

TOUCHSTONE

Volume 8.1

Hostos Community College
The City University Of New York

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Touchstone
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Preface

Christine Mangino

Welcome to the eighth volume of *Touchstone*, Eugenia Maria de Hostos Community College's scholarly journal of teaching and learning. I had the privilege of authoring the first article in the initial edition of *Touchstone* (2008) and it is truly an honor to now write this preface. The journal was created at a time when all new faculty were reading Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* as part of the new faculty orientation and discussing the equal importance of teaching, service, and scholarship to faculty's role in academia. It is apropos for our community college, focused on classroom instruction, to have *Touchstone* to share our teaching strategies with one another while celebrating our faculty's successes as educators.

Since the inception of this journal, the Professor Magda Vasillov Center for Teaching and Learning has further integrated these tenets. There is now a group of faculty within the center whose work is focused on the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. We have developed the Hostos Teaching Institute, a year-long series of workshops designed to support faculty in their teaching, and the Office of Academic Affairs (OAA) Teaching Project, a more intense application and reflection of pedagogical strategies. Within OAA, we have developed "The Academic Scoop" a monthly online newsletter which serves as a vehicle for sharing useful experiences. The faculty-authored Chalk Talk section is dedicated to highlighting various teaching strategies, and each month a different faculty member shares a unique technique from the Hostos classroom.

Teaching matters. Quoting John Dewey, "If we teach today's students as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." A teacher's job is never stagnant--the world is a dynamic place, each new cohort of students comes to us with new and diverse experiences. We must reflect on what we are doing, how our students are learning, and how to best prepare our students for an ever-changing job market. There has been much talk nationally about how students are not "college-ready," but we must shift the paradigm to a more proactive approach, asking instead: "how do we as educators and as an institution become student ready." These are our students and it is our responsibility to make sure they are successful, to prepare them for the tomorrows they are seeking.

Hostos is a college of passionate and dedicated educators, faculty and staff who are working hard to prepare our students for their tomorrows and to help Hostos strengthen our ability to stand up and say, "We are student ready." We have many faculty who are conducting action research, including some who have involved students as researchers and even co-presenters at national conferences. Our faculty had over 300 pieces of work either published or presented at conferences in the past year. This is no small feat considering the heavy workload and our faculty's level of

engagement in service to the college and our students. It has been a privilege to get to know our faculty's work and areas of interest in depth. In my role as Provost, I have the opportunity to read the exemplary articles and books produced here; we have so many faculty doing such high-caliber and interesting—even life-altering—work.

Going forward, we need to identify additional opportunities for sharing these works. Sometimes we are so busy doing our jobs, we rarely have time to engage in conversations around our teaching. Touchstone is one way for us to have these vital dialogues. Enjoy the conversations and thank you to all those who submitted articles and to our editorial review board for making this eighth edition happen. A special thank you to Professor Jason Buchanan for taking on the responsibilities of editor for Touchstone.

Our community has fully embraced the goal of continuous improvement from our strategic plan. By focusing the past five years on examining how we can do what we do better, we are experiencing the outcomes to show we continue to improve. In 2016, we witnessed our largest graduating class to date; we saw the highest three-year graduation rate for Hostos and the highest job placement rates for our career program students. As I reflect on my experiences with Touchstone and the Hostos community, I am proud to have spent my career working at being the best educator I can beside such dedicated professionals. As we continue the work to be “student ready,” I look forward to the next edition of this publication and seeing the progress we will have made as we continue to strive for our students.

Christine Mangino

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Summer 2016

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New Horizons, New Explorations

Jason Matthew Buchanan

As scholars, educators, and teachers, every semester represents a new horizon. During my time at Hostos, I have seen this community strive to achieve many new goals, to constantly innovate and improve in order to make the college a better place for everyone. The rub, of course, is found in the reality that crossing any horizon is easier said than done. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari describe the horizon as a movement of thought that is finicky; namely, the horizon “recedes when the subject advances,” but in many aspects “we are always and already on the absolute horizon” (38). What Deleuze and Guattari suggest is that a horizon of knowledge not only seems to be just out of reach but also is a space that we always occupy as thinkers, requiring just one moment of inspiration to cross. New ideas about pedagogy, scholarship, and engagement require a lot of hard work to finally reach a moment of inspiration that, in hindsight, now appears so simple that we are often amazed we didn’t think of it sooner.

It is my hope that this issue of *Touchstone* represents moments where horizons are being crossed or at least identified—a horizon must be first located before it can be crossed. *Touchstone* is a journal where authors can try and cross the vistas of knowledge, creativity, and practice. It is also space of communication where those at Hostos can express the range of work they do in an effort cross their personal horizons. Scott Stevens has argued that finding new registers to talk about scholarship and pedagogy is important as it brings in a diversity of conversations. For him, we find new ways to discuss scholarship and pedagogy when “we inhabit new relationships...and create new paradigms to reflect those new relations” (384). *Touchstone*, I hope, helps foster the new registers of teaching and scholarship here at Hostos. In this way, the journal can create new conversations and relationships that allow us, both collectively and individually, to reach new horizons as thinkers, teachers, and scholars.

The collection of articles published in this issue of *Touchstone* reflects a meditation on horizons, both personal and professional. Natasha Yannacañedo’s piece, “Fighter,” tells the story of her grandmother Louise and shows, in a touching narrative, how the legacies of family members both comfort and motivate us. In “Food for Thought: Using a Small-Bite Syllabus in an Online Course,” Jacqueline M. DiSanto describes how rethinking syllabus design can help students in online classes build relationships with their colleagues and their professor. Damaris-Louis Yamoah Lang’s “Organ Donation Concerns and Myths: A Classroom-Based Research” analyzes how myths about organ donations play a crucial role in the decision to not become a donor.

The distance between theory and practice is discussed in Etienne A. Kouakou’s

article where he explains the need to create better avenues of collaboration between researchers and practitioners. In “Re-entry at Hostos Community College: Education + Community = Partnership for Success,” Sandy Figueroa explains how an encounter with a student resulted in a new horizon of pedagogy that was a better fit for the re-entry population at Hostos. Oded Naaman’s “Just Sign Here” is a creative piece that follows the emotional rollercoaster of Clark as he moves through life and love. Jennifer Tang’s insightful piece on Michael Powell’s film *Peeping Tom* analyzes how the film is a precursor to the modern day obsession with “selfies” and recordings.

In “Using a Capstone Course to Increase Standardized Test Scores and Predict Future Success in the RN –NCLEX Nursing Exam,” Edward King examines a pedagogical horizon that uses a new method for exam instruction in order to help better prepare nursing students at Hostos. The article by Ana Ozuna, Sarah L. Hoiland, and Nelson Nunez-Rodriguez is an engaging description of how their pilot courses bridge the gap across subjects and curricula, all around the topic of hair.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have participated with Touchstone throughout the years. As the new Editor, I am indebted to all those who have previously served on the Editorial Board. I am particularly grateful for the work of Carl Grindley and Kim Sanabria, who were the Editors before me. Also, I would like to thank Anne Lovering Rounds, Diana Macri, and Lisa Tappeiner for their work on the editorial board. Going forward, I eagerly anticipate all the future submissions and learning about the new horizons here at Hostos.

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Fighter *Natasha Yannacañedo*

I am twelve years old, celebrating my birthday at a seedy Burger King in the Mission District in San Francisco. “Conga” by Miami Sound Machine plays in the background. My family is sitting at two tables, devouring fries and burgers. It is 1986, so trans fats have yet to be discovered.

Without warning, a tall, dark man comes out of nowhere, fast, and slugs my mom and then my grandmother in the face. The perpetrator runs away, but my deaf uncle, David, sees the look of panic on my mom’s face. Even though David did not see or hear what happened, his instinct tells him that this man has committed some crime, so he chases after the man. Two other men help him hold the man down while we wait for the police to arrive. My brother is a six-month-old baby. My mom handed him off to my father less than sixty seconds before the attack. With my Grandma Louise, we are not as fortunate.

Blood pours from her nose; the floor is covered in blood. I am bewildered. How can this man attack my Grandma Louise, a handicapped senior citizen in a wheelchair?

I have a difficult time explaining my grandmother to people. She is like a little sister and has lived with us since I was three, as she is brain damaged and paralyzed on her right side from a stroke. She was in a coma for a month after the stroke, and when she awoke, the doctors were perplexed that she is not in a vegetative state, as she had global aphasia, also known as “left side blowout,” with little or no activity on the left side of her brain.

The ambulance comes and the paramedics sweep my grandmother away in an instant. My twelfth birthday is officially over, and I am not allowed to follow Grandma Louise to the hospital. My Aunt Jackie and Uncle David bring the kids back to my house. We soon discover my grandma is fine, but her nose is broken.

At the trial, the judge asks, “Do you have anything to say?” My grandmother laboriously walks in front of the judge with her walker, step by step, looks her attacker right in the eye and grunts, “Nose!” while pointing to her deviated septum. In one word, she conveys all her rage at him for desecrating her beautiful face. This moment in the courtroom captures the essence of my Grandma Louise—a fighter.

Growing up, I witness Grandma Louise living every day trying to find words that won’t come out of her mouth. She says yes when she means no and no when she means yes. She is severely impaired in both comprehension and expression of language. What breaks my heart daily is my grandma often asks why. “Why, why, why, why, why?” She says it when she gets upset or frustrated about something. I always feel like she is asking, “Why did this happen to me?” “Why do I have to live like this?” I understand at a young age that life isn’t fair. And I learn it from watching my Grandma Louise struggle every day.

In spite of this, my grandma still finds joy in her life. She teaches me not only that it is important to fight but also how to find beauty in the darkest existence. Grandma Louise has a boyfriend at the senior center. She often flirts and winks at men, showing off her twinkling, baby-blue eyes. She loves any kind of candy, but especially White Divinity from See's Candies. Blackjack is her game of choice. She applies makeup every day, sometimes drawing her eyebrows on crooked, as her "good side" is paralyzed. Her incredible spirit radiates under the paralysis and brain damage.

Before her stroke, in her 60s, Grandma Louise went out dancing five nights a week; she loved to dance anything ballroom—foxtrot, waltz, swing, American tango. She even won a dance contest. Grandma Louise owned two businesses, a dry cleaner's and a flower shop that were connected in the back. She bought the adjoining businesses without knowing how to be a florist! She went to floral design school after she bought the business. My mother was the only child in her school who had a working mother. At the age of 60, Grandma Louise showed up at my mom's house with blonde hair. My mom protested, "You can't dye your hair blonde—you are my mom!" Grandma Louise shrugged it off, saying, "I can do whatever I want." She never left the house without a full face of makeup.

After the stroke, it must be excruciatingly frustrating for a woman so composed to have to wear a chunky leg brace and practical, polyester pants suits. Grandma Louise spends a year perfecting her signature with her left hand while her paralyzed right hand remains curled up in a claw position.

My grandma always sings, no discernable words—old, joyous songs. "Louise" is my favorite. The melody still dances in my head:

Every little breeze seems to whisper Louise. Birds in the trees seem to twitter Louise. Well, each little rose tells me it knows I love you, love you, baby. Every little beat that I feel in my heart. Seems to repeat, what I felt at the start. And each little sigh tells me that I adore you, Louise. (Leo Robin, 1929)

It is strange how a brain can separate these things. She cannot construct a sentence, yet she can sing these melodies.

Throughout my childhood, I often wonder what my grandma thinks of me. How deep does her attachment go? What are the limitations of the heart with that much brain damage? But then I think, "Actions speak louder than words," and I know how much she loves me. I cherish her winks; they make me feel special, like we have a secret. Sometimes, she leans over and squeezes my hand affectionately. I love to play blackjack with her; we play for pennies and are evenly matched. I sneak into her room and watch TV when my mom isn't looking. Every time my grandma goes away, she always brings candy back for me. Baby Ruth and Snickers are our favorite junk food variety candy. Even with her brain damage, she spoils me.

Grandma Louise's doctor, Dr. Matula, tells my mother, "Louise is my most handicapped patient, but she does more than any of my other patients." She gets her hair done once a week at the beauty shop and goes to senior centers every

weekday. She brings home pamphlets saying “Reno! Reno!” in an attempt to get my mother to take her to Reno. With three kids and her job, my mother is not amused. She gets frustrated with Grandma Louise; she can often be selfish, a result of her brain damage. Grandma Louise asks my mom to paint her nails as my mom is cooking and holding my crying baby brother. “Not now, mother!” my mom barks.

Grandma Louise is such a rebel. Even though she is not allowed, she goes to the store using her walker, one slow step at a time, with her giant diamond rings and purse hanging off her walker. It must take her two hours just to go the two blocks and back. Her right leg is dead weight that she drags along. A policewoman brings her home; she can't believe my grandma is out on the street. She tells my mom someone will cut Grandma Louise's fingers off to get her rings, and she is correct, because there is no way anyone would get those rings without my grandma putting up a fight.

My grandmother designed one of the rings with two of the rocks from her ex-husbands' engagement rings. She had five husbands. I blame all the men in my grandma's life for her high blood pressure and stress leading to her stroke; she often had atrocious taste in men.

Except for her first husband. He was an actor who killed himself by accident with a loaded gun. He was rehearsing in front of her at their house and did not realize the gun was loaded. His last words to the police were, “She had nothing to do with this.” My grandma was a widow at seventeen.

The rest of her husbands were basically jerks, including the last one that stole her furniture and didn't bathe her after her stroke. I suppose my step-grandfather, Grandpa Bernie, was the best, because even though he was an alcoholic, he stuck around to raise the kids. My biological grandfather took off when my mom was a baby. We had very little contact with my mom's side of the family after my grandmother's stroke because most of them had abandoned her when she had her stroke. They didn't know how to cope. Having seen this level of selfishness, I have little patience for people who don't show up when a crisis happens, and I am a firm believer that when the shit hits the fan, you show up for the people you love.

Grandma Louise has the best facial expressions. Dirty looks, flirty looks, inquisitive looks. When I am 24, my mom and my sister see me play Masha in *The Seagull*, and they almost die because they say I look exactly like Grandma Louise with all my dirty looks. I take it as a compliment. I had no idea that I could be that expressive. I was a very shy child and was repeatedly told by my mother how my behavior was like my dad's. I also look more like his Peruvian side of the family with my almond-shaped eyes and curly, dark hair. However, the more I mature, I realize I have a lot of Grandma Louise in me—the love of dancing and the fighting spirit. And of course, the dirty looks.

When I am in college, my grandma becomes weaker and dementia starts to kick in. My mom finally has to put my grandmother in a small group home for senior citizens. I visit when I can, and guilt is often present, because you can't ever visit enough in these situations. Seeing my grandma in this state is excruciating. When I get married at 26, she comes to the wedding but her spirit is fading. She is no longer my Grandma Louise; she is a shadow of that force. I try to just be

grateful she lived to see me get married, but there is a penetrating sadness I can't get out from under.

A year later, when I am living in New York, I get the dreaded call. My mom says, "Grandma is in the hospital. I didn't know what to do, so I let them put a feeding tube in." I want to scream, "Noooooooooooo!" But I remain calm and say, "Have them remove it. We don't want to prolong her suffering. Bring her home. You have to bring her home." I fly back to San Francisco the next day.

My sister and I take care of Grandma Louise at my mom's house while she dies. My mom disappears into the kitchen; she can't handle the final stages of losing her own mother, even though she felt she had lost her long ago to the stroke. It is the first time I hear the death rattle that comes from a dying person, the soul's last declaration that it had indeed existed. I want her to stop fighting once and for all—to just let go. I am impatient for her to die because I want her to finally have some peace.

My sister and I are in control of her pain management. Every time she moans, I say, "More morphine!" My Aunt Jackie later tells me she was concerned they would do an autopsy and my sister and I would go to jail for overdosing her. This makes me laugh. What I don't tell my aunt is I actually contacted a "right-to-die" organization about what constitutes a lethal dosage of morphine. However, it never needs to come to that.

"Swing Low, Sweet Chariot" is playing in the background as Grandma Louise takes her last breath. The death rattle finally silenced. I close her eyes for her. My younger sister, Maia, and I take off her hospital gown and dress her in her favorite light blue suit. We meticulously apply her make-up like she would have wanted. Her tiny corpse disturbs me, how wasted her body has become. The bed sores make me cringe. Her skin has become like rice paper, translucent and delicate, while the veins in her hands map her long life. She was 88 years old.

Right after my grandmother passes from this world into the next, the wooden chair that hangs in my mother's living room is slowly swinging. My mom points it out to us—Grandma Louise's spirit. For months after Grandma Louise's passing, the Christmas music box plays in the garage every time the lights are turned on. My mom feels my Grandma Louise winking hello.

I inherit my grandmother's infamous diamond rings, but my mother insists I give one to my sister and brother to share, to be fair. I oblige. I often wear my ring and constantly get compliments on it. I am nostalgic and love having my grandma with me in this simple way. The hilarious thing is, as a child, I always liked the other ring, the one I gave to my siblings. But I kept the one my grandmother designed. It's simple and classic and a reminder of her extraordinary life.

Using a Capstone Course to Increase Standardized Test Scores And Predict Future Success in the RN –NCLEX Nursing Exam

Edward King

I. Background On Standardized Testing In The Nursing Curriculum

There are certain required courses within the RN Nursing Curriculum. These courses are Nursing of Fundamentals Practice, Nursing Care of the Childbearing Family 1 and 2, Pharmacology, Nursing Care of the Adult 1 and 2, Nursing Care of the Client with Mental Illness, and Nursing Trends and Issues.

The RN Program at Hostos Community College utilizes the Standardized Testing Package from ATI Testing Inc. There is a standardized test given to the students at the end of each course enabling the instructor as well as the students, to measure test scores against the average obtained by other nursing programs throughout the nation.

The ATI Tests are graded using Proficiency Levels. These levels are:
Below level 1: Scores below the Proficiency Level 1 standard can be considered below minimum expectations and can be of significant risk in this content area.

Level 1: Scores meeting the Proficiency Level 1 standard can be considered to meet the absolute minimum expectations for performance in this content area.

Level 2: Scores meeting the Proficiency Level 2 standard can be considered to exceed most expectations for performance in this content area.

Level 3: Scores meeting the Proficiency level 3 standard can be considered to exceed most expectations for performance in this content area.
(ATI Testing.com).

The instructor can use these levels to interpret and compare the student's progress to similarly situated nursing students throughout the country in the same course. The student's actual grade is discernable to either be above or below the national or program mean. The national mean compares their grade to all nursing students and the program mean compares their grade to other RN students in a community college. Therefore, when a student is below Level 1, they are well below the program mean and the exam readily identifies the materials needed to be studied so their grade can be improved to a higher level evidencing a knowledge of the subject matter.

A research study that examined 589 RN graduates between 2003 and 2009

indicated, “that scores on the ATI RN Comprehensive Predictor were positively, significantly associated with first-time pass success. Students in jeopardy of failing the NCLEX-RN on their first attempt can be identified prior to graduation and remediation efforts can be strengthened to improve their success.” (Alameida, et al., p.1). Therefore, this work was intended to provide a brief review of past testing, as well as incorporate the current ATI Standardized Tests to identify the students predicted ability to pass the RN-NCLEX Licensure examination on their first attempt.

Nursing Trends and Issues is the last Nursing Course taken by each graduating RN student. I wanted to include the ATI Leadership Test within the Nursing Trends and Issues Syllabus because the course examines the role of the Registered Nurse as a leader within the healthcare team. Also, the content of the ATI Leadership Test reflects approximately 40% of the RN-NCLEX Examination based on Client Management and Infection Control. (NCSBN.com).

I had utilized the ATI Leadership Test when I had taught this course in two prior semesters. The students had obtained passing results, coming very close to the National mean in one course and exceeding it in another. (See Graph 2, NUR 320 courses labelled A and B).

II. Rationale For A Pilot Program To Incorporate The Ati Leadership Material And Testing In Nur 320

In the Spring, 2015, I was asked to teach NUR 320 by the Interim Nursing Coordinator, Professor Hamide Laucer. At that time, I identified the low score on the RN Comprehensive Predictor achieved by a prior graduating class which was 1.8% below the Mean National Average. The class only had 12 of 22 students projected to have better than a 56% chance of passing the RN-NCLEX Licensure Exam. This standardized test is used to predict passing rates on the RN-NCLEX Examination used for licensure in New York State. Ultimately, this class did have a large number of failures on the first time RN-NCLEX Licensure examination. Refer to Graph 1,

I wanted to initiate a pilot program to determine if a score increase on the RN Comprehensive Predictor could be achieved by the graduating class of June, 2015. It was my theory that including the ATI Leadership subject material, along with a quick review of the ATI Nursing Fundamentals and Pharmacology Tests, would have a positive impact on the RN Comprehensive Predictor. I based this theory on results I had achieved using the Leadership ATI Test with the graduating classes taught in two prior semesters. See Graph 2.

Prior to teaching Nursing Trends and Issues 320 in the Spring, 2015 semester I received permission from the Allied Health Chairperson, Dr. Charles Drago and the Interim Nursing Coordinator, Professor Hamide Laucer, to start the pilot program. At the conclusion of the pilot program, the RN Comprehensive Predictor was 1% above the Mean National Average, and had 16 of the 17 students projected to have better than a 56% chance of passing the RN-NCLEX Licensure Exam. Ultimately, all the students in this class passed the first time RN-NCLEX Licensure examination.

While the use of an ATI review within NUR 320 cannot be considered the only factor leading to an increased score on the RN Comprehensive Predictor, I think it certainly cannot hurt the students in the course. A review of graph 1 indicates that when the ATI review was used in NUR 320 with the ATI Leadership Examination, the number of students scoring at the bottom of the RN Comprehensive Predictor (56% or below chance of passing the RN-NCLEX) was reduced from ten (10) students to one (1) or two (2) students. This is a dramatic improvement for the students at the bottom of the class who need this remediation the most. As to the rest of the students, the class average was also raised to at least meet the national mean.

Therefore, based on two separate classes, it seems possible to increase the results obtained on the RN Comprehensive Predictor for a graduating class when ATI materials were reviewed within NUR 320. See Graph 1.

Upon examining the results of the earlier ATI Leadership Examination for the class with 4 failures, it was evident that the class mean was a few points below the national mean. Therefore, I looked at the ATI curriculum, knew I had to revise some lesson plans, and planned to move the ATI Leadership Examination up in the semester as opposed to waiting near the end. My theory was that the graduating seniors had less of an attention span at the end of their final semester.

Thereafter, independent of this work in the Spring, 2015, Nursing Trends and Issues was designated a Capstone Course. The Office of Academic Affairs invited me to participate in a summer long semester to work on the syllabus for this course. The results of this work are detailed in the next section.

III. Results From Updating The Nur 320 Syllabus In The Summer, 2015 Title V Capstone Seminar

During the Summer, this seminar was led by Sarah Brennan, the Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Silvia Reyes, the Title V Director.

I worked on the Title V Capstone Seminar with Professors Natasha Yannacanedo from Drama, and Marta Rivera from Criminal Justice to improve the syllabus in NUR 320. Incorporating these ideas, the writing assignments, student presentations and standardized testing were incorporated into the syllabus.

As a result of these changes to NUR 320, several positive results can be reported:

1. The General Education requirements were identified as being met by the students as they did their presentations for Sarah Brennan.
2. The class which had consistently tested below the national mean on their ATI standardized tests was able to improve all their ATI standardized tests to meet or exceed the national mean.
3. Their RN Comprehensive Predictor compares very favorable to other classes. The number of students scoring at 56% or less chance of passing the RN-NCLEX Examination on the first attempt were reduced to only two students from a high of 10 students in a preceding class that did not utilize the

ATI Leadership or ATI review within Nursing Trends and Issues.

It is my belief, that if time permitted a retest of these two students would have increased their grades since Nursing care of the Adult 2 had not yet been completed at the time the RN Comprehensive Predictor Comparison was given to the class.

I thank my colleagues and the Office of Academic Affairs for the opportunity to participate in this Capstone Seminar and believe it greatly improved the student performance within the course as a result of the work done with the seminar leaders and the other professors.

Graph 1: RN Comprehensive Predictor Comparison

Predicted Probability of Passing the RN-NCLEX

Predicted Probability of Passing the RN-NCLEX	#1 Class N=22	#2 Class N=17	#3 Class N=21	Individual Score
99% 5	1	2	8	0-100%
98% 0	0	2		77.3-79.3%
96-97% 2	3	1		74.0-76.7%
94-95% 0	1	0		72.0-73.3%
91-93% 0	3	3		70.0-71.3%
89-90% 1	0	1		68.7-69.3%
84-87% 1	5	3		66.7-68%
80-82% 1	0	2		65.3-66.0%
73-78% 3	2	0		63.3-64.7%
59-71% 1	1	5		60.0-62.7%
31-56%	6	1	2	54.0-59.3%
1-28%	4	0	0	0-53.3%
Adjusted Group Score	66.1%	69.3%	68.3%	
Mean-National	67.9%	67.9%	68.3%	
Mean-Program	68.5%	68.5%	68.6%	
	NO use of ATI Testing	ATI utilized	ATI utilized	

Graph 2: Comparison of ATI Leadership Test results in Nursing trends & Issues

RN Leadership	NUR 320 "A"	NUR 320 "B"	NUR 320 "C"	NUR 320 "D"	NUR 320 "D" Retest
Level 3 0	3	0	1		
Level 2 6	1	1	3	9	
Level 1 1	7	12 1	0	7	3
Level <1	0	0	4	3	
Class Mean	70.3%	74%	67.8%	73.7%*	
National Mean	72.5%	72.5%	71.9%	71.9%	
Program Mean	72.7%	72.7%	71.4%	71.4%	

•This class mean does not include the increased scores from the three retests who originally were at a Level <1.

Graph 3: Nursing Fundamentals Test for Graduating Class of 12-2015

NURSING FUNDAMENTALS ATI TEST	Nur 216 5/12/14	Nur 216 Retest 5/20/14		Review in NUR 320	Retest in NUR 320
Level 3 1	0			2	
Level 2 4	8			15 2	*
Level 1 7	6			2	1*
< Level 1 8	4			2	1*
Adj. Group Score	53.0%	59.6%		66.9%	
Mean -National	62.8%	62.8%		63.1%	
Mean - Program	62.1%	62.1%		62.7	

Explanation of Retest in NUR 320

- * < Level 1 This student retesting in NUR 320 was a voluntary retest who had level 1 on her first attempt but wanted to try again for a higher grade.
- * Level 1: This student had < Level 1, retested to a level 1.
- * Level 2: As to these two students, one had been absent for the ATI Test and one was retesting who had < Level 1.

Food for Thought: Using a Small-Bite Syllabus in an Online Course

Jacqueline M. DiSanto

For many students taking an online course for the first time—asynchronous or hybrid—determining how much time to allot for each assignment completed in cyberspace can be daunting. Faculty present syllabi with student learning outcomes that must be met within 15 weeks; assignments are often laundry listed with due dates and verbose directions.

According to the Community College Resource Center at Teachers College (2013), maintaining a purposeful presence in an online environment has been described as even more important in cyberspace than in an actual classroom. It is often difficult to establish a relationship with learners who either never see the authority figure in a formal class setting or have reduced face-to-face interaction in a hybrid course. At Hostos, faculty office hours might not be scheduled at convenient times for students who have opted for a course section without specific class times.

During a twelve-year period at Monroe Community College in Rochester, New York, 19.7 percent of participating students reported that falling behind and not being able to get back on track was responsible for their lack of success in an online course (Fetzner, 2013). How can an asynchronous or hybrid course maintain equal rigor to a traditional section without overwhelming a student who may not be comfortable without the physical presence of the instructor?

One method that offers students the opportunity to digest content, assignments, and deadlines a little at a time is by delivering the syllabus in sections, hence the term small-bite syllabus. This has been tried in several Education courses at Hostos since the 2011 summer session.

Not one single student ever requested the entire syllabus, although each semester someone usually does ask if he/she can have the next section a couple of days earlier than scheduled.

Several days before the first day of the semester, the introduction to the syllabus is uploaded to BlackBoard. It contains the following:

- Faculty information such as name, email address, and office hours
- course description
- Textbook with image
- Student-learning objectives
- Assignment titles (without description) with how much it counts toward final grade
- Grading policy

At the same time, the first section of the syllabus, containing topics, assignments, and due dates, and directions is also added. Both the introduction and first section are placed under Course Documents/Syllabus, and an announcement (with email notice) is sent informing the students the information is available. Additional messages explain how to use the Assignment and Discussion Board features.

Examples

Two sections of EDU 101: Foundations of Education are offered during the first summer session; both are writing-intensive. One section is hybrid and the other is asynchronous. The syllabi are divided into three sections with due dates at the end of the first and second week and then sometime toward the end of the session. The students who typically register for these two classes are non-education majors needing to complete one of the required writing-intensive courses.

The hybrid version of EDU 105: Social Studies for Young Children was completed under the Hostos Hybrid Initiative in Fall 2012. The course is designed so that the students discuss instructional theory, social-studies themes, and directions for the upcoming assignments in class. The online component requires the students to research New York City as a resource for teaching social studies and to share components of the assignments with their peers before the final project or paper is due. For this section, monthly syllabus sections are made available. There is also a Chart of Assignments posted on BlackBoard, which acts as a calendar. This is necessary to demonstrate the topic shared by the face-to-face period and the online work within a given time period. This commonality is a requirement for hybrid courses.

Teacher-Education majors must complete 120 hours of field experience in either an actual school setting or a child care center. This course is offered every fall and spring in two asynchronous sections and one hybrid section. Students in the fully online classes receive seven syllabus sections, distributed weekly for first two months of the semester, with one exception. The third sections spans a two-week period of time and includes time so that the students who may have trouble balancing the fieldwork hours and online work with other courses can catch up.

I started using a small-bite syllabus in an attempt to improve the students' ability to manage time. I found that, when offered small-bite sections, students produced work that took topics deeper and were more effectively revised. An unexpected result was the ability to broaden topics for student enrichment or to revisit activities in order to provide remediation. Delivering information in deliberate intervals supports the development of purposeful presence on the part of the faculty, especially when information in the section of the syllabus is directly connected to issues and topics that arise from discussion forums and student work.

Future plans include researching the impact small-bite syllabi have on academic achievement in and student attitude toward completing a course in an online environment. If anyone is interested in small-bite syllabi, I would love some company.

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Organ Donation Concerns and Myths: A Classroom-Based Research

Damaris-Lois Yamoah Lang

Saving lives is essential to human survival. The main goal in the health sector is focused on saving lives. Health professionals use myriad of techniques to help their patients obtain a healthy working body. The body's physiology as a whole relies on the coherent workings of the individual organ components it's composed of and hence a healthy body basically means healthy sets of organs. Medical scientist and doctors employ techniques such as the harvesting of human tissue via stem cell research ("Alonso, L and Fuchs, E.," 2003), blood and organ donations ("New York Organ Donor Network," 2014) to transform physiologically disabled bodies into functionally healthy bodies. Although blood donation via the blood drive project has remained relatively successful, organ donation on the other hand has received significant setbacks ("Organ Procurement and Transplantation Network (OPTN)/Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients (SRTR)/United Network for Organ Sharing (UNOS)," 2013). Reservations observed when recruiting donors are prevalent in organ donation in comparison to blood donation.

Hypothesis

The reluctance associated with organ donation is based on general and mythical concerns.

Methods

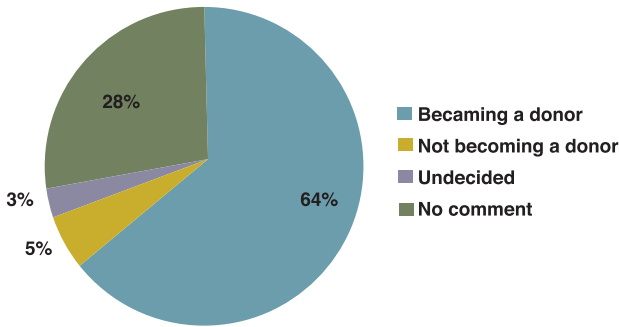
Sixty-one students who are not organ donors were selected to participate on a voluntary basis. Participants were first given adequate education on organ donation, and they in turn educated the public on the mechanics of organ donation. Finally, participants documented their views on organ donation before and after the training.

Results

The summarized reflections were categorized into general and mythical concerns. General concerns included-A general lack of interest on the subject, fear of doctors not saving individuals' life if they were registered organ donors and whether donating organs while alive generates a disability ("Anatomy and Physiology Class," 2012). Mythical concerns included-Religious beliefs against organ donation, discomfort or sensitivity about the topic associated with death and fear or discomfort about being buried with missing parts ("Anatomy and Physiology Class," 2012).

All students participated irrespective of their decision as organ donors. Stands included: Became donors (64%), Not donors (5%), Undecided (3%) and No Comments (28%).

Participants Stand on Organ Donation



Conclusion

Participants' concerns about organ donation were addressed. They expressed they received adequate knowledge on organ donation, which will guide them to make informed decisions and, in addition, equip them to educate members of their communities.

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Translating Theory into Practice: How to Address the Inherent Challenges

(An Analysis of the Implementation of the Communicative Approach in Second Language Acquisition or SLA)

Etienne Kouakou

Much has been written about the importance of theory to sound and productive practice, as well as the transition from theory to practice (Alias & al, 2014; Gonczi, 2013; McMaster & al, 2015; Tasca & al, 2014; Tinto & al, 2013). The studies referenced in this essay confirm the difficulties inherent in translating research or theory into practice. Indeed, many practitioners who claim their practices are grounded in a certain theory may fail to apply the theory faithfully either because of a distorted understanding of it or because they consider the theory lacking in some way. In any event, what becomes clear with the studies referenced in this paper is that theories are rarely directly translated into practice without addition or modification. Hence, it seems essential to provide proper training to ensure that professionals who profess their espousal of a given theory understand it thoroughly. Beyond this awareness, what the researcher and practitioner communities need are forums of collaboration where both parties feel included so research can inform practice even as practitioners share their experiences to inform any necessary modifications to the theories they are using.

Part 1

From Theory to Practice: Related Issues

Before addressing the necessity for a tighter collaboration between researchers and practitioners, one needs to understand how theory can inform practice and review and find ways to minimize, or eliminate some of the difficulties inherent in translating theory into practice. In general, both practitioners and researchers view theory as a concept or set of concepts that inform a framework in which productive practice is grounded. In other words, theory provides the necessary foundation for the implementation of a framework or guidelines to accomplish a task. Such a framework is bound to vary according the field, but the commonality remains that the theory provides an understanding of the mechanisms and mental processes involved in accomplishing the given task. Informed by this understanding, it behooves the practitioner to activate the appropriate mental processes by implementing the framework developed with the theory in mind.

Both Alias, & al (2014) and Gonczi, & al (2013) agree that theory does provide a framework for practice. Although the two studies were conducted in two different

fields, respectively engineering and medicine, the two researchers concluded that one theory alone was not always enough in developing a sound instructional framework. In other words, they found, practitioners rarely apply any theory as originally presented. Gonczi, &al (2013) argue that in general, the actions professionals take to implement theories are tentative and situated. Gonczi and his colleagues claim that practitioners develop a so-called toolbox to implement a given theory according to the circumstances. When practitioners encounter a challenge, the mind goes back to their toolbox. Gonczi &al (2013) further argue that making decisions in the real world is not based on a series of proposed theories and that there are obstacles to the direct implementation of theory. For example, problems may not be defined accurately; information may be incomplete, and time may be scarce. Hence, most real-life decisions tend to be intuitive and influenced by the decision maker's background and experiences. Learners are involved in an emotional-cognitive endeavor for which they may not necessarily be prepared. Hence, pre-service or in-service professional development is necessary. Like Alias, &al (2014) article, Gonczi and colleagues make an important point about the influence of emotional considerations even while making spontaneous decisions.

The challenges practitioners face in translating theory into practice may be further compounded by practical issues such as location, limited scope of the theory or even the practitioners' own interpretations or misunderstanding of the practical implications of the theory. For example, some of the specific challenges encountered while attempting to translate cognitive theory precepts to classroom practice were intervention design (text selection, question development, etc.), methodological limitations (size, measure and participant selection knowing that students struggle with reading for a variety of reasons, which warrant pre-screening) and school-based implementation problems such as time constraints and evolving student populations. Tasca &al (2014) see three main barriers to the implementation of theory by clinicians: the perceived inadequacy between theory and practice because of the diversity of cases, lack of communication between researchers and clinicians, and the wide array and diverse backgrounds of clinicians who range from psychologists to psychiatrists and counselors with accreditations based on a wide range of criteria. Tinto, &al (2013), see some of the major challenges as limited resources and socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. Specifically, there are issues for remote areas that are not easily accessible and possess little to no structural facilities. Clearly, the above studies acknowledge the importance of theory to practice even as they recognize that turning theory to practice is not always readily feasible for a variety of reasons ranging from infrastructure to lack of understanding and perception (founded or unfounded) that the theory is deficient.

In closing, it is safe to suggest that some of the challenges to the implementation of theory are inherently political. Issues of infrastructure, as mentioned in the Tinto, &al (2013) study, depend in great part on the level of development of the country where the seminars reported on in the paper took place. However, the other challenges, those stemming from erroneous interpretations of theories, can be remediated. Gonczi &al (2013) suggest an overhaul of the relationship between theory and practice. Their study proposes a sort of triangulation that would start with

practice as a way to inform theory. This way of recasting theory and practice presupposes an intimate collaboration between researchers and practitioners to which Tasca & al (2014) adhere. Indeed, for Tasca and his colleagues, one way to bridge the divide between theory and practice is to establish networks where researchers and clinicians collaborate on studies that are relevant for both sides. Such collaborations are likely to create a sense of ownership of the theories stemming from the studies involved. In essence, the lack of communication and attitude issues on both sides could be placated. In the same vein, McMaster & al (2015) suggest that translating theory into practice follow specific steps, the first of which would be to test the theory in an actual situation (classroom, hospital, other workplace) to assess its appropriateness and feasibility when implemented in an actual situation.

Partial Conclusion

All the studies above acknowledge theory as the foundation of a framework for practical application. However, the articles also discuss a number of challenges to the direct translation of theory into practice. To address these challenges, the articles suggest a closer collaboration between researchers who invent the theories and practitioners who use them. The collaboration could signal an overhaul of the theory-to-practice paradigm for more direct interactions between the communities of researchers and practitioners, where practice informs theory and vice-versa.

Part 2

An Analysis of the Implementation of the Communicative Approach

As stated earlier, many practitioners who profess espousal of a certain theory may not apply it faithfully for various reasons. This part of the paper analyzes whether the various frameworks developed to implement the Communicative Approach (CA) are premised on an accurate understanding of the theory and its scope, whether such applications add to or detract from the theory, and whether or not the reasoning connecting application to theory is sound.

El-Dakhs (2015) conducted a study on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). At issue in the study was the notion that Communicative Language Teaching, the instructional framework of the Communicative Approach, proscribes the formal teaching of language based on the notion that languages are acquired through exposure only. The paper looked at recent trends that have developed with the aim of providing a form of CLT that incorporates some focus on explicit teaching of form. For the novice, it is important to know that one of the most salient features of the CLT is its focus on establishing the conditions that mimic or attempt to replicate situations that promote real-life communication. Given the goals of establishing sustained real-life communication, the CLT acknowledges and tolerates errors as part of the learning process. The staunchest proponents of the framework even claim that teaching grammar explicitly is detrimental to language acquisition or learning.

Ellis (1990) introduced Form-Focused Instruction (FFI) in response to the

numerous complaints about the limitations of the originally conceived CLT. Many studies found that L2 learners, who were exposed to the CLT, were certainly fluent but had no grammatical accuracy. FFI called for language instruction that would incorporate what was dubbed “noticing,” which boils down to highlighting potential errors for the learner to notice (also known as proactive noticing) or provide the opportunity for learners to interact and highlight the errors from the interaction at a later time (known as reactive). The FFI approach is comprised of four stages: input, processing, production and feedback. Each stage is replete with teaching techniques that target specific language functions within the CLT approach. Through the techniques, the L2 learning process includes focus on both form and communication because learners are exposed to meaningful language input and use the metalinguage to explain language forms even as they interact with fellow L2 learners. In this sense, the FFI goes beyond the original concept of the CLT. Indeed, it provides opportunities for students to absorb the language. Beyond mere exposure, which is known to facilitate the development of fluency, the FFI helps learners notice relevant language forms, thereby doubling their acquisition speed and promoting accuracy at the same time.

Farooq (2015) conducted a study with teacher participants to gauge their understanding of the CLT and assess the accuracy of their implementation. The study concluded that although many teachers understood and embraced the Communicative Approach, many still felt the necessity to use other approaches as needed. In that sense, the application of the Communicative Approach was tinted with other theoretical considerations. Hence, one can rightly suggest that the method in use in Saudi schools, where Farooq’s study took place, is a hybrid of the original Communicative Approach, which prohibits error correction and direct instruction, among other things, and gives precedence to establishing the conditions for genuine, real-life communication. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents in the Farooq (2015) study agreed with a survey statement that the Communicative Approach focuses more on listening and speaking skills to the detriment of reading and writing skills. In such responses, Farooq detects a potential misconception of the Communicative Approach. However, he does acknowledge that initially, the CLT placed more emphasis on oral communication and that this instructional framework added reading and writing components later.

Another finding of Farooq’s (2015) study was that although the focus of the CLT is on establishing genuine communication situations, some students, if not the majority of them, in some countries might also want their teachers to play the traditional role of “repository of knowledge,” which implies direct instruction. Hence, although a teacher might espouse the precepts of the CLT, students’ preferences, dictated by their native cultures, might force the instructor to veer from the prescriptions of the Communicative Approach as framed in the CLT, thereby leading to a hybridized form of the theory.

Finally, as part of his data collection process, Farooq (2015) observed that teachers sometimes reverted to their native Arabic to explain challenging concepts, which contradicts the precepts of the Communicative Approach. This situation raises the issue of whether or not the teacher ought to be a native speaker of the target

language. In fact, had the teachers not been a native speaker of Arabic, they certainly would have created the adequate circumstances to have their students learn the targeted concepts through input instead of opting for translation, which was clearly an easy way out of the challenges involved with creating real-life circumstances.

To reflect on the same issue of the faithful application of theory, Lenchuk (2014) conducted a study with the purpose of examining the extent to which the precepts of the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB), another framework grounded in the Communicative Approach, are prevalent in LINC, a Canadian home study program for new immigrants who are unable to attend regular classes. Specifically, the study aimed to analyze whether the inclusion of a language focus in the online program violated the precepts of the CLBs, which is grounded in the Communicative Approach, where explicit language instruction is considered counterproductive. For Lenchuk (2015), the introduction of language structure is in violation of the principles underlying the Canadian Language Benchmarks or CLB. Because of his findings, Lenchuk called for further research in the area.

Another finding of the study was that for a theory founded on the desire to establish communication in the most natural possible way and predicated on Stephen Krashen's notion of comprehensible input, the amount of exposure to the target language structure was minimal and not amenable to absorbing the target language structure. The conclusion of the study highlights the discrepancy between a task included in a module of the LHS and the precepts of the CLBs, which is grounded in communicative task-based instruction.

Prior to the El-Dakhs (2015), Farooq (2015) and Lenchuk (2014), other scholars (Shawer, 2010; Wong, 2013) had studied the challenges of transferring theory to practice. Shawer's (2010) study focused on why the CLT, the instructional framework of the CA, failed in some circumstances. To answer this question, Shawer (2010) conducted a study of two teachers' practices, dubbed communicative and non-communicative, through a qualitative case study.

As used by Shawer (2010), the term non-communicative, refers to approaches designed by teachers who do not understand the implications of the CLT framework or simply cannot negotiate the translation of the theory into practice. Such teachers may design hybrid methods premised on incoherent versions of CLT based on their limited understanding of the theory.

Shawer (2010) noted some areas of deficiency in the effectiveness of the Communicative Approach, among them two areas of the utmost importance to academic success: reading and writing. In some countries, Shawer noted that even improvement of speaking and listening skills fell short of the expectations of the Communicative Approach. This is a clear indication that the CA alone cannot resolve all SLA problems simply because many factors must be taken into consideration in a SLA situation. In this particular case, the curriculum was well designed. However, those who were expected to implement it were not well trained to do so, which led to the hybrid forms referred to earlier.

Shawer's (2010) study found that failure of the CA/CLT was imputable to teachers. In the study, both teachers, Andrew and Joseph, were well versed in CLT theory. Yet, only Andrew tactfully translated his theoretical knowledge into actual

classroom practice, thereby fostering improvement in all areas of language acquisition for his students. Conversely, despite Joseph's extensive knowledge of the principles of the CLT, he failed to implement the approach in his classroom, preferring instead to use teaching approaches that were in contradiction to the precepts of the CA. Consequently, his students failed to make expected progress. Some of them even decided to leave his class midway through the semester. The bottom line, according to Shower's article, is that CLT works as long as it is correctly implemented. Hence, it is important to ensure that both in-service teachers and teacher candidates be monitored so they can receive more support in implementing the CLT when necessary.

In the other study, Wong, C. (2012) aimed to study the correlation between a group of college ESL instructors' perceptions and actual implementation of the CLT. Some educators did not advocate CLT because of their limited understanding of the instructional framework of the Communicative Approach. Here again, as in the Shower (2010) study and some of the others reviewed above, the study mentions a misconception, among users of the CLT, that the framework focuses essentially on developing speaking skills. Although these teachers may be right based on the initial forays into the implementation of the theory, it is essential to know that the approach later broadened its focus to include other essential areas of language acquisition, notably writing and reading.

What becomes clear at this point is that although definitions and descriptions of the CLT abound in the SLA literature, there is still a need for a precise definition, which, according to Wong (2012), makes it difficult for teacher education programs to incorporate relevant training into their curriculums. It is interesting to note that focusing on the CLT alone was not enough for some teachers, so they supplemented its precepts with elements of their own teaching experiences. What is not clear here is whether the inclusion of other approaches and techniques was due to lack of understanding of what the CLT entails or whether the teachers in question found the CLT lacking in some ways.

Wong (2012) references many studies that suggest the existence of a discrepancy between teachers' perceived notions of the CLT and their classroom practices, which oftentimes included elements of traditional teaching. In some cases, teachers squarely refused to attempt to implement the CLT, arguing they were not sufficiently knowledgeable in the approach to use it.

Such responses speak to the importance of catering to a variety of learning styles and preferences. Granted, all students in a class do not necessarily want to learn in groups. Some students may learn best individually or in pairs but not in bigger groups. To the extent that the CLT can cater to all learning styles, teachers should be expected to use it exclusively. Otherwise, it makes little sense to expect teachers to use a framework only premised on the one theory however effective it may be.

Wong (2012) suggests, although not very directly, that some of the teachers in her study may have been influenced by scholars' various interpretations of the CLT. Hence, based on what each of the teachers in her study had read on the method, they constructed their own understanding, which in turn guided their implementation of the framework. The study found that the participating teachers' implemen-

tation of the CLT closely matched their perceptions of the theory that engendered the CLT, that is, the Communicative Approach. However, their perceptions did not necessarily coincide with the original meaning of the Communicative Approach. Again, as suggested elsewhere, the participants' understanding and conceptions (misconceptions) of the CLT resulted from their personal professional readings.

Since SLA scholars interpret the CLT with some notable variations, the misconceptions discussed in the study should not come as a surprise. Rather, they reflect a certain understanding based on each teacher's background as it was shaped by their choice of readings in the professional literature. Ultimately, when it comes to classroom instruction, the final decision is the teacher's prerogative. Teachers make decisions based on their backgrounds and beliefs. However, Wong (2012) references a number of studies that suggest that teachers may espouse other approaches if they are given the latitude to experiment with them and determine their efficacy. Consequently, if the intention is to have teachers whose mainstay is the CLT, it would be appropriate to provide workshops where such teachers can experience and observe approaches that have proven effective. In this particular case, teachers would need to attend workshops where the CLT is modeled as it was originally intended to be implemented.

Conclusion

The studies referenced in this essay acknowledge the role of theory as the foundation of sound practice. Theory provides the cognitive and metacognitive knowledge necessary to design effective instruction. In the field of Second Language Acquisition, knowing the workings of the brain in a language learning situation has led to the invention of theories that aim to bring to practitioners the mechanisms involved in the Second Language Acquisition process. Currently, and this has been the case for the last two or three decades, language programs have adopted the so-called Communicative Approach, with the CLT as its instructional framework. However, the implementation of this framework varies according to the setting for lack of understanding of the tenets of the theory that engendered the framework, because teachers or instructors may feel that the framework is deficient in some way, or simply for cultural reasons.

Despite the inherent challenges of transferring theory to practice, researchers and practitioners can remedy the situation as long as they agree that mutual communication and collaboration are essential. As the studies above suggest, the time is ripe for an overhaul of the theory-to-practice paradigm. If theories are to be implemented effectively, theorists and practitioners will have to work closely using their mutual experiences to design language-teaching frameworks premised on existing theories but also aware of the necessity to modify and improve aspects of any theory that proves ineffective. Close collaboration may be in the form of professional development for pre-service and/or in-service teachers, or mutually planned studies. Better yet, the time might be ripe for the kind of researcher/practitioner epitomized by holders of an Ed.D. or other professional doctorates.

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Re-Entry At Hostos Community College: Education + Community= Partnership For Success

Sandy Figueroa

Introduction

Statistics of incarcerated African Americans and Latinos and the interventions that are established to prevent incarceration, reduce recidivism, and all the other remedies were not on my mind when Jeffrey sat in my office. Jeffrey was on academic probation after his first semester at Hostos Community College, a college located in the South Bronx and part of in the City University of New York (CUNY), a system of over twenty campuses spread out across the five boroughs of New York City. When I asked Jeffrey his career goals, he responded very vaguely. Jeffrey was about 19 or 20 years old and had been incarcerated and had addiction issues as well. His mother also had been incarcerated, and she was getting her master's from another CUNY college with the help and support of College Initiative (CI), a community-based organization dedicated to helping formerly incarcerated people attend college. In her mind, since education worked for her, education will work for Jeffrey. His mother asked me to see Jeffrey so that I could mentor him through his college experience. In speaking with Jeffrey, I realized that he felt that college was useful; however, he did not really see himself as a college student. In reality, even with the help of his mother and CI, Jeffrey simply stumbled into Hostos and was not ready to fully claim his status as a student.

The thought that kept running through my mind after his visit was: if the general population of first-time, non-traditional students at Hostos Community College face a number of obstacles and challenges in their first semester in college, how are the re-entry population who are burdened with the shame and stigma of imprisonment and dealing with addictions, facing the daily challenges of college life? How can I, as a faculty member, and Hostos Community College, as an institution, be effective in at least easing the transition to college life for those who have been incarcerated and are now returning to society (formerly incarcerated)? Jeffrey was my reality check.

CUNY, The Black Male Initiative, And Reentry

In the fall of 2004, Matthew Goldstein, the then Chancellor of CUNY, established a University Task Force on the Black Male Initiative (BMI). The Task Force was charged "with developing recommendations that would include a series of action-oriented projects to help black males overcome the inequalities that lead

to poor academic performance in the K-12 system, the attendant weak enrollment, retention, and graduation from institutions of higher education, and high rates of joblessness and incarceration”.

In their report to the Chancellor, the Task Force made the following nine recommendations:

1. Provide strong University leadership on the challenges facing black youth and men;
2. Strengthen the school-to-college pipeline to enable many more black male students to move into higher education;
3. Increase admission and graduation rates at CUNY colleges;
4. Improve teacher education to prepare professionals for urban education;
5. Improve employment prospects for black males;
6. Contribute to the reduction of the incarceration rate for black men;
7. Establish an Institute for the Achievement of Educational and Social Equity for Black Males;
8. Involve experts in the implementation of the recommendations; and
9. Establish benchmarks and hold Colleges accountable for implementing these recommendations.

CUNY was awarded funding from the New York City Council after hearings before the Higher Education Committee of the New York City Council. As a result of the initial grant, “fifteen demonstration projects were funded designed to improve the enrollment and/or graduation rates of students from underrepresented groups, particularly black males. Funding was also allocated to increase opportunities for individuals without a high school diploma to enroll in GED courses oriented towards college preparation; to provide support for formerly incarcerated individuals to enroll in college; and to survey workforce development opportunities in New York City’s construction industry”.

All of the CUNY campuses involved in the CUNY BMI projects meet on a monthly basis at the CUNY Central Office. As a representative of my college and a BMI advisor, I attended monthly CUNY BMI Funded Projects meetings and was exposed to the various projects within CUNY as well as those community-based organizations (CBO) that work in partnership with specific CUNY campuses or CUNY-wide programs.

In the fall of 2008, Michael Carey, the Executive director of College Initiative met with members of CUNY BMI projects and described the work his organization was doing in prison and with those formerly incarcerated who wanted to attend college. He invited the BMI project participants to attend the launching of the mentoring program that was developed and implemented by those formerly incarcerated and working with CI. Mr. Carey made a video presentation of the mentoring program that had been developed with an outside consulting firm. The

video was described step-by-step procedures, program development, assessment, and incentives that the population had created on their own with guidance from the consultants.

I received an invitation to meet with program participants and went to observe the mentoring process, ask questions, and meet the participants in person. I saw that CI had really changed the lives of these men and women who once had only a dream of attending college. Now, I was talking to graduates from CUNY and State University of New York (SUNY) as well as private colleges. There were CI members who were attending graduate school for their masters and in some cases even their doctorates.

When Jeffrey left my office, I knew what I had to do and with whom I was going to work. Again, statistics and research were not my immediate goals. I saw a CBO that was focused, organized, and committed to the population learning from each other and supporting each other. I contacted Mr. Carey, told him of my idea, and asked to meet with him and the appropriate staff members. Armed with my idea, I went to the then Dean of Special Programs in Academic Affairs, who was the supervisor for the Hostos BMI programs.

The Idea

In order to ease the often difficult transition into college life, I proposed a summer boot camp in which the formerly incarcerated selected by College Initiative who applied to a CUNY institution would receive instruction in reading, writing, and math to prepare them for placement tests. The goal of the program was to reduce the need for remedial courses in English and math and provide an orientation to college covering time management skills and introducing students to programs within the college and CUNY to assist them in successfully navigating the first semester. In the college orientation meeting, the summer participants would be introduced to their CI mentors to establish goals. In addition, since many of the participants are on parole or probation, they needed to learn to work with their probation/parole officers around issues related to their college schedules and responsibilities and report on their progress in reentering society after imprisonment.

Although the program could have been housed at The Fortune Society, a community-based organization whose mission is “to support successful reentry from prison and promote alternatives to incarceration...” or at the offices of College Initiative, I wanted the program to be housed in a college campus so that the students experience the real feel and taste of a college campus before they committed to a college-degree program. When I presented the idea to Dean of Special Programs, Carlos Molina, he was enthusiastic and shared the idea with the president of the College. I was fortunate to have the support of College administrators at the highest levels.

Planning for the summer pilot program began in October 2009 with a target

of June 2010 to pilot the program. The members of the planning committee were staff from College Initiative, New York Justice Corps, The Fortune Society, a representative from the Office of the President, the director and assistant director of the Hostos Academic Learning Center (HALC), the then director of Institutional Research, and me, a faculty member in the Business Department of Hostos Community College. For nine months, the planning committee sifted through research, education models, logistics, costs, and orientation models to develop a program that would effectively support this cohort of students.

Program

The summer orientation program was based on two fundamental goals: 1) prepare students academically not only with study and time management skills, but also with the academic foundation they would need to pass the entrance exams in math and English and avoid remedial courses and 2) provide support for formerly incarcerated individuals who may find the transition to college socially difficult. These “non-academic” skills included time management, goal setting, navigating college and university bureaucracies, and maintaining productive relationships with parole officers, faculty, and mentors.

Academics

The program was scheduled for 10 weeks and involved three hours of instruction a night, for four nights a week. Scheduling evening instruction allowed students to meet the demands of work and parole and probation supervision.

Given the 120 hours available for instruction, finding the right balance of academic and non-academic instruction was a priority. CI and HALC decided on reserving one evening a week for non-academic skills instruction (30 hours) and three evenings (90 hours) for academic instruction.

Academically, HALC administrators felt the importance of designing activities that specifically prepared students for one or more skills tests and provided them with a solid foundation to succeed in their CUNY placement tests and in their college-level courses. To this end, and based on students’ CUNY test results, HALC decided to prepare study plans for each student.

Instruction and Training

Training and well-planned lessons were fundamental to the success of the program. To provide a deeper immersion in skills development, the curriculum linked study skills and test taking techniques to ensure that each student was quickly engaged with the areas they needed to pass their CUNY tests. Comprehensive facilitator manuals and accompanying student handbooks focused on strategies to improve developmental skills in reading, writing and math. The same lesson plans and syllabi were used for each workshop. The syllabi included instructions, explanations and exercises for the different activities to be covered in each workshop. The

workshop instructional model used a manual prepared by the Hostos Academic Learning Center and practice tests.

Specially trained, non-faculty facilitators delivered workshop instruction. To prepare facilitators for workshops, training sessions were provided during the spring 2010 semester. Development activities provided facilitators with the opportunity to improve their teaching techniques and strategies by reading essays on current teaching practices, observing other facilitators during workshop sessions, and by participating in discussion groups led by HALC staff. These development activities served to improve the facilitators' knowledge of writing, reading and math theories, their ability to use a variety of pedagogical approaches during workshop sessions, and their understanding of the role that they played in the learning process. Participation of developmental activities was required of all basic skills facilitators.

In addition, CI provided training for HALC instructors on the characteristics of the reentry population and the criminal justice system, while developers from CUNY College Transition Initiatives provided two seminars on their work with GED-to-college transitions.

Coordinator and Liaison

The need for a coordinator and liaison between HALC, college administrators and CI was recognized early in the planning stages and I assumed the responsibility. I was present each night to take attendance, give counsel and troubleshoot.

Schedule

Students' test scores were essential to the structuring and design of the program. CI and HALC worked with the testing office at Hostos to ensure that the students could take placement tests in a timely manner and as a cohort. Since most of the participants needed to pass one or more skills test, the 90 hours of instruction would be divided between reading/writing and math.

Because all of the participants needed to pass at least one part of the COMPASS math exam, the first 45 hours of instruction, during the first five weeks of the program, would be assigned to math instruction. Students would be placed in either Mathematics 1 (pre-algebra) or Mathematics 2 (algebra) workshops based on their test scores.

At the end of the first 45 hours of instruction, students would be retested for their math exams. Students who successfully completed their math requirements would then be placed in a writing/reading workshop, while those who needed more assistance would continue to receive math instruction for the remaining 45 hours of the program.

Non-Academic Workshops

CI administrators were responsible for overseeing the non-academic programming which included workshops on identifying and realizing the elements that go into a successful college career; understanding requirements and taking responsibility for academic progress; fulfilling corrections and educational commitments by developing a strong partnership with supervision agents; the stages of an academic career; and the opportunities for and obstacles to a satisfying and sustainable career path.

Mentors

Mentoring services were provided for at least two semesters to each participating student. CI mentors were students who had at least two semesters of college experience and a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Mentors received training structured as a college course during regular CUNY academic semesters and had five mandated one-on-one meetings with mentees as well as regular group meetings and mentor support meetings during the semester. The focus of the contacts was to assess and facilitate the student's academic progress and preparation for the academic milestones that occur each semester, as well as to provide connections as needed to supportive services.

CI's peer mentors provided workshops for two evenings of the summer orientation program. During the first workshop, eleven CI mentors spoke about their experiences with the criminal justice system and the role postsecondary education played in realigning their lives after incarceration. An open discussion followed. During the second workshop, CI mentors worked with the students in small groups to develop six-month, one-year, three-year and five-year goals. The students then presented these goals to the group. Each student in the cohort was matched with a CI mentor for the Fall 2010 semester and beyond.

Recruitment

Recruitment of the students was the responsibility of CI and was built into the organization's schedule of student orientations. The students recruited for the program had been accepted into CUNY community colleges for Fall 2010, so the program had a CUNY-wide scope.

Incentives

The importance of incentives for retention was discussed early in the planning process, and CI was able to secure funding to cover subway passes for all students. Other incentives included fast-tracked eligibility for CI scholarships and, through a generous grant from The Sunshine Lady Foundation, a free netbook computer for every student who completed the program.

Program Launch and Program “Graduation”

A program launch and graduation were planned early and were seen as integral to creating a welcoming environment for the students.

The program began with a dinner during which the President of the College, the Provost of the College, the Director of the CUNY Black Male Initiative and the Director of CI welcomed the students to the program. The students then introduced themselves and spoke of their goals and aspirations.

The program ended with a graduation dinner during which the President of the College addressed the participants. They received certificates and netbook computers, and the mentors congratulated their mentees on their success.

Budget

Funding for the program came from College Initiative and from Hostos Community College.

2010 SUMMER PROGRAM BUDGET	
Academic Instructors --Tutors	\$ 6,750
Metrocards (subway passes)	\$ 5,000
Orientation and Closin Ceremony	\$ 2,000
Coordinator	\$ 5,000
TOTAL REQUEST	\$ 18,750

Program Results

SUMMER 2010				
Overall Student Performance at the end of the program (90-hours of instruction)				
Workshop	Students needing intervention	Completed and tested	Passed %	Tested who passed
M1 1	0	8	8	100%
M2 1	5	11 6		54.00%
Writing	7	7	2	30.50%
Reading	3	3	3	100%

Discussion Of The Program Results For Summer 2010

Of the ten students enrolled in M1 workshop, eight of them completed the workshop, took the test, and all eight passed the exam.

Of the 15 students enrolled in M2 workshop, 11 of them completed the workshop, took the test, and 6 passed the exam.

Of the seven students enrolled in the Writing workshop, all seven completed the workshop, took the test, and two passed the exam.

Of the three students enrolled in the Reading workshop, all three completed the workshop, took the test, and all three passed the exam.

The pilot was successful in that every student who completed the program passed at least one of the CUNY exams, and many of the students passed two of the exams.

The pilot encouraged the planning committee to continue with the program for the following summer.

When the 2010 summer program ended, the planning committee members met to debrief and suggest ways of improving the program for 2011.

Conclusion

The Hostos College Initiative Summer Program supports research findings in terms of the importance and significance of education for the reentry population (Brazzell, Crayton, Mukamal, Solomon, Lindahl 2009).

In the report on Building Pathways of Possibility from Criminal Justice to College: College Initiative as a Catalyst Linking Individual and Systemic Change (Sturm, Skolnick, Wu 2011), the authors utilize the case study method in illustrating the success of College Initiative in working with their community partners, and highlight the collaborative work of the Hostos College Initiative 2010 Summer Program in their success with an innovative method to assist those seeking college after incarceration.

In their June 2012 report, The New York Reentry Education Network (NYREN), “a group of leaders and organizations in New York City dedicated to increasing educational access and success for people with criminal justice backgrounds” highlight the work done by College Initiative and other organizations within the network that seek education as a means for permanent rehabilitation for those formerly incarcerated.

In their November 2013 publication, “Higher Education and Reentry: The Gifts They Bring”, the members of the Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice bring home the point in first-person narratives of the life-changing effects of higher education on the lives of the members of the focus group of their study. The members of the focus group comment on the need and importance of faculty support in pursuing their educational and career goals and dreams.

In spring 2013, then College President Félix Matos Rodriguez established the Hostos Reentry Committee, and I continue to serve as a member of the committee. Through the former chair of the Reentry Committee, Professor Neil Hernandez, Hostos Community College has made contacts in the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the Manhattan Detention Center and the Brooklyn Detention Center as well as the Bronx Residential Reentry Center to offer the inmates the opportunity to include a college degree in their planning when they are released from the facility.

In the words of Tambu, a Calypsonian, in his song, “The Journey Now Start”, all of us—community and educational institutions are embarking on the formal journey of looking at higher education as one of the paths to success for those reentering society after incarceration.

And what happened to Jeffrey? When Jeffrey left my office, he left Hostos and College Initiative. However, Jeffrey made such an impact on me that he is remembered in each successful story of our participants and students. Because of Jeffrey, I am glad to have played a small part in the success of one segment of our college population.

Just Sign Here

Oded Naaman

For him, it was a pleasant enough evening.

They sat in their favorite little Italian restaurant, ate their favorite food, and talked about their day. It seemed like any other dinner they had in the past six months (not counting the ones where they just watched some television together and no conversation was needed).

Only when they both drank their espresso (that was one of the things he loved about her: the fact that she could drink three or four of those without it affecting her ability to fall asleep), she said the sentence that changed everything: “We need to talk.”

What happened from that point, he had already experienced way too many times before: “It’s not you, it’s me”; “I’m not in that place of my life right now”; “It seems we want different things from life.” He sat there silently, and when she finished and noticed he wasn’t going to react, she just stood up, kissed him on the forehead and walked away.

“Wow. She didn’t even offer to pay her part of the bill.” A voice woke him up from his deep thoughts about the meaning of life. He looked up to see a man in an expensive black suit. He sat in front of him, in the chair where she sat just a few minutes ago.

“Do you mind if I sit here?” He said after the fact.

“Actually...” But the man in the suit was already signaling the waiter to bring him an espresso as well.

“My name is Jenkins. Joe Jenkins. You?” He turned back and presented his hand.

“Uhhh... Clark. Clark Green.” Clark took the man’s hand and hesitantly shook it.

“That was brutal, what just happened,” Jenkins said with a knowing nod.

“Yes. Ahhh... Mr. Jenkins is it?” Clark was so confused. “I really appreciate your interest, but I also really want to be alone right now.”

“You really liked her,” Jenkins said as he took the espresso cup from the waiter’s hands, and drank it in one sip.

“I don’t think I want to talk about this with you.”

“Fair enough. But let me just tell you this, Mr. Green: I can help you.” He took a business card out of his jacket’s pocket and handed it to Clark.

Clark took it from his hand and looked at it: Second Chance – Relationship Insurance, it said. And beneath the heading was the contact information for Joseph Jenkins, Head of Sales.

“You’re trying to sell me insurance?” Clark said, confused.

“Not just insurance, Mr. Green. Relationship Insurance.” Jenkins leaned towards him. “I can make sure you will never feel what you’re feeling right now.”

“So if I buy your insurance, I can get Jane back?” Clark almost laughed.

“Oh no.” Jenkins leaned back. “Like every insurance, you can’t submit a claim for a previous injury. Jane is old news.”

Clark sneered.

“But from now on,” Jenkins continued, “your relationships will be completely insured.”

“But what does that mean?” Clark said.

Jenkins looked at his watch. A real Rolex.

“I have to go,” he said, standing up. “Call me to set an appointment up and we can discuss this further.”

He dropped two \$100 bills on the table.

“Dinner is on me,” and he walked away.

Clark couldn’t move for a while, heavy with the day’s events. At some point, he stood up and left the restaurant, still holding the business card in his hand.

* * *

It took him four months to start dating again, and about fifteen dates to finally meet someone who actually piqued his interest, and apparently he piqued hers. It didn’t take him long to completely fall in love with her. He dated Annie for six months, and at almost the same mark as his previous relationship, she had almost the exact same conversation with him, and broke his heart.

He was miserable for weeks. He hardly slept, using the night to stalk her on Facebook, trying to figure out what went wrong, trying to pick up on whether she was already dating again. She was.

It was one of those sleepless nights when he finally remembered that he still had Jenkins’ card in the back of his wallet. He took it out and started dialing.

“Hello?” said a voice on the other side, and only then did Clark realize he was calling in the middle of the night.

“I’m sorry, I wasn’t thinking. It’s so late...” he mumbled into the phone.

“That’s OK. You might not believe it, but seventy-eight percent of the calls I get are in the middle of the night. I wasn’t sleeping. Don’t worry about it. How can I help you?”

“My name is Clark. Clark Green. We met...”

“Yes. Of course. I remember you, Mr. Green. How have you been?” he cut Clark off.

“Well... Not so well. My girlfriend just broke up with me... and you know... I...”

“Say no more, Mr. Clark. Come to my office first thing in the morning. I’ll text you the address to this phone number. Is 8 AM good for you?”

“Sure...” Clark wasn’t really sure what was happening.

“Great. See you tomorrow morning.” And Jenkins hung up.

Not two seconds after that, he got the text message with the address. Clark

went back to bed, and not long after that, he fell asleep.

* * *

"You look tired." Jenkins placed a cup of espresso in front of Clark.

"Haven't been sleeping a lot lately." Clark sipped halfheartedly at his coffee.

"I get that." Jenkins sat in front of him, on the opposite side of his big fancy desk.

It was a large, modern office, located on the forty-second floor of a building downtown. Clark had walked by it many times before, not knowing this was where Second Chances was based. There were other salespeople, or whatever they were, sitting in their offices, talking to other potential clients, but the walls were probably soundproof, since Clark couldn't hear anything that was being said.

"So, is this like a dating company? You get me a date if I get dumped?" Clark turned to Jenkins.

"Oh no. We provide you with a relationship if you get dumped." Jenkins smiled.

"But how does that work?"

"You pay us a premium every month, just like your car insurance. If your relationship doesn't work out, you file a claim, and we provide you with a new one. A new relationship."

"Yes, but how does it work?" Clark was baffled.

"I really don't understand the question, Mr. Green," said Jenkins with a sealed face.

"But..." Clark started to ask, but Jenkins waved his hand to stop him.

"Let's go over our options, shall we?"

Jenkins took a remote control in his hand and turned on the big screen that was mounted on the wall. A slideshow popped onto the screen.

"We have three basic packages. The simplest one is called The Wild Card."

"What is that?" Clark asked.

"You don't know what you get. All you know is that you get a relationship replacement." Jenkins answered, and clicked the remote to move to the next slide. "This is our mid-range option. It's called The Perfect Match."

"You're getting me someone suitable for my personality? So it is like match-making." Clark grimaced.

"No. You get an almost exact replica relationship of the one you lost," Jenkins replied.

"So I'm getting the person back?"

"That's a different option. Or, more to the point, an add-on. In The Perfect Match, you get a relationship similar in every way to the one you had."

"But..." Before Clark could ask his question, Jenkins had already moved on to the next slide.

"And our premium package is called Love at First Sight. It's our most expensive and luxurious package." He was smiling ear to ear.

This time Clark waited for him to explain.

"The person you will meet will be amazing. Perfect in every way. Not only will

you fall immediately in love with her, but she will fall in love with you right away. And we can guarantee you stay in love for five years.”

“Both of us?” Clark was skeptical.

“Both of you. Guaranteed.” Jenkins leaned back.

Maybe it was the dark goo in his stomach, or the fact that he hadn’t slept for two weeks, but he immediately said, “That’s the one I want.”

Jenkins leaned over, smiling.

“You won’t regret it!” He opened up a drawer and pulled out a large folder filled with papers, opened it, and pointed to the first page. “Just so there won’t be any misunderstandings, this is the monthly payment.”

Clark glanced at the number and gasped.

“Problem?” Jenkins asked.

Once again, he wasn’t sure what propelled him to do it, but he said, “No.”

“Good.” Jenkins flipped the pages quickly and went to the last one. “Just sign here.”

He handed Clark a pen.

“Shouldn’t I read it first?” Clark said while taking the pen.

“Sure. You can take it home and sign later.” Jenkins put his hands behind his head. “Take your time. Just know that if you start a relationship before you sign, it won’t apply to it.”

“I don’t think I’ll meet someone by the end of today. Or this week, for that matter.”

“Right. But who knows?”

Clark sat there frozen for a few seconds, holding the pen. Then he was about to start signing when he stopped and looked at Jenkins.

“You were talking about add-ons?”

“Ahh yes. The add-ons.” Jenkins straightened himself up and clicked the remote.

The slide changed.

“As you can see, we have three major add-ons. The first one, we already talked about. It’s actually securing the person you lost to continue the same relationship. The second is insuring you if you break up with someone.”

“If I break up with someone?”

“Yes. Our standard policy only protects you if you get dumped. If you are the one who is initiating the end of the relationship, and you want to make a claim, you have to pay for the add-on.”

“And the third one?” Clark asked.

“Part of the fine print is that you can only use each policy option once. If you activate Love at First Sight once, you can’t claim that again. The third add-on allows you to submit a claim up to three times.”

“I see. And the prices?”

Jenkins clicked for the next slide and when Clark saw the prices he shook his head quickly.

“No, no. The standard package will be enough for now.”

“Fair enough.” Jenkins said.

Clark took a deep breath and signed.

Jenkins reached out his hand, and Clark shook it.

“Congratulations! I’m so happy for you!” Jenkins smiled a big smile. “Here’s our customer service number and some more instructions on how to make a claim.”

He gave Clark a brochure.

“What now?” asked Clark.

“Now? Now, like every insurance, I hope you’ll never need us.”

* * *

Clark felt cleansed after signing the policy. Not long afterwards, he started dating again. Soon enough he found someone.

It was great at first. First date, second date, sex, meeting parents, meeting friends. But almost to the day, at the six-month mark, she broke up with him.

Something inside Clark told him that maybe he self-sabotaged this relationship just so he could make the claim on his policy.

Panicked, he realized he didn’t remember where he put the brochure. Frantically, he searched the entire house, only to find it at the bottom of his old tax filing box. It was late. Clark read the brochure carefully. Twenty-four-hour customer service, it stated.

Clark grabbed his phone and dialed.

“Second Chance Customer Service. This is Jeanine. May I have your customer number please?”

“Customer Number? I don’t have it...”

“No worries. May I have your first and last name?”

He gave them to her.

“And your date of birth?”

He gave her that as well.

“There we go, Mr. Green. How may we help you today?”

“I’d like to make a claim,” Clark said, excited.

“Wonderful. Or maybe I should say I’m sorry?” Jeanine was trying to be politically correct.

“It’s OK,” Clark replied.

“Good. So I see you have the Love at First Sight package.”

“Yes.”

“Ok. I filed the claim. Have a good night.” Jeanine said cheerfully.

“Wait!” Clark yelled into the phone.

“Yes?” Jeanine said in a dry voice.

“That’s it?”

“Yep. That’s it.”

“But... When...? Where...?”

“I’m not really qualified to answer those questions about the process. You can call your agent in the morning. It’s... Mr. Jenkins.”

“Yes,” Clark said.

“Well, have a good night, Mr. Green.” And she hung up.

Clark tried calling Jenkins, but he got a voice mail. Since there was nothing

else he could do, he lay in his bed and slowly fell asleep.

The next day on his way to work, he got a phone call from a number he didn't recognize.

"Mr. Green? Clark? My name is Alex. We need to meet to discuss the claim you made."

"Is there a problem?" Clark had a feeling this whole thing may have been a scam after all.

"No problem, just need to meet as soon as possible."

"OK. How about lunch? I work downtown."

"That's perfect. You know Bernie's?" she asked.

"Sure."

"Let's meet there at 12:30."

"OK."

"See you soon!"

Clark hung up the phone.

* * *

Alex was everything he ever dreamed of. Gorgeous, smart, independent, great sense of humor, and she brought out everything that was good in him.

From that first meeting, it was clear to both of them that they were meant to be with each other. They were in love and not afraid to show it to the world. Every day with her was a new adventure.

Clark was, simply put, happy.

After six months of dating Alex, he got a phone call.

A familiar voice was on the other side. "Mr. Green? This is Jeanine from Second Chance."

"Yes?"

"We're calling to see if you're happy with how things turned out after you submitted your claim" Jeanine said sweetly.

"Very much so." Clark said "Thank you for everything."

"Glad to hear it." Jeanine almost sounded sincere. "But there's one thing we need to talk about. Since you used Love at First Sight, you now need to choose another option, or buy the add-on that allows you to reuse First Sight."

Clark almost said to her he just wanted to cancel the policy, but something stopped him.

"Let's change it to... what is it called? The Wild Card?" Clark eventually said.

"Good, good," Jeanine replied. "But let me suggest something. Our research shows that users of First Sight find the switch to Wild Card a jarring transition. I suggest choosing Perfect Match."

"Fine," Clark said.

"Let us know if there's anything else we can do for you." Jeanine hung up.

After a year, Clark proposed to Alex, and she immediately said yes. They married in a small wedding with a few friends and family, everybody approving this wonderful relationship. His parents loved her and his parents loved him. Their friends became one big group. It was perfect.

Two years into their marriage, their son was born. She was an amazing mother, he was a wonderful father, and they were just a little happy family.

After five years, it all changed.

It came out of nowhere for him. She invited him to dinner one evening, and told him she didn't feel the same way anymore. She wanted a divorce.

"Let's do it like two adults," she said. "Let's not make it harder on our son."

That day she packed a bag and moved to her parents' house.

Clark was angry, frustrated, but most of all sad. He still felt the same way about her, about them, and it hurt like no pain he had ever felt before.

After a week of self-reflection, he called customer service.

"I want to buy the add-on. The one that brings her back to me," he told Jeanine.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Green, but you can't apply an add-on to an existing policy. Only to your next one." Jeanine was unsympathetic.

He started yelling. Begging. Bargaining. But Jeanine remained unhelpful. He slammed the phone down.

A few minutes later the phone rang.

"Mr. Green?" A familiar voice was on the other side "It's Joe Jenkins. I just heard from Jeanine you may be unhappy."

"Indeed," Clark said.

"We've been talking here, and since you're a good customer, we're willing to offer you the opportunity to purchase the add-on just this time."

"Really?"

"Yes. But it will cost you a special premium."

"I don't mind. I'll pay anything." And he did. A lot.

The next day Alex called him and said that after their conversation she had done some heavy soul searching and discovered how much she still loved him.

"Will you take me back?" she sobbed.

The next year felt like their first year together. They rediscovered everything that was missing from their relationship, and then some. It was like they were a whole new couple, with all the familiarities and comfort of an old one. It was like heaven.

But when that year ended, she told him she was sleeping with someone else.

"We're in love. I'm moving in with him." She added no further explanation.

When he called customer service, Jeanine was able to clarify.

"Our add-on is only good for one year. It's in the contract."

Clark asked a lawyer friend to take a look at the policy.

"It's iron-clad." He offered no comfort to Clark "Nothing you can do about it".

Reluctantly, Clark called Jeanine again.

"I want to make a claim." He had no more fight in him.

"Wonderful! I'm activating The Perfect Match now!" Jeanine was more cheerful than ever.

That evening, he walked around the empty house for a while. Alex had taken their son with her, but they arranged a visitation schedule. He ordered pizza and watched some television. Then he went to bed and fell asleep.

In the morning when he woke up, there was a stranger in the bed next to him. For some reason he didn't freak out. He just watched her sleep for a while.

She opened her eyes and smiled at him.

"Good morning," she said, and kissed him.

She got out of bed.

"I'll make us some breakfast." She walked towards the kitchen. "I'm Peg, by the way".

Clark sat in bed for a few minutes and then went to take a shower. When he got out, breakfast was ready for him. How she had known his favorites was a puzzle to him, but they just sat there and talked. For a moment, Clark thought how strange it all was, but then he realized he just didn't care.

Michael Powell's "Peeping Tom" (1960) in the Age of Facebook and Selfies

Jennifer Tang

Upon its release in 1960, *Peeping Tom*, a film by the esteemed British director Michael Powell, auteur of such classics as *The Red Shoes*, *The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp* and *Black Narcissus*, came under fire. Though his fellow Brit, Alfred Hitchcock, also inspired a similar kind of outrage thanks to the explicit violence in *Psycho*, Hitchcock's career flourished after the film's release; Powell's did not. This psychologically complex work was called "depraved," "perverted," "pornographic," and his film career, by all accounts, was destroyed (Moor 54). It wasn't until the late 1970s that Martin Scorsese championed *Peeping Tom* and saved it from obscurity, but by that time, Powell's prime filmmaking years had been lost.

What was the root of this outrage, this intellectual but also highly visceral rejection by critics that ultimately ended Powell's career? The plot of *Peeping Tom* is roughly as follows: a handsome and diffident young man, Mark Lewis, who works as a "focus puller" for a film crew is actually a murderer of prostitutes, a modern day Jack the Ripper. Nothing new about that, except that the killer also happens to be an obsessed filmmaker who stabs his unwitting "stars" by using a knife concealed in the tripod of his camera. The police are mystified by the intense look of fright found on the victims' faces. At the end the film, we learn why: the sadistic killer attached a mirror to his camera, forcing the victims to watch themselves die.

Critics in 1960 expressed revulsion. "The film is more nauseating and depressing than the leper colonies of East Pakistan, the back streets of Bombay, and the gutters of Calcutta," wrote Len Mosley of the *Daily Express*. The *London Times'* critic put it bluntly: "The only really satisfactory way to dispose of 'Peeping Tom' would be to shovel it up and flush it swiftly down the sewer; even then the stench would remain" (Killer Reviews 1).

Roger Ebert, in his 1999 column on "Great Films," attributed their anger to the fact Powell committed the apparently unpardonable sin of calling attention to the audience's own love of voyeurism. The pleasure of a movie-going experience, after all, derives from the spectator's ability to be "unseen," to lose sense of who he or she is for a time by becoming the all-seeing eye of the camera: "We sit in the dark, watching other people's lives" (Ebert 1). Like Hitchcock, Powell was a master manipulator of viewers' emotions. When Mark stalks his victims, the director switches to a subjective camera, inviting the audience to "become" the murderer and share his bloodlust for killing. For the polite, sexually repressed and reserved Brits who had survived the horrors of WWII, but had not yet experienced The Beatles or Swinging London, this invitation was greeted with rage, a virtual assault

on “civilized” society.

While much has been written about the film’s exploration of the moviemaking process, I believe the film has a lot to say about today’s social media culture. In recent years, voyeurism has become less a concern of the movie house than a phenomenon of the Internet and all the devices that keep us connected. For many, Facebook, the foremost social media platform, serves as a kind of daily, 24-hour reality show. The “stars” are people we know as well as ourselves. We watch and comment on our friends’ activities and they, in turn, watch us. These actions and reactions create a never-ending loop in which we end up continually staring at ourselves. This is a recurrent motif in *Peeping Tom*—Mark cannot stop filming and insists that everyone watch themselves on camera, whether they are going about their daily lives or are about to be killed. Throughout the film, he claims he is filming “a documentary,” but it soon becomes clear that this “movie” will only end with his death.

I believe Powell’s film poignantly addresses issues of privacy and voyeurism that our contemporary, highly narcissistic culture prefers to ignore. The older woman who rooms in Mark’s building ominously warns, “All this filming isn’t healthy.” The film’s heroine resents being treated like an object: the first time he attempts to film Helen, his soon-to-be girlfriend, she angrily pushes his camera away. Later, when they go on a first date, she firmly insists that he leave his camera behind (a situation eerily prescient of our current resistance to leaving behind our smartphones). Powell’s message is clear: Mark’s urge to kill is an outgrowth of his addiction to voyeurism. His detachment from “real life” leads to a spiritual deadness that can only be escaped through the “hands on” act of murder.

In the sixty years since the film’s release, however, what was once presented as the symptoms of a madman has now become an everyday activity performed by millions of people behind their computer screens. Thanks to the ubiquitousness of the Internet and the photographic capability of smartphones, we now have the means at our disposal to record aurally and visually everything about our lives. If Mark Lewis, loner and wannabe filmmaker, had lived today and simply refrained from the still socially unacceptable act of killing strangers, he would have his own YouTube channel and be lauded as a prime member of the zeitgeist.

Five years ago, a friend of mine lost her beloved mother to cancer. In 2010, Facebook was still a relative novelty, a popular but not widely used social platform. As such, her early months of mourning, as it did for many others, took place in relative obscurity and privacy. Then, as the years passed, many of my friends began signing up for Facebook and encouraging me to do the same. At first I thought it was just an amusing, harmless little website; I learned it had been started by two immature Harvard geeks eager to compare notes on single women. But then I started to notice that my view of friendship and friends began to change radically. First, the effect seemed to be positive: I reunited with old pals and acquaintances I thought I had lost. But soon the content of my online relationships evolved: friends whom I had known only in passing acquaintance suddenly began to take on multidimensional aspects comparable to that of a literary character, thanks to my being privy to their lives on Facebook. People I thought I had known well for years turned out to be, thanks to their profiles and daily updates, quite at variance with

their outward social appearances; and some relationships began to break away and sometimes crumble thanks to miscommunications that had begun (and ended) on Facebook message sites.

Then, the day after my friend mentioned that it was the anniversary of her mother's death, I opened my Facebook account and was confronted by a photo of her mother's headstone, obviously taken at the cemetery and strewn with roses. The dates of her birth and death could be clearly seen, etched in granite. "R.I.P. Mom," my friend captioned. "I will always love you." It was clear my friend was in pain and only wanted sympathy from the Facebook world. I felt sorry for her, but the image of her mother's grave haunted me for days. Perhaps it was my own fear of death, but I realized it was also because the photo had been so intimate. I felt I had been thrust into the depths of someone else's grief and I wanted to look away. What was next, I wondered, a photo of the autopsy?

At the same time, the image itself struck me as strangely familiar. I felt I had seen something like it before. Then I remembered: the photo of the headstone reminded me of a scene in *Peeping Tom*. "Much of the tension in *Peeping Tom* comes from its constant scenes of people looking at things they shouldn't," writes an AMC critic (*Movie Mashup* 1). Some discerning critics noted that much of the horror of the film comes not from the killings themselves (which are shown mostly off-screen), but from the revelations of how a young man becomes a killer (Peary 116). Like Norman Bates, Mark is sociable and invites an earnest young woman, Helen, into his home to watch childhood home movies made by his father. The elder Lewis (played by Michael Powell himself) was a scientist fascinated by the nervous system and people's reaction to fear. Unfortunately, he used his own son as a guinea pig.

In one of the film's most memorable sequences, a movie-within-a movie shows a young Mark (played by Powell's own son) jumping out of bed in fright after his father drops a lizard onto his bed. Mark defends his father's actions, telling Helen that his father immortalized his reactions in his landmark research tomes in psychology. Helen, however, is shocked by his father's lack of emotion and sensitivity. An even more disturbing sequence follows: the boy is seen approaching his mother's deathbed. The camera follows his stricken face until two glaringly white hands, splayed out at odd angles to convey their lifelessness, come into view. The boy reaches down and grasps the corpse's fingers. Helen lets out a gasp of disbelief as she realizes that the elder Lewis decided to film his son's reaction at the exact moment that his beloved mother died.

Powell then cuts away to Mark and Helen watching the film. "And now, here's my mother's funeral. And here is her burial," he continues breathlessly, though we are curiously denied this view. It was at this point that I remembered my friend's dead mother – the image of the tombstone that even Powell had found too disturbing (or unnecessary) to show, had managed to make its way to my own Facebook page.

By demonstrating that nothing is sacred and that the camera is free to do whatever a director wants, Mark's father conditioned his son to disregard the notion of privacy and accept that the violation of people's boundaries is fine as long as you have a project in mind (a research study or a self-styled documentary). But Mark

goes further than this: he later introduces his victims to an early concept of the “selfie” by making sure his victims watch themselves die. In the film’s final sequence, Mark commits suicide with his own “selfie stick”, impaling himself while filming and watching his own death throes in the mirror.

By exposing what an unhealthy obsession with film and filming can do to the mind, Powell seems to have had courted rejection by his peers. Despite his enormous success as a filmmaker, I speculate that he may have suffered some level of guilt over an inability to experience “real life”. Instead of being lauded for his honesty and willingness to delve into the less savory aspects of directing and movie-making (now recognized by Scorsese and others), Powell was attacked for depicting the destructive power of unfettered voyeurism and revealing one of his profession’s occupational hazards. Audiences and critics were mystified by this betrayal. What was Powell saying? Was he actually advocating a kind of censorship, that filmmakers should shy away from certain “taboo” topics, given that film can be used for evil as well as good? Or was he making the observation that film is by nature exploitative and that, as a filmmaker, this state is simply unavoidable?

While Peeping Tom remains, to date, thought-provoking and fascinating because it invites questions such as these, I believe that much of its original power to haunt and horrify audiences has been lost. In addition to our high level of tolerance for graphic violence, which makes any horror film from the 1960s seem as tame as Disney programming for preschoolers, modern audiences will laugh at the film’s implicit idea that those addicted to selfies and/or filming themselves are disturbed or inclined to murder. In today’s “sharing” culture, where advertisers and friends alike encourage everyone to “share” their photos, hobbies, preferred products, likes and dislikes, even homes and phone numbers (Google Maps puts to the rest the idea that your remote country home is free from prying eyes), the idea that everyone is entitled to certain privacy rights that cannot and should not be broken feels arbitrary and rigid; the concept has become entirely subjective, dependent upon the will and cooperation of the subject. This belief appears to persist today despite tragedies: for example, the Sept. 22, 2012 suicide of Rutgers student Tyler Clementi after his roommate secretly videotaped him having sex with another man (Foderaro 1).

Seen today, the elder Lewis’ treatment of his son would be considered abusive only in regard to his age: he was a child subject to unpleasant psychological experiments done without his permission. Filming his son at his mother’s deathbed, however, would no longer be viewed by society as an immoral desecration, which is what Powell may have intended. Had a real-life father done the same thing in 2015, such a sequence would have been posted on YouTube, inviting the public to share in the boy’s grief, much in the way my friend’s tombstone photo was. “Public exposure is not just a matter of egotism or idle voyeurism,” argues Steve Johnson in Time. He praises cancer-stricken friends for blogging their way to health, gaining support and useful advice on the way. He even cites “Zuckerberg’s Law”—a prediction by the Facebook CEO that “each year we’ll share twice as much information as we did the year before,” even as the list of social media casualties goes on: the thousands of faceless employees whose oblivious musings about his or her job, sexual life, or political opinions leads to dismissal; teenagers or young college students who

ruin their chances to get into a good school, a good job, or even a nice place to live thanks to a misjudged or impulsive Facebook posting.

As we continue to immerse ourselves in data-sharing technology, blogging about our lives, taking selfies, holding up seas of smartphones at any event we deem worthy of recording, posting millions of photos and videos to Facebook and Youtube, Peeping Tom's implicit message that "all this filming is unhealthy," possibly leading to insanity and death, now feels as hysterically overblown as the harsh reviews the film originally received. It's hard to see anything deviant or pathological about someone who is so much like us. In 2015, we have all become voyeurs. Je suis Mark Lewis.

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Exploring Connections Between Racial Identity, Societal Norms And Chemical Products

Ana Ozuna, Sarah L. Hoiland, and Nelson Nunez-Rodriguez

INTRODUCTION

While eating breakfast before a New Faculty Orientation meeting, early one Fall morning in 2013, the idea of collaborating on an interdisciplinary project was born. The topic? Hair. Professor Ana Ozuna would focus on racial identity as it relates to Dominican identity, Professor Sarah L. Hoiland would address societal norms and the social construction of hair identity, and Professor Nelson Nunez-Rodriguez would examine the relationship between the use of chemical products and gender. Each of us agreed to select one reading from our subject area and create guiding questions for students enrolled in our Spring 2014 semester courses, Caribbean Society and Culture, Introduction to Anthropology, and General Chemistry I. This teaching note provides a brief summary of our project rationale and background as well as an overview of the activities conducted during the Spring semesters of 2014 and 2015. We are delighted to share the inception and current locus of this exciting pilot, “Hair Project.”

This integrative unit engages Hostos students in the interdisciplinary study of hair while deepening their understanding of the interconnections between racial identities, society, and the chemical industry. Professor Ozuna assessed the legacy of black denial instituted in the Dominican identity paradigm as it relates to Dominican hair culture, and additionally examined Indian hair culture in relation to Western beauty ideals. Professor Hoiland focused on hair as both a biological adaptation and an important part of culture, particularly in terms of ethnicity, gender, and religion. Similarly, Professor Nelson Nunez-Rodriguez examined the relationship between racial identity and gender expectations, yet primarily focused on the social and commercial pressure fostered by the chemical industry. Concomitantly, his students analyzed the chemical properties of popular hair products that cause protein denaturalization.

BACKGROUND

Historically, hair has served as an important social symbol and a significant cultural marker. Characters in twentieth-century American literature, like Janie in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and Beneatha in *A Raisin in the Sun*, remind us that hair is symbolic and imbued with meaning, particularly in the African American community. Hair is linked to beauty, age, assimilation, racial or ethnic pride, resistance, social class, religious beliefs, and, of course, power. Hair is an important

part of one's identity and is shorn to strip one's individuality and force obedience in prisons and the military, adorned as part of a rite of passage, and used to categorize and dominate people according to perceived notions of race. Professor Ozuna's joint reading focuses on the present-day Dominican identity paradigm conceived by Dominican elites during the colonial period who participated in racist conditioning by emphasizing positive association with Spanish and indigenous heritage. Hence, the idealization of white and indigenous cultural supremacy led to what Ginetta Candelario describes as the "Indo-Hispanic norm of Dominicaness", and a legacy of black denial that persists today. (240). As a result, skin color and hair texture that reflect mixed heritage grants social privilege and acceptance in the Dominican Republic and its diaspora communities. Professor Hoiland selected anthropologist Barbara D. Miller's "The Disappearance of the Oiled Braid: Indian Adolescent Female Hairstyles in North America" which examines the Indian diaspora and succinctly presents three theoretical lenses within which to view this phenomenon. Political economy, feminist, and theories of race/ ethnicity, as presented in Miller, provided students with a framework to conceptualize their own ethnographic "hair projects." The joint reading led students to question what is considered beautiful in their culture and how those notions of beauty are related to power. Professor Nunez-Rodriguez selected a reading that examines historical and contemporary hair perming, and delineates the chemical breakdown of the hair during the perming or relaxing process. His students also tested a range of chemical products used to modify hair texture and presented their findings in poster presentations on the damage associated with hair modification. Throughout the semester students evaluate how the chemical industry plays on cultural pressures to create, market, and sell hair products in a global market.

All professors also featured and discussed the documentary *Good Hair* (2009) starring comedian Chris Rock who popularized the commonly heard phrase "good hair" and "bad hair" in this film. Rock explores how the cultural pressure to have "good hair" has created a global market of hair care products targeted primarily to women of color. The informal written assignment prompted some students to question if Rock pathologizes black women by positing their hair care regimen as erratic and driven by the desire to achieve the Eurocentric beauty ideal.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this project, Hostos students will be able to: 1) analyze the intersection between racism and hair culture in the United States, 2) generate meaningful interdisciplinary connections between complex ethical and social problems, 3) develop information literacy and writing skills in three separate disciplines, 4) deepen their understanding of course content and demonstrate conclusions in either a paper, presentation, or both. Moreover, students will explore the connections between institutional policies and practices that maintain racial discrimination and foster internal cognitive trauma. In doing so, our students will develop their cultural competencies by embarking in a meaningful debate intended to respect

differences, develop empathy, and learn to discuss necessary difficult topics.

SEMESTER ASSIGNMENTS

We launched our “Hair Project” during the 2014 Spring semester in our respective classes. We collectively assigned interdisciplinary readings, developed written assignments, and integrated media in our classroom instruction throughout the semester. In addition, all students participated in joint course-related activities. During African American History Month, students attended a multimedia panel discussion on the dynamics of Black beauty in African diaspora communities in the United States. Panelists included Hostos Community College professors from Black Studies, Visual Performing Arts, Sociology, and English. This event served as a “hook” for many students and prompted ongoing discussions both inside and outside the classroom.

“Hair Project” professors also planned and assigned an optional two-week Natural Hair Challenge. During this period, participants refrained from using any chemical product or styling tool that altered the hair pattern and documented their experience on Facebook. Students posted photos, comments, questions, and videos dealing with natural hair and perceptions of the Black aesthetic. The semester culminated with a presentation titled, “It’s All Pelo Bueno ‘Good Hair’: Black Beauty in the Caribbean.” Dominican photographer, Marino Corniel presented a series of photographs taken during his extensive travel in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Puerto Rico from 2010-2013. His work encapsulates the dynamic hair culture of the Caribbean and reveals the growing acceptance of natural hair in spite of the dominant beauty standard that favors the use of chemical straightening products.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The enthusiasm and interest expressed by students and faculty alike prompted us to consider further developing our project and reflecting on our initial teaching experience. In November 2014, we presented our work at the Regional Community College Humanities Association Conference in Baltimore, Maryland. During the Spring 2015 semester, we ramped up our unit with additional readings, media content, assignments, and joint events. We are currently examining ways to assess the global citizenship general education competencies in all three courses using the “Hair Project” as an anchor. This interdisciplinary project illustrates the ways to implement a culturally responsive pedagogical approach, and uses a number of teaching modalities to engage students in comprehensive analytical thinking about the hair identity hierarchies.

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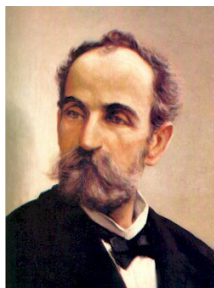
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