boyer, who was traveling the state promoting an initiative for a new kind of university program that he called, at the time, "University College." It was designed to appeal to those disaffected with conventional college education, give them an opportunity to design their own learning programs, and acknowledge that there are many different ways of acquiring knowledge.

A few years later, I met a young literature professor at the Albany location of what, by then, was called Empire State College. Bob Congemi, who is still mentoring and teaching at the college 50 years later, urged me to enroll, assemble the credits from my associate degree and miscellaneous others I had picked up at various colleges, and seek credit for what I had learned covering government, courts, and education at four newspapers around the state.

Credits were then measured in months (a month equating to four credit hours), rather than credit hours, and I did a six-month thesis project to complete my degree on the controversial subject of plea bargaining in the criminal courts. Under the direction of my mentor, Dr. Robert E. Morrison, I assembled the bibliography that I would undertake to read and proposed the lawyers, judges, and legislators I would interview. Mentor Bob Morrison and I wrote an extensive learning contract in longhand, which was typed on a manual typewriter by his secretary, and I came back in six months with the finished project, a version of which was ultimately published in a magazine on state government.

Six years later, I had a master's degree in criminal justice and a law degree and was working in state government when Bob Congemi again prevailed upon me, this time to tutor one of his students in Business Law. That was more than 39 years ago. In the meantime, I have worked with hundreds of students as an adjunct, a part-time mentor, a fulltime nontenure-track lecturer, and an assistant, associate, and full professor. I have taught individual studies and study groups in a regional center of the college, a unit, two of the former FORUM Management programs, graduate studies, the Center for Distance Learning (CDL), and, for the past few years, what is now called the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

I've worked in eight different locations in Albany and Saratoga under five presidents, six interim presidents, seven deans, and too many provosts to count or remember. To my great good fortune, two of those provosts were Joyce Elliott and Meg Benke, who also number among the deans and interim presidents. I've labored in cramped cubicles that I had to share with other faculty and in an

office in which I had to hang an umbrella over the computer to protect it from a leaky roof, as well as in a beautiful modern building overlooking a stand of pine trees. Somewhat of a bibliophile, I surreptitiously filled the last Al Lawrence office with books after borrowing more than the requisite number of shelves that I was permitted!

In my early days, I often met with students after hours in my government office at Empire State Plaza in Albany and sometimes at my home. I typed my own learning contracts, narrative evaluations, and prior learning evaluations on typewriters. I found my own books and other resources in libraries and wrote to publishers for review copies. We did not give students grades at the time, and they were often expected to come up with the themes for papers, rather than fulfill specific assignments. Students enrolled for studies on any Monday of the year, except during the faculty reading period, so one often had students working at different points in the same or a similar learning contract. I had many Business Law students and would meet monthly with them to have them analyze hypothetical problems from the text that I used for 10 editions. I might be doing contract law one day, corporations the next, and property law on another day. Over time, I developed about 30 different learning contracts in legal subjects, criminal justice, and journalism. I taught dispute mediation in FORUM and New York state government to interns in a SUNY-wide program at Empire State Plaza. One of my most rewarding experiences was the collaboration with Joyce Elliott, mentor Dick Gotti, and other colleagues on a weekend residency on family issues that we presented first in Albany, then In Syracuse. In my session on legal policy, we debated such “dull” topics as abortion, gay marriage, and surrogate parenting.

Teaching one-on-one has its disadvantages. If a student is unprepared or not understanding the material, this Socratic method (which I favor) does not work well. You can’t simply go to another student for enlightenment; you can only analyze the problem yourself. And too many students have a bad habit of “cutting class” by simply failing to show up — apparently not recognizing that their instructor is sitting alone in the office waiting to see whether they appear. But it has its rewards, as well. I remember clearly a student whose face would light up with recognition as he saw the reasoning behind many of the rules of contracts to which he had been exposed in the construction industry but had never fully understood.

Study groups gave greater opportunities for intellectual interaction and sometimes frivolity. During the health reform initiatives of the Clinton administration, I was teaching a group in Health and the Law when there was a knock at the door. A secretary stuck her head in and announced, “Al, there is someone here to see you, and it’s important.” I went to the door and opened it to find a life-size cardboard cutout of Hillary Clinton standing on the threshold. “She” joined us for the remainder of the session. With the cooperation of the secretary, the students had “invited” her as a surprise to their instructor.

When I began mentoring in 1998, I inherited a number of students who had been ill-served by an ailing mentor who had retired. The records of what they had enrolled in, studied, and been evaluated for were contradictory, and the students themselves could offer little information about what they had studied, learned, and written. Dean Joyce Elliott and I eventually concluded that they could not be given the credit that they had paid for, which, of course, left many unhappy campers. I was plagued by this problem for 10 years as students who had once studied with this mentor returned, hoping to resume their studies and complete their degrees.

Educational planning was then an open book. Every student wanted to know, "What courses do I need to take? Where are the courses listed?" There were, of course, no required courses, and the only list was of CDL courses, which, at the time, were far, far fewer in number than the online courses offered today. And they were not online; they were by paper and mail correspondence with instructors. Because they ran on term schedules and many students enrolled in regional centers on one of the 48 other weeks, the CDL courses were not available to them anyway. This required extensive discussions with students about what they wanted to learn, why they wanted degrees, and where they wanted to go. We still do this, of course, but it's much easier when they have a catalog of possible studies for a framework and even easier if they have a registered program to follow. On the other hand, I think it was somewhat easier to mentor creatively in the days when one didn't need to be as mindful of the strict educational and professional requirements that exist today in many fields. We didn't need to be so concerned about the prerequisites and credentials needed to get students where they wanted to be, which made "generalist" mentoring in fields other than your own much less fraught with the danger of turning out students who were unprepared for the career or the graduate education they desired.

"But have we become too unwilling today to be creative and to urge students to explore knowledge in innovative and unconventional ways?"

But have we become too unwilling today to be creative and to urge students to explore knowledge in innovative and unconventional ways? Are we too rigid in thinking that a program "must" contain certain elements or that only certain concentration titles will pass muster with the college's assessment committees? This is certainly not what Chancellor Boyer had in mind 50 years ago.

There was no DP Planner when I began mentoring. Students typed their degree plans, and alterations required constant arithmetic recalculations. There were no SUNY General Education requirements. Rules about "shaving" credits in order to meet what was then a 128-credit degree requirement changed constantly.

The journalism and criminal justice students that I taught developed programs that did not easily align with existing area of study (AOS) guidelines. Furthermore, faculty on assessment committees often interpreted Community and Human Services (CHS) guidelines narrowly as though the word "community" did not appear and every student was headed toward a career in social work. Criminal justice students were often required to include courses in human services, and police officers with 20 years of experience were mandated to do internships in social service agencies in order to meet a guideline that required "application" of their knowledge — something no other college required of criminal justice students.

Joyce Elliott was provost when I became a full-time, tenure-track professor, and I suggested a new area of study, to be called Public Affairs, in order to better accommodate many students in public service. She gave me a partial reassignment to discuss the idea throughout the college and to draft and shepherd guidelines through the long process of college governance, SUNY, and state education review. I worked with Tai Arnold in academic affairs, as well as faculty colleagues including Ed Warzala, Duncan RyanMann, and Frank Vander Valk. Tai was initially hesitant. "We haven't had a

new AOS in 30 years," she told me, I remember. "But, on the other hand, maybe that's a good reason to do it," she said. In the process, we discovered that an old "rule" that each regional center must have a full-time faculty member in each area of study was an "urban myth," not a requirement for accreditation. We met with some resistance. It surprised me that some faculty at an innovative, nontraditional college would balk at change, and there were those who thought "Public Affairs" referred to the likes of Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky, even though there were many colleges and programs across the country using that nomenclature.

The strangest objection, to my mind, was that, by providing students with a new option for a registered program, we would somehow be "taking away" something from the CHS area of study and the faculty who identified with it. This I never understood; at the time, we had no schools and departments and were administratively organized by regional centers. The new AOS was ultimately approved, of course, and students have now been registering programs under the title Public Affairs for nearly 15 years.

I had often been confounded by the language in AOS guidelines for disciplines outside my own learning. I remember that, when I began mentoring, even psychology professors could not explain to me what courses aligned with "domains and dimensions of thought," language in the Human Development guidelines at the time. We attempted to draft the Public Affairs guidelines in language that students and faculty from other disciplines could understand, and we used examples of course titles that might be used to meet them in the different concentrations common to the AOS, such as criminal justice, public administration, or emergency management.

I moved to the Center for Distance Learning as it was expanding in the early 2000s and converting its printbased courses to an online format that then presented on a platform called the SUNY Learning Network. It was shortly after the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and emergency management and homeland security were becoming burgeoning new fields. CDL had a one year government grant to create 10 new courses in emergency management, and I was assigned as the area coordinator in criminal justice to lead the project. There were few such programs, few resources, and little definition in academic circles as to what such an academic study should encompass. For years, I attended conferences at which the primary topic of discussion was, "What is Emergency Management as an Academic Field?" But such vagaries don't make me uncomfortable; I saw it as an opportunity to create a definition and a curriculum. Criminal justice and public administration also lend themselves to multiple interpretations of knowledge and content, and academics have also struggled since the 1960s to define the precise content of such degrees.

In a year, we had 10 new courses, many of which still form the basis of our offerings in emergency management, and a program that emphasizes the planning, policy, and management of natural, technological, and humanmade disasters.

I also extensively revised the six, then-existing CDL courses in criminal justice and proposed some additional ones as we moved them from print to online. In addition, I was responsible for seven fire administration courses that we had long offered as part of a consortium of colleges sponsored by the National Fire Academy (NFA). The NFA had produced textbooks for the courses, paying experts in the field substantial sums to write them. But when it was subsumed into the new U.S. Department of Homeland Security, that funding dried up, and the NFA proposed placing course content online. After only one meeting with representatives of the other consortium colleges, I realized that SUNY

Empire was the only institution with expertise in online education, and I urged Meg Benke, then my dean, to take on the project. We became the lead college, but each of the consortium schools was assigned to develop two courses. Unfortunately, several of them were not equal to the task of doing so in a timely way with quality content. The program would never have been completed without the extraordinary support and perseverance of Nicola Allain, who was then the director of curriculum and instructional design, and members of her team, most notably Instructional Designer Sonja Thomson.

CDL grew by leaps and bounds during my first 10 years on its faculty. We were constantly searching for new faculty and reviewing them for reappointment and tenure. Hundreds of new courses were created, and students came in droves. New protocols for teaching and mentoring them needed to be created, and new methods for reviewing their degree plans were developed. I served as faculty chair for two years, and we created several of what we called "pre-approved programs," which the faculty agreed would pass muster in an assessment committee without question if followed by students. The need for this process was obviated when the college decided to move toward registered programs.

I never felt the difficulty in moving from teaching onsite to teaching online that some of my colleagues have expressed. Perhaps it is because online discussions lend themselves well to the Socratic method that I favor. I did learn early on, though, that careful monitoring of those discussions is imperative, particularly if the subject is controversial. In the first online course that I taught, I had not realized that students were posting before the discussion period began, and, when I joined, they were already calling one another names and belittling responses with which they disagreed. One student's remarks were so egregious that he was ultimately disciplined.

When I joined the CDL faculty, there was no standing Academic Review Committee. I suggested that we needed one and became its first chair. The wealth of online resources has been a boon for access to academic sources. Unfortunately, it has also provided a wealth of information for students to plagiarize. Over the years, I endeavored to design courses with assignments so specific that it would eliminate the ability of students to plagiarize. I also think that it is part of our obligation as professors to teach students the value of academic honesty and respect for the intellectual property of other scholars. Sometimes that teaching requires consequences for the deliberate copying of the work of others. The integrity of the institution and the degrees we award require that we uphold these standards.

When I cleaned out my office shortly before my retirement, I realized that I have had a parallel career in student conduct. I had amassed nearly a full drawer of files of academic appeals, and discipline and student conduct proceedings. Plagiarism wasn't the only disciplinary issue. I conducted a number of formal hearings in which students were accused of such things as forging a transcript for prior credit, falsely obtaining financial aid, and verbal harassment of college personnel.

We occasionally get praise or thanks from our students, but often we do not recognize the impact that we have on their lives or their thinking. A few of my students have become lifelong friends. For years until she got her degree, I encouraged, nurtured, cajoled, and ran interference for a bright woman from an abusive background who was working as an over-the-road truck driver. After a number of false starts, she rewarded this effort by completing two advanced degrees, remarrying,

and becoming a counselor. Even incidental contacts can have a lasting impression. I once received a gratifying email from a student with whom I had had only two sessions before she dropped out. Years later, she wrote to tell me that she had obtained a bachelor's and a law degree from another school but that, by asking her to critique the rationale in a court case, I had taught her "that I could criticize the thinking of a Supreme Court justice."

The years between writing about a "dream," nontraditional college to teaching in today's robust institution with hundreds of faculty and staff, thousands of students, and many thousands of graduates have led me through three degrees, three careers, hundreds of students, and dozens of treasured colleagues, as well as marriage, children and grandchildren. I now look forward to returning to a career in writing as a professor emeritus, and I look forward to watching the continuing evolution of our dynamic college.

"One essential element of [our] history was the recognition that students – adult learners of all kinds – come to university with enormously complex lives, with job histories, with connections to their communities, with skills gained on the streets, in basements and kitchens, on shop floors and with neighbors … This was indeed a radical claim, especially because it threw into question the sacred belief that all knowledge worth knowing was born in and remained the property of the university."

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 34, Spring 2008

"Killing the Spirit": Empire State College in the 21st Century | By Wayne Willis

Prelude

In September 1977, during my first month of mentoring at Empire State College, I got to talking with a young clerk at the little grocery store down the street from my apartment. "Empire State College," he said, "that's the school where it's what you make of it, right?" This seemed to me at the time, and still does, a just about perfect description of our college as it aspired to be then: what Alan Mandell has called "an anti-institutional institution" that was taking different shapes every day as individual students worked with individual mentors under conditions of nearly limitless freedom and few resources. (I sometimes felt like we had all been cast in an old Mickey Rooney-Judy Garland musical: "Look kids, there's a swell old barn over there. Let's start up a college!")

The degree programs and learning contracts that came out of these freewheeling collaborations were not always wonderful, or maybe even sensible. But they frequently expressed the student's actual learning interests, goals, experiences, and capabilities to an extent that was, and remains, rare at more conventional schools.

Empire State College was never only "about mentoring," but expanding the faculty role from professor to mentor has always been vital to the pursuit of "individualized" or "personalized" education here. No one has done more than Alan Mandell to foster a complex culture of mentoring concepts and practices in the face of mounting external and internal obstacles over many years. My All About Mentoring article included in this anthology examined changes in the college from its origins to 2007 that weakened its character and spirit as a progressive educational institution. Alan's own contribution to the most recent issue of AAM (Winter, 2024) asks whether this "Age of Mentoring" has reached its end. He wonders whether mentoring has become merely a word that has "anything more than symbolic and perhaps nostalgic value" in today's Empire State University. Even so, one might respond, the not entirely abandoned language of mentoring still connects Empire State University, however inadequately, to its old educational ideals.

On Alan's retirement Empire loses one of its most persistent, insightful and seemingly omnipresent voices for the values we associate with mentoring. But perhaps others, inspired in part by his example, will still choose to use their talents to revive and update Empire's mentoring tradition. Maybe a mentoring renaissance is not yet too much to hope for?

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Wayne Willis, 2007.

In 1990, the noted American historian Page Smith published a blistering critique of higher education in the United States. He titled his book, *Killing the Spirit*. Smith had been a long-time professor at UCLA before coming in the mid-1960s to the new University of California at Santa Cruz as a founding faculty member and the first provost of one of its divisions, Cowell College. He remained at Santa Cruz during its formative years, but resigned in 1974 when a university committee denied tenure to a young colleague whom Smith believed was especially dedicated to the school's radical educational ideals. He had concluded, as Gerald Grant and David Riesman put it, "that a university that had no place for such a teacher had no place for him."[1] Smith never returned to the academic world. For the rest of his life, he devoted himself to independent scholarship and raising chickens.

Killing the Spirit was largely an updated statement of the convictions that had taken Smith to Santa Cruz a quarter century before. Although a prolific author himself, Smith contended that "the vast majority of the so-called research turned out in the modern university is essentially worthless. It does not result in any measurable benefit to anything or anybody … It is busywork on a vast, almost incomprehensible scale. It is dispiriting; it depresses the whole scholarly enterprise; and, most important of all, it deprives the student of what he or she deserves – the thoughtful and considerate attention of a teacher deeply and unequivocally committed to teaching; in short, it robs the student of an education." The worst offenders, according to Smith, were the great research universities and the most prestigious liberal arts colleges where the "publish or perish" principle operated with a vengeance. The "oases" in this academic "desert" were the "hundreds upon hundreds of small, obscure colleges … whose faculties teach devotedly and whose students learn happily and well," particularly the community colleges "where thousands of able and intelligent men and women take their teaching opportunities with the greatest seriousness," pursuing "their mission with spirit and élan." These colleges, he wrote, are "the hope of higher education in America."[2]

A "true education," Smith said, was "one designed to produce a true person." To achieve this goal, students needed to be made "an integral part of the learning process." Smith regretted that the student revolt of the 1960s had not achieved a more long-lasting success in its struggle against a bureaucratized, impersonal, "soulless" system of education. Among Smith's many targets was the continued dominance of classroom lecturing, "the most inefficient way of transmitting knowledge ever devised," as well as the least involving. Grading was another of the "greatest obstacles to effective teaching."[3] (From the beginning Santa Cruz had rejected letter grades in favor of narrative evaluations, a method that it has kept to the present, although in more recent years a grading option has been added.)

When I first read Smith's book in the mid-1990s, I thought that, had he known about Empire State College, he would have liked a lot of what we did here and the spirit in which we did it. Like Santa Cruz, Empire State College was born during the wave of higher education reform and experimentation that swept through America from the mid-1960s through the early '70s. Empire State College shared many ideals, goals, structures, and methods with Santa Cruz and other dissenting and inventive colleges of this period. A few, like Antioch, had long histories of educational progressivism, derived from the work of John Dewey, Alexander Meiklejohn, Arthur Morgan, and other early twentieth century reformers. Most, however, were either brand new institutions or new "subcolleges" created within otherwise conventional colleges and universities. In her book, The Innovative Campus (1999), Joy Rosenzweig Kliewer identifies 314 schools of this type that were created in the United States during the '60s and '70s, not including institutions that primarily served adults, offered external degrees, or relied upon distance learning. While Kliewer excludes Empire State College on these grounds, the key characteristics of her "innovative institutions" fit Empire State College very well.

Kliewer closely studied six schools from their founding through the late 1990s. These included two private colleges (Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts and Pitzer College in Claremont, California), and four public institutions (New College in Sarasota, Florida, Evergreen State College in Olympia, Washington, the University of California at Santa Cruz, and the University of Wisconsin – Green Bay). She found that in their early years all of these places had five "dimensions" that distinguished them from more typical institutions. First, these schools practiced "teaching and learning" across disciplinary boundaries. Faculty were not organized by departments, but affiliated with interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary areas of study. They had freedom to create courses and to work independently with students on subjects of interest that were not part of their own formal education or established expertise. Secondly, all six were committed to processes of "student-centered education" that enabled students to take a large measure of responsibility for designing their academic programs and shaping the learning they pursued within their studies. Contract learning was a common feature, as was the use of narrative evaluation. Core curriculum and distribution requirements were rejected. Thirdly, each school considered "experiential learning" to be "integral to the academic program" and encouraged students to engage in "out-of-classroom projects," internships, and travel study. (However, since most of their students were of traditional college age, they did not ordinarily award credit by evaluation for prior learning from work and life experience.) Fourth, an atmosphere of "egalitarianism" prevailed within these academic communities. Everyone usually dealt with each other on a first-name basis. In some cases, such as Evergreen, faculty had no formal title other than "faculty member." All had highly participatory governance structures. Finally, there was an "institutional focus on teaching rather than research and/or publication," which was embraced by faculty who displayed an ardent "spirit of vocation about teaching."[4]

I hope that our current experience (or at least our memory) of Empire State College is still close enough to this composite description so that we can see how deeply indebted our college was to the alternative higher education movement of the '60s and '70s. The innovative features that Kliewer identifies were as integral to the early Empire State College as they were to any of the schools included in her study. When the college enrolled its first students in the fall of 1971, it added itself to an educational counterculture whose formation was already well under way. While we often speak of the "mentor role" as if it was a unique Empire State College creation, faculty at other

progressive colleges were already functioning less and less like traditional professors and more and more as advisors, guides, and co-learners with their students.

What may indeed have been unique about Empire State College is that it took a liberating vision of higher education that had been nurtured in residential, selective, private and public colleges for traditional students and applied it to a nonresidential, geographically dispersed, open enrollment institution that aimed to serve "individuals of all ages, throughout society, according to their own lifestyles and educational needs."[5] It is this emphasis on vastly widened access to education, along with the methods used to accomplish it, that most differentiates Empire State College from philosophically similar schools, such as Hampshire and New College. If we are to understand the original spirit of our college, it is crucial to realize that what Empire State College attempted to do was provide for just about everybody the sort of individualized, self-directed, cross-disciplinary, experientially rooted, and just plain friendly educational experience that was becoming available to a minority of academically skilled, independent minded, late adolescents at residential colleges across the country. Thus, Empire State College took on a greater challenge than any of the schools studied by Kliewer (or by most other researchers). Many of the satisfactions and frustrations of professional life at Empire State College over the years stem directly from the extraordinary ambitiousness of the college's founding vision.

No vision, and certainly no institution, remains untouched by time. Yet when Kliewer published *The Innovative Campus* in 1999, she was impressed by how well the six schools profiled in her book had managed to preserve the qualities that had been most important to them nearly 30 years earlier, although Santa Cruz, Wisconsin – Green Bay, and Pitzer had drifted much farther toward conventionality than Hampshire, Evergreen or New College. A quick tour of their web sites seems to show that these three are still holding on pretty well in 2007. On visiting Hampshire with my son two years ago, I found its students, faculty, and top administrators retained an invigorating sense of themselves as intellectual and aesthetic free spirits, and conveyed a critical social consciousness that was not as immediately apparent at mainstream schools. It was poignant to hear New Hampshire faculty talk about how glad they were to be released from letter grading.

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How much of Empire State College's early spirit has survived? When I came to the Genesee Valley Center in 1977, I was amused to hear some mentors who had started with the college in the early '70s talk about how Empire State College was losing its energy as an alternative school and was in danger, as the philosopher George Drury put it, of being "resorbed" by the prevailing system. What, I wondered, could they possibly be thinking of? This was at a time when Empire State College still had no curricular guidelines for areas of study or disciplines within them; there was no precise labeling or counting of advanced or liberal credits;

students enrolled to study for "months" of time, rather than a number of credits; they could start a 16-week enrollment on any week day of the year except for the August reading period. During degree program planning, a student and mentor could put together any combination of transcript credits, CLEP exams, credit by evaluation requests, and learning contracts and give it whatever title they chose, so long as they could convince the rather pliant members of the assessment committee that there was a pattern there that made sense. Although I had read a good deal about alternative education, Empire State College appeared breathtakingly, even (dare I say it?) a bit irresponsibly, open. Although Empire State College was not as "far out" as some of the experiments discussed in my favorite book on educational change, Judson Jerome's *Culture Out of Anarchy* (1971), it went far enough for me.

But when I look back at some of the college's earliest documents, I get a glimpse of what may have been troubling some of my colleagues. For instance, students had once enjoyed even more flexibility in the timing of their enrollments. In 1972-73 they enrolled for 12-week quarters, but the Empire State College bulletin for that year says, "The weeks do not have to be sequential."[6] This reflected the new college's aim to "transcend conventional academic structure," including "set periods of time."[7] Perhaps more importantly, some of the actual learning contracts that are described in detail in early college publications show a degree of imaginative integration across subject areas and modes of learning, as well as an intellectual depth, that I believe was quite unusual only a few years later.8 Such contracts were probably never typical, but they reflected goals of best practice toward which the college had hoped its students and faculty would aspire. However, by the late '70s mentors were carrying large student loads and a student's four-month enrollment period was usually divided into compartmentalized studies with little coordination between mentors. Soon the separate, course-like nature of each study would be underscored when the college converted to a standard credit system. The college was becoming a more formal institution. Rumor had it that when GVC's former dean, John Jacobson, became vice president for academic affairs in 1974, he said his goal during the first few months was to write one new college policy each week!

In 1979, the college began to codify guidelines for concentrations in response to demands from the New York State Education Department. The more specific the guideline, the more likely it was to be treated as a set of requirements. Exact tallies of the liberal and advanced credits also began to be compiled for assessment of each student's degree program proposal. Increased standardization of expectations, combined with heavy student loads and limited imagination, caused mentors to produce "canned" learning contracts, rather than studies designed with and for the individual student. The establishment of the Center for Distance Learning expanded access to education for an ever-growing number of students, but CDL's dependence upon highly prestructured courses was incompatible with individualized, student-centered education as it was then understood in most branches of the college and in the wider educational counterculture.

Another departure from the early vision of the college was also significant. Empire State College began to reconceive itself as a college for "adult learners," rather than a haven for "students of all ages and situations" who did not wish, in the words of the 1972-73 bulletin, to become "standardized products on some sort of educational assembly line."[9] On the one hand, this shift acknowledged the simple reality that most of the students who accepted the college's invitation to learn were adults in their 30s and older. On the other hand, the notion that the college was an "adult college" weakened our sense of fraternal connection to institutions like Hampshire and New

College, thereby severing us from many of our philosophical roots. To compensate for its intellectual isolation, Empire State College increasingly oriented itself toward the world of adult higher education. One result is that many long-time faculty members who came to the college in the 1970s thinking of it as part of a national movement to change American society by constructing new models of higher learning found themselves working in an institution that was losing its sense of affiliation with that broader movement.

The problem was not so much that Empire State College was serving fewer young students than it might have done. It was that our work with adults came to be discussed as if it was an essentially different endeavor from what faculties at other progressive colleges were doing with their younger students. It now appeared that the reason the college treated its students as individuals and enabled them to self-design their programs was that this approach suited a *specifically* adult population – but, then again, not all adults. For those who might better be reached through a prestructured curriculum, Empire State College increasingly offered other options. When the goals of expanded access and individualized learning seemed to conflict, access gained priority.[10] Empire State College publicized itself as a college of maximum convenience for busy adults; a place that would find one way or another to serve you, outside the traditional campus. In this way, the college has steadily grown and fulfilled its goal of educational outreach to underserved people, while obscuring some of the other fundamental purposes and values that had brought it into being. As its founding documents show, originally Empire State College wanted to be more than a method for students to earn degrees inexpensively without attending classes. It aimed for a qualitatively different and better educational experience, not a replication of the norm by other means.

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Despite the internal tensions and inconsistencies, much of the early countercultural spirit of the college did survive the 1980s and 1990s to endure the new wounds of the 21st century. Over the last few years, general education requirements were inflicted entirely from the outside, by the SUNY Board of Trustees, while letter grades were adopted with the approval of our governance bodies and a term calendar was devised and declared by the college's own central administration. There are arguments that can be made for the beneficent influence of general education requirements, letter grades and a term calendar, but it cannot be credibly claimed that any of these things is consistent with the college's founding commitments to "flexibility and individual learning."[11] President Joe Moore's imposition of a uniform term calendar throughout the college is particularly ironic, since one of the college's boldest innovations was its complete individualization of enrollment cycles. Chancellor Ernest Boyer wanted to free the student from "the rigidity of the calendar,"[12] something that Empire State College was well designed to accomplish. When President Jim Hall wrote the final chapter to Richard Bonnabeau's history of the college in 1996, he predicted that by 2021 Empire State College's system, "permitting students to begin study at virtually any time" according to their personal circumstances, would be "adopted by most institutions."[13] Perhaps

if that does happen, Empire State College will reverse itself once more and tag along, when it might instead have led the procession.

Students are not the only ones hemmed in by the term calendar. Already we hear complaints from faculty, formalized in a resolution from the Niagara Frontier Center, that it is not possible to churn out large numbers of thoughtfully written narrative evaluations within the time allotted at the end of each term period. Their proposed solution is to abandon narratives and have an all letter-grade transcript. One thing leads to another as Empire State College blasts away its progressive educational foundations. It remains to be seen whether the newly mandated online registration process and catalog of "learning opportunities" will serve the education of students or result in more bureaucratic obstacles and generic instruction – just what Empire State College was meant to overcome.

Kliewer's book concludes with an analysis of several factors that enabled some of the progressive colleges of the 1960s to maintain their special qualities over time. She found that the continued presence of large numbers of early faculty members helped to hold these institutions to their "original distinctive missions" and supporting practices. Oldtimers transmitted the culture of their colleges to new faculty who, in turn, had been selected because they appeared to "share the basic values of the pioneers." As a result, faculty at Hampshire, Pitzer, New College, and Evergreen had not tried to replace the "free-flowing, nondepartmental organizational structures" that sustain the collaboration of faculty and students across fields of study. Faculty were also rewarded primarily for the quality and creativity of their work with students, rather than "being evaluated on the basis of the conventional, disciplinary research and publication standards." It has been just as important for administrative leadership, as it has for faculty, to retain its understanding of core principles and the practices that are consistent with them. Administrators at private colleges, or at public colleges with a relatively high degree of autonomy (such as New College and Evergreen) have been best positioned to resist external lures and pressures that threaten the distinctive character of their institutions.[14]

To some extent, Empire State College can still be fit into Kliewer's portrait of the enduringly alternative college. Many of our senior faculty have spent most, if not all, of their professional lives here and feel strongly about preserving the college's mission and culture. New faculty members are expected to be enthusiastic about Empire State College's educational values and practices and to reflect them in their work. Faculty still identify with very broad and often overlapping areas of study instead of discipline-based departments. Our interaction with each other focuses far more on our work with students than on talk about our personal scholarly projects. However, most of the college's first generation of mentors is long gone, and many other senior faculty are nearing retirement. Our physical dispersion, combined with our loose organizational structure, continues to make it difficult for faculty to develop a strong, collective stance in governance bodies and other college forums, leaving our core values weakly defended. Institutional leadership resides mainly with administrators who are often less attuned to the early spirit of the college than were some of their predecessors.

Mentors and students are now confronted with an organization that seeks to preserve its reputation for "personal academic advising and attention" and programs built "around the lives of individual adults"[15] while operating within academic and administrative rules that are far more conventional than they once were. The new emphasis on externally visible scholarship will reward faculty who

manage to pull away from their work as mentors to produce such scholarship, but also punish faculty who do not. The current Strategic Plan stresses expanding access to an even wider range of adult students and new devices to improve our retention rates. Worthy goals in themselves, and the plan also aims to enhance "learning resources for individualized and group studies." But no current college document conveys Empire State College's former passion for providing access to a liberating style of education that was superior to what traditional colleges offered their students and might even foreshadow a transformed educational and social world.[16] The belief that we could do, and were doing, something like that is what made some of us feel that it was well worthwhile to endure many of the college's deprivations and indignities of work life. (Preposterous workloads, shabby facilities, no library or other campus amenities, et cetera, et cetera.) Grandiose it might have been, but when Empire State College is stripped of its sense of utopian promise, it becomes a somewhat less interesting, less satisfying, and seemingly less important place.

The Yale sociologist Burton Clark says that distinctive colleges construct an "organizational saga" or "legend" about themselves that gives voice to their distinctiveness and motivates their members to preserve it.[17] An organizational saga expresses only a part of the institution's actual history and present reality, but it is the part that is most inspiring to its members, the part for which they are willing to struggle and sacrifice. For me, and perhaps for some others who are still here, the dissenting social and educational movements that flourished during the 1960s and '70s molded the organizational saga of Empire State College. Because I still revere the essential spirit of these movements, I mourn their declining influence on our college's policies, practices, and sense of itself. Empire State College may yet create a new, or highly revised, saga that will be equally energizing. I sincerely hope that it does, but perhaps I will be forgiven for detecting few signs of it at present. With what do we replace Empire State College's old radical spirit? One answer came recently from an apparently far more disillusioned colleague, who wrote, "We [at Empire State College] are a deeply religious people, and our religion is 'business' or, perhaps more strictly, 'marketing.'"

Footnotes

[1] Gerald Grant and David Riesman, *The Perpetual Dream: Reform and Experiment in the American College* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 280.

[2] Page Smith, *Killing the Spirit: Higher Education in America* (New York: Viking, 1990), 7, 19-20.

[3] Ibid., 204, 210, 215, 219.

[4] Joy Rosenzweig Kliewer, *The Innovative Campus: Nurturing the Distinctive Learning Environment* (Phoenix: American Council of Education/Oryx Press, 1999), xviii.

[5] Prospectus for the New University College (1971), as quoted in Richard F. Bonnabeau, The *Promise Continues: Empire State College: The First Twenty-Five Years* (Empire State College, 1996), 18.

[6] *Empire State College* (undated bulletin, issued for 1972 - 1973), 73.

[7] Prospectus for a New University College, quoted in Bonnabeau, *The Promise Continues*, 18. Ê

[8] *Empire State College* (undated bulletin, issued for 1972 - 73), 12-28.

[9] Ibid., 4.

[10] As Bonnabeau shows in *The Promise Continues* (23 - 24), the conflict between prestructured and more spontaneous, individualized approaches to learning at Empire State College goes back to struggles between two early college leaders, Loren Baritz and Arthur Chickering. Although Chickering and individualization did more to shape Empire State College's self-image and practices during the 1970s (thereby linking the college philosophically to other thinkers and institutions in the educational counterculture), prestructured programs (especially the Center for Distance Learning) eventually became prominent. Empire State College presents itself today to prospective students as a school that has no philosophical preferences for one mode of learning over another, but seeks to provide multiple pathways to the attainment of a degree. This neutrality shows how far the college has distanced itself from the transformative ethos of its early years.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ernest L. Boyer, "Foreword" to Bonnabeau, *The Promise Continues*, 6.

[13] James W. Hall, "Imaginings: Looking Back from the Year 2021," in Bonnabeau, *The Promise Continues*, 179.

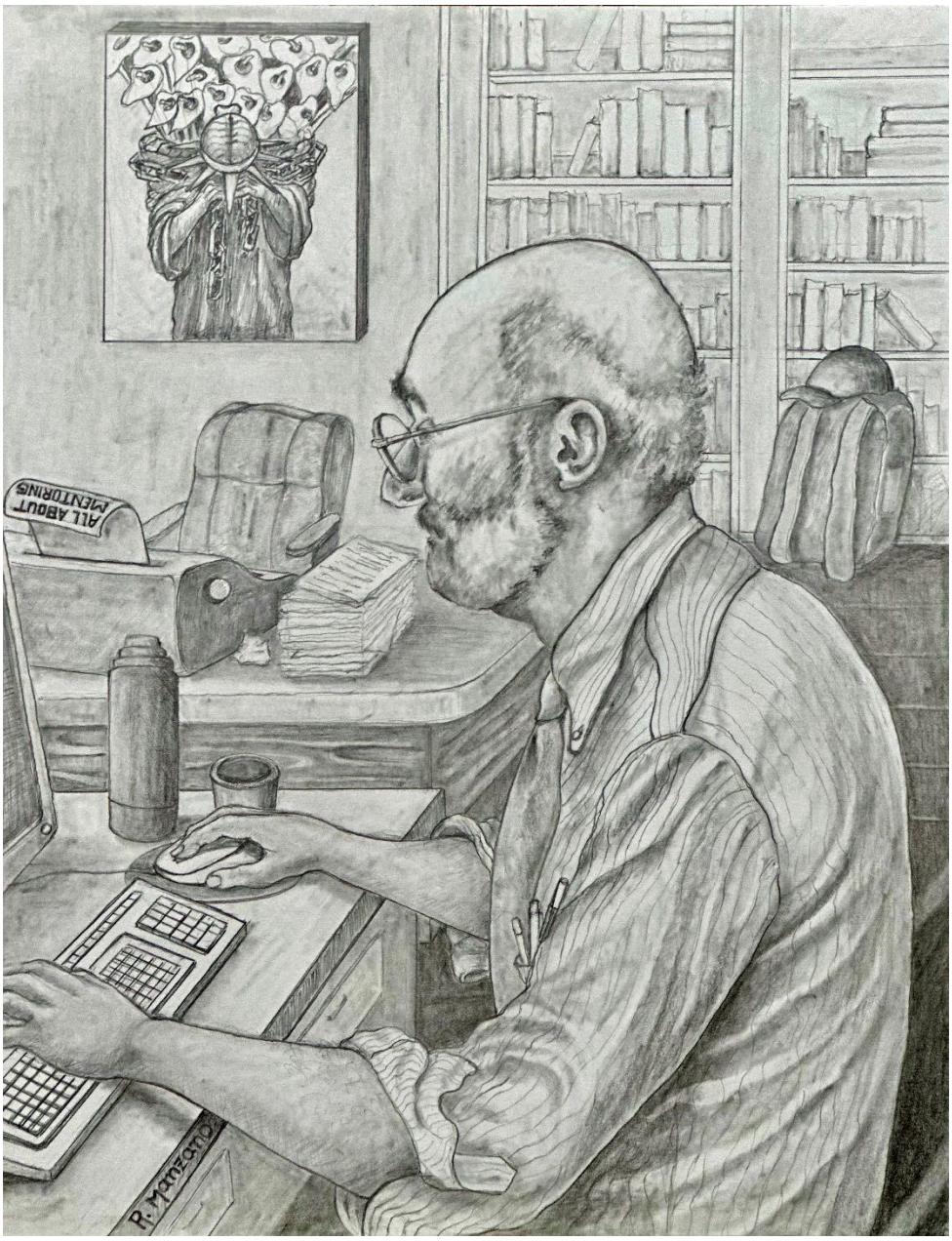
[14] Kliewer, 217-220.

[15] Quotations from *Learners First: The Campaign for Empire State College* (undated and unpaged promotional pamphlet).

[16] "Man's fate and the fate of education are inextricably linked," proclaimed Empire State College's first bulletin (1971 - 1972). "Therefore, the future of the world," and human survival within it, "depends upon the wisdom of our actions concerning future educational priorities and programs. Sound judgments and wise priorities will support the major reorientations required for the expansion of human satisfactions and potentials. Misjudgment and misplaced priorities may lead to a new human nature combining the animal irrationality of primitive man with the materialistic greed and lust of industrial man, and powered by the destructive forces available from modern technology. That could lead to the end of man." They sure don't write them like that anymore! The redemptive fervor of Empire State College in the 1970s was quite alarming to some, such as the New York State Education Department staffer who reportedly said, "Empire State is a cult, not a college."

[17] Burton Clark, *The Distinctive College* (Chicago: Aldine, 1970), 233 - 262.

IV - Facing the Future



Drawing of Alan Mandell by Raul Manzano, 2024

A Perspective on Policy Punctuations and Learning Outcomes at SUNY Empire State College | By Nadine Wedderburn

Prelude

In my All About Mentoring No. 48 essay, writing as a fledgling mentor trying to make meaning of the myriad changes taking place at the then SUNY Empire State College, I drew on punctuated equilibrium theory, a well-substantiated framework in the study of public policy that seeks to explain long periods of stability in organizational or social systems interrupted by brief, intense periods of change. In the context of higher education, policy shifts often create such "punctuations," leading to restructuring or reform in curriculum design, pedagogical practices, and institutional operations. These changes may be unsettling within a traditional education system in the short term but can result in beneficial adaptations that meet the needs of administration, faculty, staff and students. Now, eight years after the publication of that essay, I am grateful for the opportunity to reflect on punctuated equilibrium theory against the backdrop of Dr. Alan Mandell's vision of, and long-standing commitment to, adult learning at SUNY Empire.

Alan's incontrovertible and unyielding devotion to the institution for over 45 years has unquestionably served to ensure that its fundamental mission to empower adult learners to achieve their academic goals remains intact. At key moments of policy shifts or societal pressure, when the institution experienced periods of rapid transformation, Alan's advocacy for inclusive approaches to learning, particularly for adult learners, found relevance and currency. It was by his foresight and guidance that the Center for Mentoring and Learning ("Academic Innovation" added later as the Center's scope broadened) came into being and has continued to succeed. In this capacity, Alan's stewardship, and the work of the center overall, has secured invaluable professional development for new and experienced SUNY Empire faculty and staff navigating the intricacies of adult pedagogy in service of students. His leadership has remained grounded in the belief that education should be a lifelong pursuit and, as such, he has helped steer the careers of many – students and colleagues alike – through turbulent higher education times.

The pushing and pulling of public policies invariably leads education institutions to reconfigure the "what" and "how" of teaching and learning, which in turn causes policy "punctuations" to act as catalysts for innovation. Considering this, Alan has faithfully advocated for the development and delivery of various residency formats which offer flexibility in modes of learning, and he has staunchly championed the recognition of prior learning – the learner-centered practice that acknowledges profound learning occurring across the life span in various contexts beyond formal education while validating the rich experiences adult learners bring to their academic journey in pertinent and meaningful ways.

Alan's keen ability to anticipate the needs of adult learners during moments of institutional change, alongside his reputation as a highly respected voice in the scholarship and research of adult learning and teaching, reflects his deep understanding of the importance of adult education in the modern world. Over the course of his 45-year-plus career, he has played a pivotal role in guiding the institution through periods of unsettling change, turning disruptions into opportunities for creativity, inclusivity, and growth. His leadership has ensured that adult learners are not simply accommodated but celebrated as a vital part of the SUNY Empire community, embodying the adaptive and transformative

spirit that punctuated equilibrium underscores. Alan's retirement from SUNY Empire is itself a notable punctuation mark in the institution's narrative, signifying an individual's and institution's tremendous capacity to work together through challenges to realize commendable outcomes for all its constituents.

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Nadine Wedderburn, 2016.

As I sat through two days of discussion, deliberations and debates concerning processes related to the creation of a collegewide course catalog, it occurred to me that I was participating in what might be considered a protracted, defining moment along the institution's trajectory. Vibrant conversations about learning outcomes took on various qualities and I conjectured that yet another fundamental change to SUNY Empire State College's identity was imminent.

Whereas higher education institutions may be typically characterized as firmly rooted in tradition and somewhat immune to shifting public policies to which other sectors of public education are vulnerable, increased competition for government funding amidst additional policy concerns such as completion, enrollment, retention and tuition-pricing have forced public colleges and universities to contend with intense change. In the realm of public policy, these interruptive government actions are referred to as "policy punctuations" that have the potential to alter an organization's identity and priorities (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993).

In this essay, I contend that policy changes punctuating Empire State College's narrative are in evidence. Further, I propose that in this dynamic context, "learning outcomes" may be alternatively used to conceptualize an educative process in which the college community is currently engaging, not solely the formulated components of knowledge, skills and abilities promised by a course of study as is typically understood.

Policy Punctuations

The notion of policy punctuations draws on Punctuated Equilibrium Theory, which seeks to explain a system's evolution as periods of stability interrupted by dramatic transition or transformation (Gersick, 1991; Romanelli & Tushman, 1994). Based on this theory, Baumgartner, Jones and Mortensen (2014) submitted that " … policymaking both makes leaps and undergoes periods of near stasis as issues emerge and recede from the public agenda" (p. 61). As a result, the policy process is susceptible to intervals of stability and gradual, incremental change throughout its duration. Against this backdrop, it can be deduced that changes in higher education policy have resulted in marked pauses, exclamations or stops for many institutions. Indeed, here at ESC, we have been experiencing recent calls to revise, re-imagine, rebuild and restructure teaching, mentoring, learning and administrative practices, and to re-emerge as a community ready to work through the challenges of delivering 21st century tertiary-level education.

In their 2014 and 2015 higher education policy briefs that prioritize higher education state policy issues, the American Association of State Colleges and Universities identified policies that emphasize the need for public higher education institutions to prepare students to meet states' workforce and economic development demands, all the while dealing with lower enrollment rates, increasing tuition and heightened attention to academic quality. These concerns may be seen as converging into what has become known as "the college completion agenda." The Education Policy Center confirmed, "[t]he college completion focus is both a workforce and an economic development issue" (Friedel, Thornton, D'Amico, & Katsinas, 2013, p. 2). Seemingly driving the college completion agenda are performance-oriented policy reforms and increased demands on institutions for stronger accountability, affordability and access (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011).

In response to these forces, SUNY (n.d.) has devised "SUNY Excels," a system intended to measure performance as a function of five factors – Access, Completion, Success, Inquiry and Engagement. This model has been embraced by ESC. Commonly referred to as performance-based funding, many states have established formulae or policies to determine funding based on measures such as course completion, time to degree, the number of degrees awarded, or the number of low-income and minority graduates. SUNY Excels is a policy rejoinder that is intricately tied to funding and is expected to provide greater accountability and transparency across the entire SUNY system. As SUNY's Big Ideas (2015) blog reported after Chancellor Nancy Zimpher's State of the University Address: …

> in response to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's call for performance-based funding plans in his 2015 State of Opportunity Agenda, SUNY will hold itself accountable to its stakeholders through 'SUNY Excels,' a performance management system that will measure the university's achievements at the system and campus levels. (para. 8)

To my mind, these tensions among funding, completion and academic quality have reoriented the mission of higher education at large and produced some specific outcomes that the ESC community has had to learn, namely, how to mentor students through ESCstyle degree planning in an environment of changing state aid regulations; how to create programs that generate robust enrollment rates while staying true to the essence of a liberal arts and science education; and how to develop tools, systems and processes that promote equity and ensure efficiency of resources for faculty, staff and administration.

Take, for example, the fact that New York state financial aid regulations insist that students have a nearly finalized degree program plan soon after their first year of enrollment in order to continue receiving aid. Additionally, decisions about transfer credits are expected to be conclusive almost immediately upon admission and no later than the first-term registration (K. Delbridge, Northeast Region Meeting, June 2015). This is, in effect, opposite to the practice of many mentors who work with students over a period of time planning their degrees before concretizing decisions in the form of degree plans. Clearly, both the regulatory strategy and educational planning approach serve students well, but increased attention to performance and accountability gives pause to a long-established mentoring practice carried out in the spirit of promoting individualization and students' ownership of their education as a focal aspect of degree planning and of an ESC education more broadly. Establishing "pre-structured" programs at ESC has been touted as one practical response to facilitating the financial aid policy demands as such an approach would likely reduce ambiguity around required courses and offer a clear path to degree completion. This method of program

development is conceivably revolutionary to extant ESC practice and consideration for its implementation has proven to be quite enlightening.

As mentioned previously, a recent instance of ESC's punctuated narrative is exemplified in the activities related to understanding how to effectively and efficiently capture and publicize the wide variety of "courses" available for study across the college. This undertaking is arguably tied to enrollment and retention efforts, as straightforward, transparent access to study options is vital to the college's existence and to students' success. Hence, a concrete outcome of the project is an e-catalog that includes a comprehensive listing of courses offered at ESC and fully available for use by the entire community. The development of the catalog has been a multi-layered exercise and not one of simply agreeing upon course titles. Different constituencies have been involved in rounds of sorting and assigning courses to respective areas of study, determining and prioritizing course learning outcomes, organizing the relevant components of the catalog and making various decisions about study offerings along academic disciplines' lines. These activities reflect a clear departure from the way information concerning learning opportunities has been conceptualized, processed and disseminated at ESC in the past. They offer us a clear example of systems that are evolving at ESC.

Perhaps the most significant of all punctuations that ESC has been experiencing recently is the major restructuring to its organizational configuration. As Parsons and Fidler (2005) noted,

> Punctuations are brief periods when the organization may undergo a profound transition or transformation … in most cases where the trigger, which precipitates the punctuation, is external events or the actions of senior management, the punctuation does change the deep structure in a traumatic way. The brief period of punctuation produces distress for organization members. They are disorientated and confused because the organizational certainties which provided security are being undermined. (p. 450-451)

At the time of this writing (mid-fall 2015), the ESC administration is seeking to add several positions to its cadre: one dean of academic services, five associate deans, and three executive directors. These newly-identified positions are part of a completely redesigned organizational chart that systematizes the college into seven "key functional areas": Academic Affairs; Advancement; Administration; Community, Media and Government Relations; Decision Support; Enrollment Management and Marketing; and Integrated Technologies. Based on the new organizational chart, the five associate deans to be hired will report to the newly appointed dean of undergraduate studies, Nikki Shrimpton, and will provide leadership to five respective groupings of areas of study (Business; Human Services; Humanities; Science, Math, Technology; and Social Science); while the intended dean of academic services will potentially have responsibility over virtual learning, faculty development and academic support (SUNY ESC, 2015). Prior to this arrangement, primary administrative, teaching and learning activities were organized around regional clusters across the state, with each "center" exercising a measure of autonomy over its respective operations. In contrast, the latest structural adjustments to personnel responsibilities and alignments actualize deep disruptions to some of ESC's characteristic relationships and processes. In essence, the college community will have to learn new alliances and come to terms with new ways of coexisting professionally within a rearranged workplace matrix.

Learning Through Change

Although policy punctuations may be unsettling to an organization, they also provide opportunities for "new" thinking and learning within organizations. The definition of learning as offered by Nisbet, Lincoln and Dunn (2013) is instructive here: "the process of developing knowledge, skills or new insights, bringing about a change in understanding, perspective, or the way something is done or acted upon" (p. 469). Given this characterization, it is evident that change and learning can be neatly intertwined, allowing for meaningful transformation if harnessed wisely. Schultz (2014) concurred:

> … intentional continuous learning supports organizational readiness for change; though specific change implementations can be marked in time, organizational change and learning is continuous; and learning itself is change, and deliberately recognizing and identifying learning as a kind of change can help to create an environment for sustainable organizational change over time. (p. 21)

When punctuated moments of change occur in higher education, learning outcomes may manifest themselves not merely as the consequences of change but as a worthwhile, edifying process within a dynamic milieu of public policy changes and pressures. At ESC, the entire community is being forced to examine and define aspects of crucial roles and responsibilities in completely unprecedented ways. As agents of change, faculty, staff and students are able to exercise reflexivity and create strategies that will equip them to adapt to and survive continuing change.

Alternatively, while learning may be a valuable by-product of organizational change, punctuated moments can also reveal failures to learn. Given the high levels of uncertainty and ambiguity that come with punctuated equilibrium, individuals may choose not to participate in the processes attendant to organizational change and thus become part of a passive and apathetic collective. What may happen then, is that little to no learning takes place, and opportunities to recognize organizational "blind spots" or "misfits" are missed. For instance, learning takes time and the rate of change or approaches to change may be perceived as untenable by some. In addition, since learning is a more reflective and active process than merely acquiring knowledge, successful learning through change requires that organizational members are willing, ready and able to engage the change process. Some may feel out of their depth in contending with the changes afoot and simply exclude themselves from the process. This can result in a serious knowledge-sharing deficit and should be of importance to those promoting change so that barriers to learning can be acknowledged and mitigated.

To a large extent, organizational change involves behavioral change at the level of the individual. Further, Nisbet, Lincoln and Dunn (2013) point out that learning is as much communal as it is personal. Therefore, during periods of change, the shared beliefs, values and experiences of individuals that influence the core identity and mission of an organization are likely to be challenged, thus inhibiting the benefits of learning through change. Lines, Sáenz and Aramburu (2011) submit that when justifications for change are referential and penitentiary, organizational learning is more likely to be generative and engaging. In other words, when success stories of similar change activities are presented as evidentiary reference, or when managers/ leaders exhibit awareness of and concern for the potential hardships that come with organizational change, individuals are more apt to embrace change and participate in creating new knowledge and sharing

knowledge across the organization. The authors surmise that referential and penitentiary justifications are beneficial for fostering learning due to their effect of reducing uncertainty, ambiguity and perceived levels of threat. Lines, Sáenz and Aramburu (2011) stated:

> Uncertainty and ambiguity reduction in periods of change can foster learning because information processing and solution development become focused on specific issues that are important for the effective functioning of the specific change that is pursued by the organization … it is possible that the perceived level of threat diminishes when penitentiary justifications are received by those that are (negatively) affected by change. (p.178)

Punctuated equilibrium is tantamount to changing human behavior and attitudes in the organizational context. However, accomplishing change in human behavior, even through learning, is a complex task and often demands more than rational explanations. Individuals' inability to accurately estimate future payoffs of risks inspires fear and resistance to change. Behavioral change theories and strategies, although not the subject of this essay, may offer useful responses to this issue.

Concluding Comments

This essay has sought to apply Punctuated Equilibrium Theory to illustrate three profound change instances at ESC that may be considered responses to contemporary higher education policy shifts. I posit that these punctuations have resulted in significant changes to the structures and practices of the organization. At the same time, they are valuable in demonstrating the community's capacity to work through change experiences over time. Parsons and Fidler (2005) proffered that punctuated equilibrium is helpful for analyzing change in higher education institutions, and recommended its application for understanding change in educational organizations over an extended period of time. In the same way that grammatical punctuations serve specific purposes, policy punctuations have utility in revealing an organization's and its constituents' capacity for change. Parsons and Fidler (2005) submitted that "deep changes are formulated at senior levels in the organization and it is those lower down who have to puzzle out what the changes mean for their work" (p. 451). The punctuated moment is not final. Rather, it sets into motion a knowledge-creation process across the organization. Ultimately, the practical value of transformational change is contained in constituents' interpretations of the change that become routinely enacted to establish new norms. If it is true that "the only thing constant is change," then faculty, staff and students may be well-advised to expect ongoing policy punctuations, and seize them as opportunities that are potentially constructive for learning innovative outcomes beneficial to their practice, pursuits and the future of higher education overall.

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SUNY Empire State College at 50: Connections to The Open University | By Alan Tait

Prelude

I owe a great deal to Professor Alan Mandell, in particular over some 40 years exploring the centrality of the interrogative tense rather than the imperative mood in learning and teaching. Central to our professional relationship as well as to our friendship have been the four occasions on which Alan was able to come to the U.K. to participate in the Cambridge International Conference on Open, Distance and E-Learning (https://www.vhi.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/events/past-events/conferences/CDE-conference), as well as during my own visits to Empire State.

Alan's mode of conference participation was very different, fascinatingly different, from the too familiar young man or woman in a hurry, dominating every discussion, and for whom the conference was clearly a place where a career was intended to be accelerated. Alan on the other hand, even early in his career, listened quietly with an engagement that was intense, reflected in silence, and built meaning across different perspectives with respect and generousity. He had, and I know still has, the extraordinary ability to make others in a conversation rather than himself feel that what they had to say was important and valued. The practice of mentoring to which Alan has given so much commitment is in my understanding constructed on just such conversational practice and values. It makes the learner the agent of her or his own learning, responsible for changes in understanding through dialogue with the mentor and exposure to new sources of knowledge.

All this was so different to the Open University, my own institution, where our commitment to innovation with regard to access and inclusion in higher education was based on the student choosing the university without restriction of admissions criteria, at least at undergraduate level, and then engaging with a series of courses put together by academic experts, with highly personalised support. The commitment to planning the structure of the degree certainly did have an important place, but with nothing like the centrality of the process of curriculum planning through mentoring at Empire State.

For many years we debated the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches, and reviewed them as change came, especially associated with the digital revolution, for both universities. I particularly enjoyed following the analyses of such change at Empire State in the journal All about Mentoring, which Alan as editor directed over so many years.

Why is this important? The ways in which we understand and value adult learning send roots out to how we believe society more widely could and should be built, about who is valued in that society, and how their lives should be supported. The legacy of Professor Alan Mandell is insistently interrogative of such issues and will mark the lives of those who were fortunate to have met him for many years to come.

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At the All College Conference on April 6, 2021, Alan Tait, emeritus professor of distance education and development at The Open University, U.K., gave the annual Ernest L. Boyer Sr. Family Lecture. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of SUNY Empire State College, Alan Tait was also awarded the Doctor of Letters, honoris causa. We thank Dr. Tait for this talk and his help in the preparation of this text.

Alan Tait, 2021.

1: Ernest Boyer

I want to begin by acknowledging Ernest Boyer, in whose name this lecture is given. He was clearly a remarkable man who quickly in his life saw how he could achieve the most through educational administration, and he did so with access and inclusion high on his list of priorities. I've used Boyer's (1990) report on scholarship on a number of occasions in working out how to construct a research, or better put, a research and scholarship agenda for universities that are teaching focused like The Open University, U.K. [OUUK], and perhaps SUNY Empire State College, a comparison of which is my topic for today. Boyer's clear thinking made it possible to disembed so many of the false statements about how universities must or should position research at the expense of teaching, and much more productively, how agendas for scholarship should be constructed on a multidimensional framework that is so much more than just discipline based. That agenda for scholarship is an area where SUNY Empire State College and The Open University have similar concerns and priorities, but not what I want to talk about today.

2: How well do radicals age?

My theme for today could be summarized as: How well do radicals age? This is a matter of personal as well as scholarly interest, as it may be for some of you, too. Is radicalism a youthful phase for SUNY Empire State College and The Open University — essential as you push your way into an institutional landscape, but once success has been achieved, to be left behind? Or can radical challenges to established social and institutional assumptions on behalf of new audiences that challenge what a university is, what it does, and who it teaches — in other words, radical challenges to the purposes of a university — remain active in the DNA of a university even 50 years after its establishment? And if we examine the challenges of today in terms of social justice and equality, does it need to be? I am not the first to reflect on this. I have a volume by James Hall, your first and long-serving president and a close associate of Ernest Boyer when he was in leadership positions in the SUNY [State University of New York] system. In his volume Access Through Innovation: New Colleges for New Students, Hall (1991) reviewed a range of innovative colleges and universities primarily in the USA but including the OUUK, which he visited more than once — finding time to inscribe my own copy of his book with a kind word of support to a very junior colleague. I am indebted to the work of James Hall — I always called him "Jim" but now I look back with some embarrassment at the overfamiliarity of youth. If he is listening today, greetings to you, Dr. Hall.

Now we have in this talk a very noninteractive approach to learning and teaching. While I know the OUUK, I hope I can say well, despite my relative familiarity with SUNY Empire State College over

some 35 years, I cannot ever know the SUNY system or American society as well as you. So, I want to try to create a form of interaction by creating an internal conversation for you, as I move back and forth from the OUUK to SUNY Empire State College, and you test my ideas against your understanding of your own radical university. So close your eyes, perhaps, while I talk from 3,500 miles away in Cambridge, England, and reflect on whether what I say corresponds to your own understanding.

So, what do the two universities have in common, and at least as interesting, what divides them?

3: Innovation at the OU

There are a number of historical developments that help set out the context for the establishment of The Open University, U.K., in 1969. The first is that in 1960, the continuation rate from school to university in the U.K. lay at approximately 5% only, ending that decade doubling to some 10% following major expansion with around 23 new universities. Almost all the places in the newly expanded higher education sector were, however, taken up by school leavers, with the adult part-time learner served almost entirely in evening classes by Birkbeck College in London, and the University of London itself with external degrees freely available more widely throughout the U.K. and indeed the world. Higher education was primarily an opportunity for the elite and middle classes, dominated by children from private and selective schools, and more by men than women. Both the historical backlog and the continuing injustice in life opportunity constrained by social class, gender, and ethnic heritage provided one stream in Labour Party Prime Minister Harold Wilson's first proposal in 1963 that an additional new university but of a new kind should be established to address such inequities.

The primary driver for a new university like The Open University was about who could be a student, and it is fair to say that for U.K. society, The Open University has changed that. The idea that adults, in general, were worthy entrants to and participants in higher education, as against high school leavers, met considerable skepticism, with unkind remarks of an ageist and snobbish nature about how worthwhile this was. Secondly, the OU brought new entrants into university study from the socioeconomic perspective, and from the dimension of gender, including women in greater numbers than other universities then, and including people with disabilities in ways that had never been done before.

The implications of how a university should function if it is to serve adult learners, however, took us on different paths. But I will come back to that.

The second stream of the prime minister's concern was that the possibilities of broadcasting had not been optimally deployed for formal educational purposes, and he thus placed the use of technology for education at the heart of what was to become The Open University institutional model, which he named "The University of the Air." Wilson entrusted the still embryonic idea to his Minister for the Arts Jenny Lee, who is widely given the credit for making a reality of it, and in doing so adapting the original vision in some very important ways.

Jenny Lee worked with The Open University Planning Committee, which examined the available range of options on a global basis that might provide concrete help in inventing the organizational form for a radically new university. None of these provided a blueprint, but all contributed elements of innovation that made up the new whole.

A number of key characteristics of how universities were understood to function, and for whom, were disrupted, not to say upended, by The Open University, U.K. They have had an impact worldwide. The first of these is that The Open University, U.K., as the latest of the 1960s new universities designed to move the U.K. from an elite to a mass higher education system, decided to have no entry qualifications for undergraduate admissions. At a stroke, this changed something hitherto fundamental to the functioning and character of higher education, that the university chose its students, as happened through competitive entry and selective interview at all other universities. However, at the OUUK, the students chose the university. There were, for the first 20 years, more applications to The Open University than there were places, and as there were for the more selective universities, but The Open University used a firstcome, first-served queuing system to manage its admissions, not selection. The Open University, U.K., has stuck to this fundamental reversal of the power relationship between student and institution for more than 50 years.

It is this radical approach to student admission that has changed the understanding of who could go to university, from the stereotypical but not misleading picture of an 18- or 19-year-old middle-class young person, more often a boy than a girl, almost always white, to a university of adults in all sorts of occupations, and with a more or less equal proportion of women to men. The predominant characteristics of the OU student were not of someone who had had no postschool education but of someone who had had some but wanted more. The picture is one of individuals already in a process of social mobility, not so much those for whom this was the first step. However, we should not overlook the large numbers of women homeworkers, for whom The Open University provided a route for study flexible enough to accommodate the demands of parenting and home management; and the smaller but until the recent period important number of people who had retired and were studying more or less exclusively for reasons of personal fulfillment rather than vocational advancement. Finally, there were a number of student audiences who had never been served adequately by the university sector. First and foremost were students with disabilities, and to this day, The Open University, U.K., supports more students with disabilities than all the other universities in the U.K. put together, and can fairly be said to have pioneered the recognition that students with a range of functional disabilities could and should be supported to study, and how this can be done. Other groups have had their study facilitated by the flexible and student-centered nature of The Open University operations and systems, including students in prison and the military.

The foundation of The Open University as laid out here was driven by an educational and social mission built primarily on ideas of social justice, sharing the goods in society more widely, and remediating past exclusive practices. I believe the OUUK has had a great deal in common with SUNY Empire State College in its changing of society's understanding of who could go to university.

The Open University put in place a range of approaches to learning, teaching, and student support to make that openness a reality and not just a revolving door. These included learning materials that for the first year, at last, created a ramp into higher education that supported those with minimal or less than minimal high school leaving qualifications; highly developed tutorial support on an individual basis focused on student work for continuous assessment; and a modular course structure that allows students to plan degrees.

4: Innovation at SUNY Empire

SUNY Empire State College, founded almost conterminously with the OUUK, took the same central imperative as its sister university, that is to say, that there were significant populations who could and should enjoy higher education and who had had no opportunity to do so. To serve them most effectively and appropriately you needed to look to radical innovation in learning and teaching. It was primarily a lifelong learning mission for the adult learner who had had a break from the familiar trajectory of high school to college and who had worked or cared for a family or both. They were in many cases fractured trajectories, that is, individual students whose path on that high school to college trajectory had never been imagined or permitted by family, or had been interrupted by lack of resources, health crises, caring duties, etc. We were familiar with these students, too.

But SUNY Empire, led by Ernest Boyer, James Hall, and other senior founding administrators, crafted from a range of small-scale, existing innovations in the USA, a bricolage practice of innovation shared in method with the OUUK. That is, SUNY Empire created a home-based study system that built from the adult learner up, using the resources of the statewide system, centrally supported by the mentor who would guide through a form of Socratic dialogue, a practice well described by Lee Herman and Alan Mandell (2004), both friends and colleagues from whom I have learned so much, in their book titled *From Teaching to Mentoring* — titled I would say provocatively if I did not know how gentle Distinguished Professor Mandell is. The core ideas at SUNY Empire's foundation as I understand them were more radical than anything we had conceived in the U.K.: that the individual learner creates her or his own program of study rather than engaging with a curriculum designed by faculty and inherited from others. This was indeed courageous. It was to refuse the power that the university hitherto had assumed as its prerogative by definition. In addition, the knowledge that the adult learner had gained outside the academy, not only in terms of credit from other universities but also from life and work experience, could through its expression through a portfolio be given academic credit. This was equally radical I suggest, as it recognized that knowledge and understanding generated from outside the academy were worthy of recognition within the currency of academic awards.

5: What has Changed at the OUUK and SUNY Empire?

So where are we now in terms of these aging radicals?

I see some common patterns between us both. Firstly, with the OU, while the initial qualifications offered for the first 20 years or so were unnamed in the sense that they were a "B.A. Open" and only a "B.A. Open," and composed through free choice by the student not according to a pattern designed by discipline-based academics. In this way, the OUUK made a significant nod to the openness of curriculum that SUNY Empire pioneered. It was the OU students, through their own association that has membership in the university senate, who drove change toward permitting so-called "named degrees," a preselected series of modules that deliver a B.A. or B.Sc. in a subject area. Some academics at the OU — I remember that senate debate — defended what they thought was a key element of the OU's radicalism and opposed what they saw as the creep of conventionalism into the

university. But the majority listened to the student demands for easier social recognition of their degree titles that society and employers more easily understood, and agreed to the change.

Equally, as I understand it through conversations with your colleagues and looking at your webpages, SUNY Empire, too, has expanded the modes of study to include online degrees made up of conventional courses, as well individually planned and negotiated study plans for credit supported by mentoring, and retains the inclusion of experiential learning, or indeed a particular strength that is apparent, a combination of all three modes.

My assessment for both universities is that these changes have strengthened our ability to include a wider range of students and to innovate in how these students are supported. There is nothing so damaging as "founding father syndrome," if I can term it that, where any change from the original vision is regarded as treason. As SUNY Empire's Emerita Professor Elana Michelson (2020), friend, and colleague of many years, proposed in an article last year, we should "resist a more-of-the-same defensiveness that can keep us stuck in what we already do" (p. 113). That has emerged as for me the crucial theme of this talk.

And nothing has tested the mission and organizational structures and processes more than the digital revolution of the last 30 years, which I come to next.

6: The Digital Revolution

In the early 1990s or so, the digital revolution made its challenging entry, for me first in the form of desktop computers for email and managing text, although elsewhere in the university it began to transform student records and logistics. By that time, the educational radicals of The Open University, U.K., were in many cases in their 40s and 50s. And it seems to be true that while the technologies we grow up with, and perhaps up to the age of 40, are seen as part of the natural world, those that come later in our lives for some at least intrude as a personal challenge and an unwelcome one at that.

But I remember when the first desktop, just one, was installed, with its black screen and winking green text. And I sent the first email in my life, which was as it happens to a colleague in Australia. It could hardly have traveled farther. And some five minutes later, I received a reply. I couldn't believe it. I think, literally as well as metaphorically, my mouth dropped open. Suddenly the world changed shape, and some dimensions of geographical distance, of time, and of communicating, sharing, and working with others, were changed forever.

Skeptics

But those who were armored against new technological innovations, over and above the ones we had worked with for the last 20 years, represented themselves as weary skeptics in the face of naive tech enthusiasts who had no understanding of "real" communication, "real" relationships, or "real" learning. And for an innovative technology-supported university just 20 or so years old in the 1990s, there were a surprising number of such conservatives who refused to model continued innovation, and who gradually became more and more forlorn and unhappy voices. It became so difficult to distinguish a new conservatism from a legitimate protection of the educational mission, a continuing challenge.

7: Anti-commoditization Practices

So where is innovation most strong now?

Open Versus Commercial Practice

Of great interest is the reaction to the high levels of commoditization that the digital revolution has brought — above all of our personal data — in the form of a pushback with anticommodification practices in fields such as open software, open publishing, and open educational resources [OERs]. If it is true that every force engenders resistance, nowhere has this been seen so strongly as in the open publishing movement of the last 20 years. I will be fascinated to see where the next moment of stasis comes in the field of open versus commercial publishing. As for open educational resources, I remain wedded to the idea that courses can be more speedily, cheaply, and equitably produced if we are able to share and adapt — facilitated by digital systems. But apart from the valuable open-source production of some textbooks in North America where textbook prices are very high, I have personally seen less than enough evidence of open educational practice, that is, OERs in use in the production of learning resources and courses rather than lying unexamined in unvisited repositories. I hope to be proved wrong!

8: Informal Learning

On the other hand, the use of OERs for informal learning has had more success, for example with the OpenLearn site of The Open University, U.K. (n.d.), which makes freely available discontinued courses and fractions of current courses and is used by millions of informal learners. As well as sites like this there are a million blogs, curated collections of resources on every subject under the sun, and spaces for association and discussion. The digital age has produced an extraordinary creativity based on informal learning and ease of communication. We can see it happening in front of our eyes as people stare at their screens in every sitting room at home, every café, on every bus, train, or airplane. Is it here, not only in the study of but in the production and curation of resources, that the spirit of innovation in learning might burn most fiercely in the current period? And are educational institutions still fit for purpose with their architectures of learning still in analog form in terms of lengthy programs of study and credit systems, and able to support the informal learning that is going on all around them, which is, for the most part, ignored, unrecognized and unvalued? I suggest that the microcredential agenda has now far more potential than the early days of badges of competency information technology companies might have suggested.

9: It Has Not Worked

But to Conclude with an Overall Challenge to SUNY Empire and the OUUK

If we are to be critical, and I include self-critical, I would want to ask if the notion of openness, while an advance on the notion of opportunity to learn, a privilege granted by others, is in itself an adequate basis for social justice, and what the widely promoted rationale for a university like the OUUK of social mobility really means. I draw on the work firstly of Michael Young (1958) on meritocracy, and Selina Todd (2021), and in particular her recent book *Snakes & Ladders: The Great British Social Mobility Myth*.

Michael Young, an innovator in ideas in education as well as other sectors, and influential on the founding ideas of the OUUK, wrote a satire as long ago as 1958 using the neologism of meritocracy as descriptive of a dystopian society where the able minority rule for their own benefit a less able majority, and extend these benefits to their own family only, and have in the notion of meritocracy a set of beliefs that make this entirely defensible. Young was profoundly disappointed however that meritocracy became a term of approbation rather than understood as he intended as a satirical account of new forms of privilege and the justification of hierarchy that it supports. So, I think it is fair to ask if the OUUK, and perhaps SUNY Empire, while we have widened slightly the terms on which people may move in society, have unwittingly failed to critique the social mobility that we support. To strengthen the urgency of this question, I turn to Selina Todd's (2021) recent work, Snakes & Ladders. She wrote that "By 2010 40% of London's children lived in poor households … London had become the most socially polarised city in Britain, but researchers found that a similar inequality of both wealth and opportunity characterised the largest provincial cities too." She added that we "saw social mobility strategies as replacement for social policies that were designed to prevent or minimise poverty and inequality" (pp. 328-329).

"So, I think it is fair to ask if the OUUK, and perhaps SUNY Empire, while we have widened slightly the terms on which people may move in society, have unwittingly failed to critique the social mobility that we support."

In other words, it has not worked. If the original founding vision of our two universities was a commitment to improving social justice, that is to say, diminishing the gaps between the richest and the poorest and supporting social mobility, thus, creating more opportunities for secure employment and housing, and health outcomes to be available to a larger and larger proportion of the population, it has not happened. The gaps are greater, the poor are relatively poorer, the richer are relatively richer, and decent housing is more and more of a challenge. A sobering moment. The very challenges that we were established to meet have, in fact, over 50 years, developed into worsening problems rather than improved life outcomes for the majority, notwithstanding the millions of students whose life trajectories we have supported. How do we contribute, then, in the light of that? Do we continue in the same way? Or do we recognize that the hopes of 1971 have in some ways gone backward and that we must rethink how we deliver our missions?

I would like to focus on my own answer to those questions, which are the questions I hope to leave you with, on whether our understanding of social justice and, in particular, social mobility is adequate. I think they are not. Firstly, it is all too usually implicit, not thought through. To renew our mission statements, which have not succeeded overall in embedding change for the better in our societies, despite the many achievements of our students, we need to discuss and debate what we mean by social justice and social mobility, and then plan again how we can better deliver on those ambitions; better than we have done so far.

Secondly, I think the very strength we thought we had in supporting the individual learner may also be a weakness. It is not that it is wrong, rather, it is inadequate. While we thought we were mitigating the most damaging characteristics in our societies, perhaps we were too often reflecting

and reproducing their individualism. There is a clue, I think, in that both universities have been pulled back from "open curriculum" being the sole program offering, to complement the mentor-supported curriculum planning process in the case of SUNY Empire and the Open Degree in the case of the OUUK, to qualifications that are built around the same principles of established fields of knowledge with names that are immediately recognizable in communities and by employers, that is to say, a B.Sc. in economics or a B.A. in literature.

And while the open curriculum continues to engage many, at least half of our OUUK students, perhaps in their decision to take named degrees in subject areas, implicitly express the notion that they are not just individuals; they are or want to be part of wider communities defined by knowledge area. In other words, the truism that human beings are social animals not just individuals is being expressed in its own ways by our students.

Relatedly, can we do anything about the very long-established notion that social mobility is an individual's farewell to her or his own community, for admission to another community or social class? This individualistic notion of social mobility is impoverishing for the community left behind, as those most able and energetic members of the community are encouraged to get up and go, and at the same time negates broader notions of social solidarity that have contributed so much to the fragmentation and anomie that we can recognize in the U.K. and perhaps, it is for you to say, in the U.S.

So, let's celebrate at 50 years the many, many lives of individual students whom our universities have supported in their life trajectories, and whom no one else chose to notice. But let us also reflect on the challenge that the injustices in our societies that we were established to mitigate have, in fact, gotten worse. Let me return to the question as to how well radicals age. The task before us, I propose, lies in our capacity to draw on the radical courage of SUNY leaders Ernest Boyer and James Hall and in the U.K. Government Minister Jenny Lee, and as young and old alike renew the moral challenge to our societies today to reinvent our universities to support a fairer more just society, just as our founding mothers and fathers did 50 years ago. In other words, we still have work to do!

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Endnotes

Empire State College Core Values

Prelude: Lee Herman

When you ask Alan a question you suppose has a "yes" or "no" answer, you will likely receive a response like this:

"What an interesting question! It's so complicated. If I could just ask …..?"

Such a response can be frustrating. But then, you find yourself immersed in a deep, thoughtful conversation. You realize that your original question has rich implications. You encounter yet more questions that deserve further thought. You and Alan have entered a world of intellectual wonderments.

Alan and I have been conversing for nearly 45 years. We are friends and collaborators. Though we live 250 miles apart, we talk weekly (currently, it's every Sunday at 9:30 am) about our lives and projects. Our collaborations include articles on teaching and learning, a book on mentoring, and presentations at academic conferences. In recent years, we've also created art projects: Alan makes collages; I make photographs. We've made several small books of collage and photography. Whether art or scholarship, what we make results from those "interesting" and "complicated" conversations. (Alan, by the way really likes quotation marks and parentheses.)

Our collaborations are learning activities. I have learned from Alan that there are common basic values which are necessary conditions of not only academic learning but actually of all learning. Those values include practical, creative, social, political and moral qualities. They are, in fact, core principles of living a good life.

Here is a summary of some of those core values:

— I think the most fundamental principle is that learning is inherently collaborative, whether it be between teacher and student, one friend and another, or between ones' self and one's inner voice. Learning, in other words, is dialogical.

— Dialogue requires that every person's curiosity be taken seriously. Who, after all, is so omniscient as to decide, a priori, that an idea or question is not worthy of inquiry? Every question, every curious questioner deserves respect.

— Inevitably, dialogical inquiry will produce surprising connections and conclusions - all of which invite examination. Every subject is inexhaustible.

From decades of dialogue with Alan, I've learned that dialogue itself is the activity of living well. Certainly, it makes me happy. Dialogue, as Plato might say, is "the form of the Good." Moreover, lavishing thoughtful attention on another person's curiosity and receiving the same in return is a form of love. Alan and I have carried on our love affair for decades. I am so happy that at this celebration I can express my gratitude.

"I'd argue that the expertise of mentoring … plays second fiddle because it is our own version of "care work," a fantastic blend of the cognitive and the affective, a kind of experiential-emotional-intellectual labor that has been historically demeaned (so often as 'women's work'), but is personally enriching, socially valuable and intellectually complex."

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 37, Spring 2010

Empire State University Core Values

Over its more than 50-year history, SUNY Empire State University has had two statements of "core values." The first was presented by a group of faculty and administrators including Keith Elkins, Walt Frykholm, Bob Carey, and Jim Case at the 1993 All College Conference and published in All About Mentoring, Issue 1, September 1993; the second (that we have included in each issue of this publication since 2005) grew out of the work of a task force made up of Marianne Arieux, Eric Ball, Joyce Elliott, Leslie Ellis, Cathy Leaker and Alan Mandell and was endorsed by the Empire senate in 2005. Here, we present both of these documents as one way to honor our institution's ongoing commitment to a set of "core values."

Core Values of the College, 1993

1. The student is at the center of all educational decisions.
2. Mentoring is the best way to implement these decisions.
3. The quality of the mentor/student relationship largely determines the quality of the student's education.
4. We believe in making ourselves and the College accessible to students in terms of place, time, and programming.
5. The College works collaboratively with students in a variety of programs and studies and on a number of levels: we believe in serving individual students in a manner appropriate to their needs.
6. Our goal is to foster the development of self-directed learners who are intellectually curious, open to new ideas, own their own learning and have the academic skills to continue learning beyond college.
7. The College should be a diverse academic community which serves a diversity of students.
8. We believe in the mentor as an adult learner, in collaborative learning, in collegiality and mutual support. We need to be reflective practitioners.
9. We believe in recognizing learning wherever it occurs and however it is acquired, and in the community as a learning resource.
10. The College should serve the community and the broader society both directly and, through its graduates, indirectly.
11. We should be open to new ways of learning and teaching, and innovative in pursuit of achieving these core values.

Core Values of Empire State College, 2005

The core values of SUNY Empire State College reflect the commitments of a dynamic, participatory and experimenting institution accessible and dedicated to the needs of a richly diverse adult student body. These values are woven into the decisions we make about what we choose to do, how we carry out our work in all parts of the institution, and how we judge the outcome of our individual and collective efforts. More than a claim about what we have already attained, the core values support our continuing inquiry about what learning means and how it occurs.

We value learning-mentoring goals that:

- respond to the academic, professional, and personal needs of each student;
- identify and build upon students' existing knowledge and skills;
- sustain life-long curiosity and critical inquiry;
- provide students with skills, insights and competencies that support successful college study.
- support critical exploration of knowledge and experience;
- provide opportunities for active, reflective, and creative academic engagement.

We value learning-mentoring modes that:

- respond to a wide array of student styles, levels, interests, and circumstances;
- foster self-direction, independence, and reflective inquiry;
- provide opportunities for ongoing questioning and revising;
- reflect innovation and research.

We value a learning-mentoring community that:

- defines each member as a learner, encouraging and appreciating his/ her distinctive contributions;
- recognizes that learning occurs in multiple communities, environments, and relationships as well as in formal academic settings;
- attracts, respects and is enriched by a wide range of people, ideas, perspectives, and experiences.

We value a learning-mentoring organization and culture that:

- invites collaboration in the multiple contexts of our work;
- fosters innovation and experimentation;
- develops structures and policies that encourage active participation of all constituents in decision-making processes;
- advocates for the interests of adult learners in a variety of academic and civic forums.

Thirty Years a Mentor: If Caught Stealing this Case You Will be Prosecuted | By James Robinson

If Caught Stealing this Case you will be Prosecuted.

These words stare at me from the side of a battered red plastic milk carton as I stand waiting for my tea to heat in the microwave.

“Thirty years,” I murmur. “Look at that.”

“Yeah, that microwave is pretty damn slow,” Matt says, rushing past with a memo in his hand. He stops for a second. “You okay? You don’t look so hot. I mean, I don’t mean to offend, but you look kind of, what? Queasy? Icky? Maybe more icky than queasy. Queasy implies a kind of vomity thing, don't you think?"

“Matt,” I start again.

"Well, I've never been very good at distinguishing that kind of thing. I guess that's why I'm a biologist and not a doctor. Listen, I'd love to talk, but I have a student waiting." He dashes away, paper fluttering in his grip.

"Jesus, it can't be."

Eva's at the Xerox. "You know a lot of older people have that problem," she smirks.

"No, Eva, I meant. . . "

"It's a post midlife acceptance kind of thing. You know, when a person starts to slow down a little, they can often feel that their perceptions are not always clear to them. That's a normal process, and you can usually benefit from it if you don't start to obsess over the loss. You look pretty good though, considering."

I stagger back down the hall. "I can't believe this."

"You having reality issues again, Robinson?" Toni has just come into her office. She is shouting over the wall at me. "I hope we're not going to have any of our little problems this afternoon."

"No," I say, "I was just reflecting on . . . "

"Oh, that again. You men are always reflecting. I have that at home and it drives me nuts."

Ed rambles over to my door. "A problem?" he asks.

"Well, not really. "

“There’s always a problem. I’ll bring it up with Joe Moore if you want.”

“It’s not that important.” Then I say, “Ed did you ever notice that plastic milk carton?”

"Yes, I have. They give us new office space and then they keep that old crap. That's the kind of thing that demoralizes everyone."

My tea is cold by now, so I head back to the microwave. I find Ivan talking with Mark. I open the door and shove the tea inside, grimacing.

“You don’t like the tea?” Ivan asks. “I thought it was very good.”

“Yes,” I say, “the tea is really fine.”

"It is much better than we had in Bulgaria when I was a graduate student."

"Anything is better than when you were a graduate student," Mark says. "That's a historical given. That's like saying Nixon had a normal sex life."

"He didn't?" Ivan asks.

"He probably didn't," I say, "but that's not . . . "

"It is entirely relevant," Mark says. "It's much more relevant than the stuff they usually teach about the 1960's. I wasn't there. But if I was, like you, I'd be outraged. I mean it's one thing when they lie to you about stuff you weren't alive to witness, but you were there for that stuff."

"You were there for Nixon's sex life?" Ivan asks.

"No, he means Nixon wasn't there," I say.

"In Bulgaria that was often true with our leaders, also." Ivan shrugs.

By this time I don't care about the tea anymore. It's hot or cold, but it just doesn't matter. I go back to my office and look at my 30-year clock, my badge of honor and survival. It's better than my 25-year pewter medallion. My medallion just sits there dull and unaccomplished. The clock has a solid, mechanical gleam of competence. I wish I could wear it around my neck on a gold chain, so everyone could see. I'd leave my shirt unbuttoned down to a big tattoo that said, "Mentor." When I walked into the State Office Building there would be an awed hush. Husbands would tell their wives, mothers would tell their children, "Look, dear, it's a Mentor, a 30 Year Mentor."

I watch as the second hand marches around the dial. How many sweeps has it made since I first saw that milk carton?

Cathy waves to me. "You have a countenance grievous sicklied o'er with doubt and palsied woe," she says.

"Please, don't start."

“Yeah, just because the Yankees are in, what, tenth place?

“I can’t think.”

"Well, as a Canadian, a woman and a Mets fan I can't really help. I mean diversity has its limits, eh?"

"Go back to your office, Robinson," Toni shouts, "And leave that poor woman alone."

"He's not bothering anyone," Dori says. "You shouldn't pick on him like that. It isn't fair to treat people like they were a doormat, even if they are old and feeble."

John stops to listen. "That reminds me of a good joke. This old guy dies and goes to heaven, and his wife... "

"Not now, please. "

"You already heard it? Okay, Nixon and Clinton walk into a bar."

"NO!"

"Hey, Robinson," Jack says. "You're lookin' kinda rotten. You gotta be careful with yourself, you know? I mean, I used to let myself get run down and then I said to myself, hey, I got better things to do than run around after all these crazies on the streets, you know?"

“Maybe it’s not the same one,” I say. “Maybe it’s a different milk carton.”

Karyll pauses at my door and smiles. “You okay?” she asks.

"Sort of."

"That happens on the Rez all the time. People are just sort of happy, or sort of sad. But it makes you wonder what's really going on for them."

"The Rez sounds like an attractive place right now."

"You might fit in," she says smiling. "Of course, it would take a while."

"Thirty years?"

"Maybe. People are slow to accept you. You'd have a lot to prove."

"To them?" I ask.

"More like to yourself."

“Karyll, you know that red plastic milk carton in the back?”

“Not exactly.”

"I've been looking at that thing for 30 years."

Lee has come to the door and is looking over Karyll's shoulder. "Why didn't you get rid of that thing when we moved?" Lee asks.

"I thought I did."

“You could have given it to Yvonne,” Lee says, “to go with her yellow chair.”

"Why don't you get rid of it now?" Karyll asks.

“Yeah,” Chris says. “That’s more to the point. What’s the matter with you?”

“Would it bring back the 30 years?””

"What do you think?" Karyll asks me.

“No way,” Chris says. “Are you freaking’ kidding’?”

“That’s what I thought.”

Jeanne comes to my door. "I hate to interrupt this obviously important conversation, but you have a student waiting. And Lisa called. She wants to know if you're doing anything."

“Yeah, Robinson, quit gabbing and do your work.”

"Thanks, Toni."

I wonder who stole the case to begin with. It wouldn't have been Evelyn. It definitely could have been Gary. Or Marie?

"I bet it was Marie, the time she brought her carpet to the office and Gary put the fake dog poop on it."

"Robinson?"

"Yeah, Toni?"

“Did you take your meds?”

Thirty years.

This is a work of fiction. The characters in it bear no resemblance to any person or persons, living or dead.

"We are in a crisis. …This is not only a crisis of "legitimacy" (as the great social theorist Jürgen Habermas described such historical moments); it's a crisis of all major social institutions that not only have lost their reliability and credibility but, particularly now, have made us poignantly aware of their cracks, their basic unfairness, their failure to provide what we feel — and know — they need to provide. Too many people in too many places are being hurt; too many people cannot make it, no matter how they try. 89."

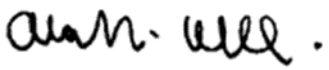
Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 54, Autumn 2020

"If we lose the memory of those who have been involved in what has been a thirty-year experiment in teaching, we miss an opportunity to learn from those who have struggled to gain a new form of expertise. If we lose the insights and the previous experiences of those newer to ESC, we miss an opportunity to keep the experiment alive and to hear voices that might sometimes be critical of what many of us take for granted."

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 20, Fall 2000

"Mentoring is not some holy form that we need to defend at all costs. Mentoring as democratic dialogue, as the opportunity to think deeply about knowledge (its creation, its communication and its legitimacy), has value because it pushes us to confront the most basic questions about learning: What do we want to know? Who knows what? Can we ever judge one idea as better than another? What is the relationship between knowledge and power?"

Alan Mandell, *All About Mentoring*, Issue 48, Winter 2016



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