

**MAKING THE CONNECTIONS:  
ONE STUDENT'S REFLECTIVE SHOWCASE OF GRADUATE  
COURSEWORK**

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SPRING 2012**

When I reflect upon my experience in the Learning, Teaching and Educational Transformation non-licensure M.Ed. Track at University of Massachusetts, Boston, I recognize and appreciate how this program has had an impact on my own life and the lives of others. The past two years have been a challenging endeavor in my own personal and professional development, which has provided me with invaluable insight into myself, and the way I view, think, and interact with the world around me. This capstone project showcases some of my graduate coursework the past two and half years. These works provide the reader with insight into my thinking process and my experience as a graduate student.

I had thought little, if at all about continuing on to a graduate program of study during my time as an undergraduate student at UMass Boston. Then one day during my final semester as an undergraduate one of my professors, Dr. Shirley Tang, wanted to speak with me after class. I remember the moments leading up to that meeting well. I was quite nervous, and I could feel it building up within my muscles and joints. I felt knots in my stomach and my jaw felt incredibly rigid. It was times like these I dreaded because I didn't know what to expect. For all I knew I was in trouble. I tried to recall everything that had happened over the past several weeks to figure out if there was some reason as to why my teacher wanted to see me. Then I was there sitting in an office on fifth floor of the Wheatley building. I remember a brief silence being broken when Dr. Tang asked what my plans were after I graduated. I wasn't sure. My professor expressed that she thought I should consider continuing my education through a master's degree. I was in awe and humbled at this moment. This conversation had turned out to be a defining moment in my life in choosing where my life would go next because I really wasn't sure what my next major endeavor after graduation would be.

I should say that before the meeting I hadn't put much consideration into grad school, and I had no idea what graduate courses were like. In my mind I always had a way of filling in the unknown with rather grand illusions. Thus, I had assumed that a master's was something that was only for people who had outstanding academic records, and that my performance most likely didn't make the cut. In my undergrad I had been working full time and going to school, which definitely affected my grad point average. I had also assumed that graduate school was for people who were some what established in a career and wanted to move up in their professional lives. At that time I was working a job as a retail clerk and thought that

graduate school was out of my reach. After meeting with my professor I felt much more confident that I had the ability to continue my education, and pursue a goal that I once saw as inaccessible. This dialogue with my professor helped to clarify my vision and understanding of graduate school, and I realized it wasn't just something based on GPA's or moving up the professional ladder. I saw this as a way to continue doing something I love. I began to see grad school as the next step in continuing my learning process.

When I further reflect back on this moment in time I begin to see that it was through the mentorship of people like Dr. Tang who helped me to become a more confident, independent, and engaging individual. My involvement with the faculty, students, and staff of the Asian American Studies Program here at UMass Boston made me feel a true sense of self worth, and that I could make a real impact on others. I think this was because they take the time out to listen and share their personal stories and develop connections.

As I put together my application to apply to graduate school I was nervous and knew very little. I did some research looking into what the M.Ed. programs at UMass Boston entailed. Initially, I thought that I would like to be a teacher so I applied for the M.Ed. with licensure at the secondary level. After waiting several weeks I received a letter in the mail stating that I had been accepted into the College of Education and Human Development (Known at that time as the Graduate College of Education) for the Spring of 2010. I also interviewed for a graduate assistantship, and was shortly thereafter offered the assistantship working at South Boston Education Complex for the Admissions Guaranteed Program. I felt incredibly privileged to receive this opportunity, and I felt somewhat at ease because unlike my undergraduate experience, I could now focus on my studies to keep my GPA up.

At the beginning of the first semester I found myself questioning if I really wanted to teach so with the help of my advisor I chose courses that could also be applied towards the Learning, Teaching, and Educational Transformation Non-Licensure Program (LTET), which I transferred into later on in the semester. I made the choice to transfer based on the experience of both personal and professional life. Through my assistantship at the high school I got a first hand look at the challenges of working in a Boston Public School such as how the teachers there need to manage their time between planning and teaching their curriculum, proctor MCAS tests, and navigate the political and social networks. The most important aspect I learned from is that I wasn't ready to give up the other activities I was involved in. If I had decided to become a

teacher I would have to give up the time I devoted each week to working with other members of the music community I have been involved in for almost eight years. The LTET program allowed me to pursue a degree that would allow me to work in education, but also to take what I learned there and apply it to the other parts of my life. Furthermore, my graduate studies in the LTET track changed my perspective as to how I viewed my involvement in my local music community from being a participant to becoming actively engaged with other people.

My work in this music community spans a vast array of projects that range from planning monthly and annual events, DJ'ing, and teaching and discussing music with other members of this community. Critical Thinking (CRCRTH 601) was one of the first graduate classes, and it taught me to see this community in whole new light. Originally I saw the monthly DJ night I did the booking for as a release from the stress and tensions I experienced from everything else going on in my life. After taking this course I really began to think about how this monthly event wasn't just a way for me to enjoy the music I discovered and enjoyed.<sup>1</sup> I began to see that this monthly event I had started with my friend Damian, as something much bigger.<sup>2</sup> It was a way to develop connections, it was a community, and it brought people together. So then I started asking different questions to different people. Instead of just asking Damian; "Who should we book this month?" I started asking him and many of the regular attendees that I met; "what do you think are ways the night could be improved," or "what do you really enjoy about the night?" As I understood the affect that our night had on the people who came out to support I saw a larger picture where I could apply the tools and skills I learned from my course work to my personal endeavors. What I had once saw as a personal release from the everyday stress I encountered had now become an important community building, critical thinking, and learning and teaching opportunity for me that takes place once a month. Through this process I have created new

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A contains the Critical Thinking Manifesto I created in my CCT 601 course. It reflects the importance of critical thinking and how it can applied to one's life in multiple ways. This CCT project reflects some of the beginning changes in my thought process. I noticed that some of the ideas I discuss about my thoughts on my involvement in music and nightlife run parallel to my thoughts on critical thinking. There is another important aspect of this manifesto, and that is I had to define critical thinking. This was truly thought provoking and challenging experience because I had to stop and do some deep reflecting. I found myself having a difficult time trying to define something that was broad. I realized that I needed to come up with a definition that was a balanced framework between objective and subjective viewpoints.

<sup>2</sup> One of the most profound experiences that happened to me during my coursework was the action of integrating my own views and experience. When I was an undergraduate student writing papers for my history courses I was never encouraged to do this. I was always told to use facts, quotes, 1st, 2nd, and/or 3rd sources, etc... So when I first wrote my final CCT 601 project as shown in Appendix B it was really strange at first to talk about my personal beliefs with Buddhism and the similarities I saw that ran parallel to what I learned in the CCT 601 course.

friendships and acquaintances, created a small network where young music producers can share their work and ideas with each other, and I have started teaching younger individuals how to DJ so that I can pass along the skills I have acquired over the last ten years.<sup>3</sup>

In my second semester I took the skills and tools from my Negotiation (DISRES 621), and Behavioral and Classroom Management (SPE G 607) courses and used them in my work for the Admissions Guaranteed Program. Through the use of such tools as reflective dialogue, and using positive or negative reinforcement I found that I was able to better manage small groups of students when I was working with them. This was especially helpful at times when I was doing workshops or presenting in front of a classroom full of students.<sup>4</sup> The SPE G course gave me a lot of insight into working with students who have behavioral issues, which I found was both applicable inside and outside the classroom. Getting students to listen, pay attention, or feel as though they are a part of what is going on can be a difficult challenge. But, through my classroom observations I was able to get first hand experience on some ways to better work with students.

Thinking back to before taking the SPE G course I realized some of the differences in the way I handled challenging classroom situations. When I worked for a summer academic program before this course I was tutoring a high school students in English, and when they would become loud or disruptive I noticed I would become really flustered. There was one student who would continuously disrupt class until I would send her to see the program director. But, after taking this course I realized that the student was being disruptive so she could leave the classroom and avoid doing the daily activities I had organized. So when I returned the following summer to teach these students again I took a new approach to the student that had been disruptive the previous year. The SPE G course provided me with new strategies such as positive and negative reinforcement so I could model the behavior of the students who were well behaved without singling out the disruptive student. Over the first few weeks of the summer course I began to

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix B is the final project I produced for CCT 601, which shows the deep level of reflection and thought that I had started to integrate into my every day thought processes. This project allowed me to do something I had never done before, and that was I began to reflect and integrate some of my personal philosophy into my work. Before that I had been unsure if something like that would ever be appropriate. But, this project helped me to flush out the similarities that I saw existing between my personal practice as a Buddhist and what I had learned through in my CCT 601 course.

<sup>4</sup> Appendix C contains a classroom behavior observation sheet and a behavior management plan that I created for a student after completing my classroom observation time for the required coursework in my SPE G 607 course.

notice a change in her behavior. She became less disruptive and more focused on what we were doing in the classroom.

As I completed other courses over the next two and half years I continued to see improvements in myself and my work. I also felt like I had improved self-esteem and became more comfortable working closely with high school students. The negotiation course was also valuable to my event coordination work when it came to working with booking agents, and sponsorships at our events. One of the key techniques that has worked really well is when I focus on seeking out mutual interests between myself and the booking agents I work with. I have found that I am able to make them feel important, but keep the costs down to a level that we can afford.

Around the half-way point of my coursework I was very excited with my decision to enroll in two graduate counseling courses; Theory of Counseling (COUNSL 614) and Family Therapy (COUNSL 621) The theory class helped me to develop my reflective listening skills, which I noticed was particularly helpful when I tried to make connections with the students I worked with at the high school. This was evident to me when I used reflective listening with the students. Before I tried reflective listening with these students it seemed as though their reaction and engagement with me was much lower. Yet, once I implemented this practice these same students contacted more often if they needed tutoring, or assistance in navigating the college application process. The practice of reflective listening really made an impact on the students and I think they felt a connection with me once I began using it.<sup>5</sup>

Kirin Aurora, who was the instructor of my Family Therapy course helped me to better understand the connections students have outside the classroom. She also had us contact and interview a family therapist, which was one of my favorite assignments. This was because the woman I interviewed, Dr. Joyce Pavao, had originally done her doctorate in Human development at Harvard University. I think one of the reasons this assignment impacted me so much was because Dr. Pavao had taken a roundabout route to becoming a family therapist. It allowed me to see that you don't have to take a single direct path to get where you want to go in life. Both these courses taught me something else about therapists, that the two most important factors about a therapist is their personality and how they interact with their clients. It doesn't matter what kind

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<sup>5</sup> Appendix D is a mock counseling interview from my Counseling 614 where I used the technique of reflective listening.

background or theory a therapist specializes in. I found this to be very inspiring and in my own work.<sup>6</sup>

In the spring of 2011 I focused my coursework in Asian American studies because I wanted to do research, and gain a greater understanding of the main student population I worked with under my assistantship at SBEC. I enrolled in Asian American Research (ASAMST 397), and Teaching and Learning Asian American Studies (ASAMST 497). Both courses gave me a stronger understanding of the challenges some of the students I work with might face in their lives. These courses helped me to think critically, and reflect about how I interact not only with Asian American students, teachers, faculty, and staff, but with people of diverse backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures. In ASAMST 497 my instructor, Dr. Peter Kiang, pushed me to design and execute a research project that focused around my assistantship. For the project I compiled a survey for all the senior students enrolled in the Admissions Guaranteed Program. The 497 course and this project showed me that the greatest challenge for many of these students was learning English, because a language is often intertwined with culture, and learning one means learning the other. Dr. Kiang really encouraged me to do a great deal of reflection about myself and my work.<sup>7</sup> This course was like a stepping stone for the research work I would do in my Critical and Creative Thinking 692 course.

In my final year as a graduate student I enrolled in two more Critical and Creative Thinking courses; Research and Engagement Process (CRCRTH 692), and Action Research (CrCrTh 693), as well as audit Synthesis Theory and Practice Seminar (CRCRTH 694). The experience I had in the CRCRTH 692 course was very interesting. Upon enrolling in this course I knew very little about it. From my previous coursework and interactions with Andrea Dawes, the director of the AGP program, and Dr. Kiang of the Asian American Studies Program I decided to continue my research in the realm of ESL. This course assisted me in organizing my

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<sup>6</sup> Appendix E is the paper I wrote after interviewing Dr. Pavao for my Family Therapy course. In it I discuss her career path a bit more in depth. This interview made me feel a bit relieved and that I didn't need to have my future plans laid out in stone. It also showed me that I could pursue a career in education without having to teach per se in a classroom.

<sup>7</sup> Appendix F is the questionnaire I created for the high school students I worked with as a graduate assistant for the AGP program, along with my final project thoughts, reflections, and analysis for AsAmSt 497. This class was incredibly inspiring for me because by the end of the semester I really got to know a number of students in the class who were part of the Asian American studies program. The staff and students in this program made me feel like I had a place on campus that I could call home. There was one experience in particular where a fellow grad student who is Cambodian jokingly said to me; "Chris, how does it feel to be the only white guy in the room?" I answered him in all honesty and said that I never felt like the odd man out because everyone in the program made me feel welcomed.

research and thought process for the final project.<sup>8</sup> Initially, I felt confused and overwhelmed by the syllabus and assignments. However, by the end of the course I had a strong grasp of the research process I had learned throughout the semester. This course required me to slow down and reflect about the actual process of the research I was doing. I found this to be very practical and applicable tool because I tend to move through school, work, or personal projects at a very quick pace. I move back and forth between school and personal projects trying to balance my time as best I can. This process helped me to see potential sources and gaps within my work that I may have normally overlooked, or not given enough attention to, and it broke down the larger research project into stages that were much more manageable. The final paper was research paper that highlighted the urgency of addressing the issues ESL students face in Boston Public Schools.

When I enrolled in 693 I wanted to focus my action research on a much smaller scale in comparison to the research project I did in 692. By focusing my attention I would be able take what I learn through my action research and apply it whatever my lifetime goals might be. Another way to frame this would be to take my action research project on the relationship I have with my mentor, and take what I learn through that process and apply it to my work with ESL students because it could help get clear on ways I can be a better mentor to them.<sup>9</sup>

The capstone requirement has allowed me to pick and showcase pieces of my work that reflect the tools, pedagogies, and skills that I have acquired through my LTET coursework. As well as to show my reflective thought process. One of the greatest things I enjoyed about the LTET program was that I was able to tailor my elective courses to fit my professional and personal life style. I found this extremely useful in my work with pre-collegiate youth because I was able to use the tools from my counseling courses and combine them with the skills I developed in my Critical Thinking courses. This allowed for me to develop connections with students in my day to day workings with them (through the use of such skills as reflective listening), and at the same time develop tools that would provide me with better ways to serve these students in their development (as with the work in my SPEG, CCT, and AsAmSt coursework).

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<sup>8</sup> Appendix G is the ESL research project I completed for the CCT 692 course. This project examines the web of complexities and challenges that Boston Public high School students face in their lives. I felt like this project was incredibly insightful and rewarding because I learned a great deal from both the course framework and the research I found.

<sup>9</sup> Appendix H is my Action Research Project for the CCT 693 course.

In going forward from my graduate studies I hope to take what I have learned and continue to build upon it. The concepts, pedagogies, skills, and tools are all things I can now take and develop as I continue on my path forward. When I think back to that conversation I had with Professor Tang back in 2008 I feel as though I have come a long way. I remember first returning to UMass as a graduate student and being unsure of what the future would entail. However, as I come to the end of my graduate studies I feel much different. Through my involvement with the Asian American Studies Program I have kept in touch with Professor Tang, and she has been a great mentor. Recently, we had a discussion about my future after graduate school. This time it was much different because I approached her with my thoughts about pursuing a Ph.D. or an Ed.D.. I started the conversation this time, and I felt much more confident in my own abilities to continue my education.

## Appendix A: Critical Thinking Manifesto

Chris Ward  
Manifesto  
CCT 601  
05/04/2010

### Critical Thinking Manifesto

What exactly is critical thinking? It is a culture, a way of life, and a unique and subtle art. Without it, the human race would be nowhere near what it is today. And if it suddenly ceased, where would we be tomorrow, or the day after that? Critical thinking is a vital part of who we are as a whole and we need it. There are too many dangers we would have to face without it. And we must make sure to pass on this culture, this way of life, so that our children and our children's children can continue to reap the benefits of it.

Critical thinking is a very broad term so it is important to make sure that some basic guidelines are laid down to define it and give some direction to the people who are trying to familiarize themselves with it. It starts first by simply being aware. When one has awareness one can take the next step forward, which could be analyzing an idea, thought, situation, problem or anything else. It involves having strong discernment skills, making connections, and being able to deeply reflect. It must be unbiased so that one can see from multiple perspectives and angles.

With a strong base in these skills one can further examine and build upon complex thoughts, ideas, problems and other subject matter. Developing this base is vital not only to the thinker but to those around them. Through association with critical thinking and critical thinkers one will pick up the language, mannerisms, and habits that they have immersed in and by engaging with critical thinkers one can raise the bar to a higher level of thinking. By immersing oneself in the language of critical thinking it is a step into higher world of learning, and into this new culture.

Through critical thinking not only does one reach higher levels of thinking, but one also develops a stronger thinking disposition. The thinking disposition effects ones attitude, values, and habits of mind, which revolve around thinking. A good disposition is essential to the growth of good thinking practice and patterns. And it cultivates good thinking habits. These habits influence activities that in turn strengthen those habits, which feed back into each other.

But by far one of the most important outcomes of becoming a critical thinker is the development of one's own metacognition. Also known as "mental management", metacognition

is defined as; the art of reflecting on and guiding one's own thinking process. Being able to reflect and think about ones own thinking provides a number of advantages from making decisions, to problem solving, and making plans for the near and distant future. This practice also promotes responsible, strategic, and independent thinking.

Though the development and strengthening of one's critical thought process the mind creates feedback loops. For example, when one is immersed in the language of thinking they begin to expand their mind, and critical thinking, this helps to build up one's metacognition. These developments in critical thinking and metacognition increase the drive of the strategic spirit, which creates a greater drive to learn and expand one's thinking. Thus feeding back into the learning loop.

Without critical thinking there may be no rich invitation for thought and development. Barriers between religions, philosophies, ideologies, and differences could become worse and create greater conflicts that could lead to intense struggles and violence much greater than already exists today. Or even worse societies could be reversed to outdated ways of life leading to greater suffering for masses of people.

Without Critical thinking how would we raise questions to challenge ourselves? How would we develop structure and organization within ourselves and with others? It is without a doubt a necessity for deepening oneself and society as a whole. It allows us to build models, to shape our behavior, and to alter all these things to be more desirable and reach deeper intellectual capacities.

The next step along this road of developing critical thinkers and thinking is to make sure that the knowledge and tools are passed on to future generations so that people can continue to strive and expand their minds on a multiple levels ranging from personal to society and beyond. And this would allow our children can then continue to build upon the foundations that have been set up for them.

## Appendix B: CCT 601 Final Project

Chris Ward  
CCT 601  
Final  
05/18/2010

### Final Reflection

For my final reflection, I have taken some time to think about what has stood out to me most in my work from the Critical Thinking course, and in doing so I have made some very interesting connections to the coursework with my reading and studying both inside and outside of the classroom. Through the coursework I have gained a greater understanding of what some of the many aspects and skills are that might make up a strong critical thinker. In my free time outside of the classroom I have spent a great deal of reading Buddhist sutras and studying Buddhist philosophy. I have noticed a lot of similarities in both what it means to be a critical thinker and my Buddhist studies. In conjunction with this I also found some interesting ideas in an article by Marc Lewis called “Interacting Time Scales in Personality (and cognitive) Development; Intentions, Emotions, and Emergent Forms,”<sup>10</sup> which led me to make some very interesting connections between critical thinking, Lewis’ theory of development, and Buddhist philosophy. In doing so I have developed a perspective that I feel will have a great effect upon my future outlook of the world. To give some background I will give a brief description of Buddhist philosophy and Lewis’ theory and then show where I see the greatest connections and ideas that have had the greatest influence on me over the past few weeks.

Reflecting back on the classroom discussions about critical thinking has really left an imprint in my mind of what it means to be a strong critical thinker, and since then I have often found myself looking back on this reminding, and repeating this idea to myself. So I thought it best to share some of the adjectives and descriptions that stood out in my mind from our class discussions and readings; open-minded, unbiased awareness, problem solving, and metacognition.

While sifting back through my notes I noticed I had written down a particular description that to me conveys the feeling of what makes a good critical thinker. A good critical thinker is

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<sup>10</sup> Lewis, M. D. (2002). Interacting time scales in personality (and cognitive) development: Intentions, emotions, and emergent forms. In N. Granott & J. Parziale (Eds.), *Microdevelopment: Transition processes in development and learning* (pp. 183-212). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

someone who is able to analyze specific thoughts, ideas, situations, etc... A critical thinker needs to have good judgment and discernment qualities geared towards whatever is being thought about. They take the time to reflect and think deeper, to go beyond their first and initial reactions upon the subject of focus. Critical thinking involves making connections between two or more entities. It allows one to build a base upon which we can continue to construct more complex ideas, theories, and/or understandings, etc... I thought that the final sentence of my notes also brought up a very important point and theme that was sort of in the background in a lot of our coursework: "Critical thinking should be unbiased and compassionate." I think that compassion is definitely one of the foundation points of critical thinking but it was not discussed in great length in the classroom. Why are we trying to cultivate good critical thinkers? Why are we implementing activities in the classroom? It is because we want to better our children and ourselves, and because we care about each other, our society, and people as a whole. If we can have everyone reaching their full potential who knows what other possibilities await. Compassion is defined as "sympathy for the suffering of others, often including a desire to help." Throughout the entire semester, I found myself coming back to this point, and saw it as an underlying cause in the pursuit of becoming a better critical thinker. I could go on further, but I feel this paragraph sums up a large chunk of the qualities and parts that define what it means to have good critical thinking skills or to be a critical thinker.

Buddhism is quite a large and broad topic so to keep things uniform and as simple as possible I will refer to and use only one text for reference, *The Wings to Awakening; An Anthology of the Pali Canon*<sup>\*</sup>, translated and explained by Thanissaro Bhikku<sup>\*</sup>. His works are widely known and respected in the Buddhist community and is key to understanding the more complex side of Buddhist thought. It should also be noted that this text and work is from the Theravada (literally meaning "the teachings of the elders) school of Buddhism, which is the oldest surviving school of Buddhism and was founded in India.

Before continuing on, a few basics must be understood about Buddhism. The Four Noble Truths, The Noble Eightfold Path, This/That Conditionality alongside Dependent Co-arising, and some forms of meditation practice need to be defined without getting in too deep, but just enough to grasp the essentials, and to make all the important connections.

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<sup>\*</sup>A free PDF is available online at <http://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/thanissaro/wings/index.html>

<sup>\*</sup> Bikkhu is a Pali term describing a fully ordained monk not someone's last name therefore we will use Thanissaro in footnotes referring to his work.

The Buddha spent a long time developing himself through deep reflection and meditation. Through this course metacognition and developing of his skills he became aware of two major factors. The first that there is a causal relationship between acts and their results, and the second, good results are better than bad ones. By focusing on his own skill development and these two variables of cause and effect the Buddha formulated what is known as the four noble truths.<sup>11</sup> The four noble truths are like four giant pillars that make up the foundation of Buddhism. They should not be misconstrued as a pessimistic outlook on life, but rather as categories for viewing and classifying the processes of immediate experience.<sup>12</sup> The four truths are as follows:

The truth of suffering

The truth of the cause of suffering

The truth of the end of suffering

The truth of the path that frees one from suffering

The first truth states that life is stressful and all living beings suffer. *Dukkha*, is the original term in Sanskrit used in the Pali Canon (the collection of Buddhist texts), which best translates as “that which is hard to bear,” and refers to strain on the body and mind, on all levels, from intense to acute. The second truth says that stress is caused by craving/desire. This craving arises within the mind like, for instance, when we want something we don’t have. The third truth states that there is an end to suffering and this craving/desire. The fourth truth is that the way to end this suffering is by taking up the practice of noble eightfold path.

The noble eightfold path is the way of practice Buddhists follow to end suffering. The use and idea of a path has two implications: first, that the factors are a means to an end; and second, that these factors lead to, rather than, cause the goal. The path is a combination of qualities and skills the practitioner must learn and develop to achieve the goal, but once these skills have been developed the convergence of those qualities and skills then carries the practitioner closer to the goal. The eight factors of the path are right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. These eight factors are like principles and guidelines to follow like a code of conduct. If someone were to exemplify right view, he would use the knowledge of the four noble truths to categorize his conditioned

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<sup>11</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *The Wings to Awakening* (Barre, Mass.: Dharma Dana Publications, 1996) Pg7

<sup>12</sup> Thanissaro Pg279

experiences in terms of function. This viewpoint divides the experiences as being either skillful or unskillful. When the practitioner has developed right view, he or she will be able to see the process, which causes stress, and then see craving clearly enough to have a sense of dispassion.<sup>13</sup> Again, this is just a basic understanding of the concept because of each of these factors has multiple levels of depth, complexity, and understanding.

The eight factors of the path are separated and grouped under three aggregates: discernment, virtue, and concentration. Right view and right resolve fall under discernment; right speech, action, and livelihood under virtue; and right effort, mindfulness, and concentration under concentration. Understanding these factors and the aggregates of Buddhism is essential, but can get quite complex, so what we want to focus on is how the aggregates work with each other through dependent co-arising. This concept of dependent co-arising will in turn explain how the factors interact on a micro level, while the aggregates work together on a meso level.<sup>14</sup>

These eight factors which feed into the aggregates create a feedback loop system that mutually reinforce to each other. This feedback loop is often described as having a spiral shape. For example, when one starts to develop discernment that in turn strengthens conviction, which leads into developing virtue. Virtue builds upon concentration. Developing concentration helps to form a base for clearer development and discernment. Therefore we can see how this model feeds into itself. The other interesting part of this model is that a practitioner can jump in at any point. For example, if he or she starts by developing concentration it will lead to greater discernment and so forth. It should also be noted that this system could work in the reverse. The erosion of one factor can then lead to the erosion of the others.

The next point in understanding how all these pieces of Buddhism fit together is through the teaching of dependent co-arising, and this/that conditionality. This idea is broken down to this basic process:

- 1) When this is, that is.
- 2) From the arising of this comes the arising of that.
- 3) When this isn't, that isn't.
- 4) From the stopping of this comes the stopping of that.

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<sup>13</sup> Thanissaro Pg271

<sup>14</sup> Thanissaro Pg172-173

This teaching explains how the past, present, and future are intertwined. The model has two key causal principles. The first being linear and the second being synchronic, which creates a non-linear pattern. Pairing together (2) and (4) connects events, over time (linear), while (1) and (3) connect objects and events in the present moment (synchronic). Through this intersecting (collaboration) the pairs create a complex feedback system that takes in influence from the past and thus effects the present. Adding in actions of the present thickens the loop as the future is influenced by these actions. These reverberating actions can have multiple outcomes, by either intensifying one another, having little or no interaction with each other, or canceling each other out. The other factor that makes this system so complex is that the system is not only applied to the physical world, but also to the mind. Therefore, it's like two huge feedback systems working on multiple levels that overlap, while simultaneously having an effect on one another and vice versa. Their immediate and long-term consequences cannot always be predicted.<sup>15</sup>

To develop the factors that are a part of the noble eightfold path (which in turn affect the feedback loops previously discussed), meditation practice becomes an integral piece in this ever-complex puzzle. Due to the vast number of different practices and the limited amount of time and space, I will only describe a few. The purpose of meditation practice is to develop the skill of mindfulness and there are many ways to achieve that. We will examine two types of practice: first, mindfulness of body; and second, mindfulness of breath.

When one sits down to practice mindfulness of body the focus should be on the process of scanning the body and being alert of all sensations. Practitioners should move at a slow and steady pace, focusing their mind on each part of their body and as a whole to become more aware of the sensations and feelings they are experiencing. As one continues this process and reaches deeper levels of awareness they will develop a better knowledge and understanding of their body and of more subtle sensations. In time, this process will bring about a state of full-bodied singleness and stillness within the mind, which allows the mind to enter into deep concentration. Further practice leads to deeper concentration, greater knowledge of one's body, and to a better understanding of the phenomenon of origination and passing away with regard to the body. Again the key is to keep the focus on and within reference to the body. This concentration as it is developed then leads to greater discernment, which continues to contribute to the system of feedback loops.

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<sup>15</sup>Thanissaro Pg11

The practice of the mindfulness of breath is quite similar to the mindfulness of body practice. However, the focal point is not the body, but on the breath and the space where air is drawn in at the base of the nasal cavity. Keeping the center of attention on the sensations of breathing the practitioner discerns each breath, being mindful of whether it is long or short, and the rising and falling of the chest. Like developing mindfulness of body practice, this will lead to deeper concentration and eventually to the goal of awakening/enlightenment.

Now what exactly is this awakening/enlightenment? I have tried to avoid mentioning this word, but it seemed near impossible to write this paper without having it come up at some point or another. The reason being is that when this term is attempted to be defined or set within a particular criteria people may suddenly think that they have it, or that they know something more than others. Even worse, there a dispute could arise because two parties cannot be in agreement on the actual definition of the term. In many cases it seems to best be left alone. And the best way to experience it is through guided practice so that the practitioner does not mistake awakening/enlightenment for something else. However, with the process of becoming a better or stronger critical thinker we can relate the practice of meditation and awakening.

The significance of Buddhist philosophy and critical thinking is that this practice not only develops one's mind towards the goal, but that it does indeed develop the practitioner into a critical thinker. And by beginning to understand the complex feedback loops that one creates in their life, one can better develop their critical thinking skills, or any other skills for that matter.

In Marc Lewis' work on the idea of dynamic systems framework he discusses how development is a process of self-organization. His work describes how cognitive and emotional development is deeply intertwined in a spiraling shape on different time scales. This theory shows how emotions affect our moods, and how these moods feed into to the long-term development of one's personality. At the same time, one's cognitive development goes through a similar process.

Lewis states that this framework is made up of *Self Organizing Systems*, which create order from disorder, which are complex ordered forms made from simpler components; this structure has a micro, meso, and macro level. Emotions, like learning, take place on the micro-developmental scale, which rapidly occurs in the present moment and feeds into the meso-developmental level where goals and moods develop based on the outcome of the micro stage. These emotions and moods constrain one's learning process and abilities. For example, an

individual who has a strong interest in a particular subject may excel to a greater extent because he or she enjoys learning about it. These moods and goals feed into the macro-development of one's overall personality, which can take years or even a lifetime.

Through the course of development complementarities form, which are large-scale patterns that create parameters and networks of self-organization at smaller scales. These complementarities may couple together and reinforce patterns while restraining others. Examples of this would be when an individual develops likes and dislikes. Complementarities work in part with what Lewis calls *cascading constraints*, which are what happens when activities become habits and these habits further constrain activities, which reinforce those habits. People form habits at early ages and as they get older it becomes more difficult to give up or change these habits.

Lewis' theory on personality development over time lines up with the Buddhist philosophy of this/thata conditionality. The learning process and emotions experienced in the present moment feed into the feedback loops that make up both cognitive and personality development, in the spiral model.

In many ways, Tishman's lists of work and activities are like micro-exercises to develop one's critical thinking and fit into this system of development. In addition to this if we examine the major themes of Tishman we can fit them into the development model. For example, immersing oneself in the language of thinking in the present moment will lead into the development of becoming familiar with this language and culture of critical thinking. As one becomes more familiar with the language, his disposition will be affected, which will in turn lead to better mental management. As one's mental management is strengthened his strategic spirit will grow too.

In seeing the connections between these systems of ideas and patterns I have started to hone my focus on developing myself. And through these connections I hope to apply these new models of learning not only to the concepts and ideas discussed in coursework and readings, but take this theory and apply it to all directions of development.

On a side note, I have greatly enjoyed starting my graduate studies this past semester. I found it very refreshing to return to UMass, after taking about a year off. I completed my undergraduate degree in the spring of '08 and at the time I wasn't really sure if I wanted to come back. Still, I remember my last year here Chancellor Motley discussing the theme of "Return &

Renewal”, and I have found myself reflecting on those words ever since. Now that I think about it, I wonder if I can some how work this idea of Chancellor Motley’s into this emerging theory.

## Appendix C: Classroom Observations

### Classroom Observation

Date of Observation: 11/22/2010

Name of Observer: Chris Ward

Name of Lesson / Topic Being Taught: Measuring Energy - Kinetic Potential Joules Motion Force

Content Area: Freshman Physics Class

#### The Class (Information & Make-Up):

How many students are in the class?

24 students were present during this class period. The class total however is 32 students.

Who are the students in the class?

The class is a diverse mix of Black, Hispanic, Asian, and white students from the Boston area. Most of them live near or around the school, though some commute from as far away as JP or Hyde Park.

Nicolette Bain, Bryan Bajandas, Janely Canuela, Daimon Chin, Michelet Desrosiers, Nadja Galvao, Randy Garcia, Patrick Golden, Khalid Harrison, Bailey Harte, Nicholas Heafey, Robin Hines, Shaquille Jackson, Briana Kase, Stephen Koenig, Melinda Lopes, Christian Lopez, Anteneh Mekonnen, Edith Mendoza, Moesha Orelus, Shakora Ragland, LizMarie Sein, Marika Thompsom, Nadia Thompson, Carina Trinh, Nakiaa Turner, Joisy Valeraruiz, Daija Webb, Elaina Wrightmccarth

Who is the instructor? (Is the instructor dynamic? Does he/she connect with the students? Is there more teacher talk than student talk?)

Mrs. Cardoña, whom the students seem to like very much. She is also fluent in Spanish, which I think helps her connect with her kids because most of them are Hispanic or black. Mrs. Cardoña is very knowledgeable about the subject matter in her class and is a very kind and sweet woman, however, I know that she her freshmen physics class can be a handful for her because of the number of students, and she has mentioned to me that sometimes she has a hard time managing them. I thought this would be a good class to sit in on precisely for that reason, and in the hopes I would get to see some of the issues and topics we discussed in class about children acting out etc...

What is posted on the walls to support student learning?

There is an assortment of posters around the room with different topics on them such as the weather, the five senses, and some dealing with math. Although the posters look a little out dated. There are two areas with large dry erase marker boards up for writing. Half of one is sectioned off displaying different information such as a timeline for an upcoming science fair that students can participate in. Another section contained current classroom topics and formulas for solving certain types of equations. There is also a “word wall” with specific words that posted up that are relevant to the lessons in class. It contained such words as kinetic, potential, force, motion and other from the current unit the class was on.

How is the room arranged?

The room is arranged with the desks in a large square where everyone who is sitting in it can see each other and can better hear each other during discussions. The desks themselves are about 2ft by 4ft with roughly 2-3 students sitting at each one. The teacher’s desk is at the front of the square in front of the main board.

How are the classroom materials arranged? Do students have access to reading material in the subject area?

Yes there are books on the desks in front of the students, and there are other stacks near the entrance and on a bookshelf near the back of the room.

Draw a simple sketch to illustrate how the room is arranged. Please label each area.

\*see appendix 1

### Instructional Strategies:

How are students grouped throughout the lesson (i.e., in rows doing work independently, in partners, in small groups, etc.)? Explain how students are grouped throughout the lesson and explain why you think they are grouped this way.

The first half of the class the teacher has given the students some physics problems to work on in groups of 2-3 with the other students sitting near them. Mrs. Cardoña will spend the second half of the period going over the answers to the problems she handed out to the students.

Are the students free to move around while they are learning?

Yes they are able to move around and form different groups to work on the lesson. I did notice that some of the groups were more talkative than others. I know that some of them finished their work early and the teacher did not seem to mind if they were talking quietly. During the first half of the period the teacher went around the room and observed the students working and provided help when asked, however, she did not give the students to the answers to the problems. She told the students who were having trouble to at least make an attempt to solve the problems they were unsure about.

Does the teacher dominate the talk in the room or do students have a voice?

It was much more of a 1-on-1 dialogue between Mrs. Cardoña and her students during the first half of the class, while during the second half it was a larger discussion with the teacher asking the problems and having the students answer. She would write out the formula and the answer on the board to show the students the correct procedure to get the answers.

Did you observe strategies being taught that would support students to access the material? Yes or No. Explain.

Yes, because she was waling around and providing support while encouraging the students to attempt the problems themselves and they had their books by them to refer too. There were also formulas on the board to help students who may have forgotten them; yet, they had to figure out which one was the correct one for the problems they were solving.

What did you see students doing or saying?

Most of the students were diligently working during the first half of the class. There were a few however that seemed to be quietly talking and not doing any work. One student in particular had a hard time staying focused and he continued to walk around and make noise until he was addressed. Mrs. Cardoña said “Bryan I don’t appreciate you making all that noise and interrupting me like that.” At which point he apologized and sat back down for about 5-6 minutes before making another outburst. There were also 2 students who were quietly goofing around after they finished the problems near the front of the class. But as the teacher would get closer to them while talking to other students they would quickly settle down. Overall it took the students about 10-15 minutes to really settle down from when they first entered the classroom to doing the problems they were given.

## Behavior and Classroom Management:

Are systems in place to support behavior and classroom management? (For example: Are the classroom rules posted? Do students know what is expected? Are expectations and consequences clear? Other ideas.) Explain.

The classroom rules are posted up along with the school’s mission statement on a large black filing cabinet. Most of the students act and reflect what is asked of them. In conversation after class with Mrs. Cardoña she said that her students were acting much better than when they first started back in September. Students who were late had a pass, and although there was some talking, none of the students were being inappropriate or acting in any way that was harmful or overtly disrespectful.

Are students reinforced for positive behavior? Explain

Mrs. Cardoña did give the students positive reinforcement when they answered the problems and took part in the discussion. She would tell students things like “good job”, “very good”, etc. after they answered correctly. However, when there were behavior issues in the classroom she tended to call out students who were not acting in accord with the rest of the class.

Is there other evidence of positive interventions and support? Explain.

She did provide positive intervention because when Bryan and Khalid were talking she said “Bryan, Khalid, I need you guys to pay attention and stop talking so that we can continue with the lesson.” On another occasion she said, “I can not hear the question being asked because there is too much talking.” Mrs. Cardoña always provides an example of what is the correct way to act or respond when she has to intervene.

Describe anything else that you noticed.

Like I mentioned before it took the class about 10-15 minutes after they arrived to really get settled in and focus on their work. In most cases I could figure out which groups were working and which were doing little and talking. My presence in the room didn't seem to cause the students to act in any way out of their normal routine.

### Inclusion Support – Level of Differentiation:

What behavioral approaches did you observe being used.

I noticed a lot of proximity control and that the teacher would work with groups of students first who working near other students who were being loud to help quiet them down. She also used a lot of non-verbal or signal interference when students were talking out of turn or getting rowdy. As the class began to engage in more talking around the end of the first half of class the teacher knew it was time to change the program and focus on discussing the answers to the problems. She gained everyone's attention by clapping twice, which caught the student's attention. She gave positive reinforcement to students who participated and answered correctly. When students didn't act accordingly the teacher provided them with an example of what was appropriate. If the students got too noisy the teacher would pause and wait for them to quiet down, which also seemed to work well.

Provide quotes that that illustrate the classroom instruction and behavioral approaches used.

Please work on the problems for the first half of the class and in the second half we will discuss and go over the answers to them.

Daija, you're talking is pulling attention away from the class discussion please pay attention.

Daimon, why is your head down? Do you need to go to the nurse?

What differentiation did you observe?

As the teacher went over the problems with the class she wrote out the formulas and steps needed to solve the problems. She also acknowledged students' answers that were correct that

had been achieved through another appropriate route during the second half of class. During the first half she went around to the students and gave them individual support while assessing where they were and looking for areas of difficulty.

### Reflection:

How does your classroom visit link to the work we are doing in class?

The classroom visit was great because it helped me to put a lot of what we discussed in class into perspective. To watch the students and teacher interact and see the methods I read about actually happen was really interesting and insightful. I also noticed how fast things could happen in the classroom and it helped me understand how important it is for a teacher to not lose control.

What did you find interesting?

I really enjoyed the whole experience of observing a classroom in full swing and seeing the methods put into practice. It also helped me to continue to reflect on the impact that teachers have on their students and simply how people impact each other. Although I was in an urban high school I can definitely see how younger children would be much more easier to manage. I could see how things can be trickier with this age group through my experience and that was pretty invaluable.

What are some questions that you have?

I don't have any questions in particular to this assignment. I think the only ones I would have would be if I could continue to observe the classroom and see the changes that take place from now to the end of the school year.

What changes would you make to the instruction that you observed? Why?

If I were to make any changes I think I would have Mrs. Cardoña maybe focus more on reinforcing the students who are doing a good job in class rather than calling out on students who are misbehaving. Although she always provided a misbehaving student with the an example of the correct behavior, or steered them in the right direction I think that she could solve more of the behavior issues in the classroom if she called out her students who were doing the right thing. Overall though I think she managed her classroom appropriately and did a good job with such a diverse group of kids.

## Behavior Management Plan

### I. School

The school I observed at is Odyssey High School, which is located in South Boston at 95 G Street. It serves students in grades nine through twelve from all over the Boston community including areas such as Dorchester, Hyde Park, and Jamaica Plain. The school is on the third floor of the South Boston Education Complex, which also includes two other high schools, Excel and Monument. Although all three schools are located within one building each has their own rules, regulations, and distinctive feel. All three are part of the Boston Public School system.

The school's theme is environmental science and post secondary preparation. It offers dual enrollment, after school programs, athletics, advanced placement, project-based learning, internships and job/field studies, has an EnviroMentors program, and partnerships with higher education institutions. It has partnerships with the Benjamin Franklyn Institute of Technology, Boston Harbor Islands National Park Area, Institute of Contemporary Art, Lynch School of Education at Boston College, M.I.T. Sea Grant, Medicine Wheel, Museum of Science, Urban Ecology Institute, Urban Scholars, and Wentworth.

Odyssey's mission is to have its students engage in rigorous real world academic inquiry, discovery, and problem solving in the urban environment in which it exists, and to prepare students for post-secondary opportunities and achieve academic excellence through collaborative interdisciplinary projects. Their mission also has high expectations for each student's development in the academic, social and civic areas so that when students complete their career at Odyssey they are ready to enter the world as adults. In conjunction with these guidelines, Odyssey is governed by "The Big Six", which are six rules established to create a healthy and productive learning environment. The Big Six are:

1. *No Profanity.*
2. *No CELL PHONES or IPODS visible during the school day.*
3. *No food or drink outside the cafeteria.*
4. *Respect yourself, your peers, your teachers and your school.*
5. *Clothing attire in the building must be appropriate and respectful.*
6. *Headgear must be removed upon entering the building (hats, do rags, bandanas, sweatbands, scarves, etc). These should remain in locker during the school day.*

The total number of students enrolled at Odyssey is three hundred forty-four. Of those students, 44% are Black, 25% are Hispanic, 23% are White, 7% are Asian, and 1% are listed as other. About 78% of the student body is enrolled in regular education, while 22% are in special education. They do not have a bilingual program. The average daily student attendance rate is at 83%. The percentage of students who continue on to the next grade level is at 95.5%. The dropout rate is 14%. Over half of the student body come from "low-income" families and receive free or reduced price lunches.

The total number of staff at Odyssey is thirty-six and of that twenty-three are teachers. The student teacher ratio is 1:16; the small school size “personalizes teaching and learning, promoting confidence, responsibility, and leadership,” and allows teachers to closely monitor their students work and growth. There is one full time guidance counselor, a full time special education director, and a full time CFC student support specialist to assist the students. All teachers at Odyssey high are licensed to teach in Massachusetts and 97% of them are categorized as “highly qualified.” 67% of the teaching staff is white, 22% is black, 8% is Hispanic, and 3% is Asian.

The school also offers its normal student body a number of challenging courses to prepare its students for continuing their education and for all abilities. There is also an AVID (Achievement Via Individual Determination) teacher who assists students in developing their study, organization, and time management skills. She also helps students plan for attending a four-year university, set goals, and work on developing leadership abilities. Students take standard high school courses for their freshman and sophomore years and are then able to take advanced placement courses during their junior and senior years in the core subjects of math, science, history, and language arts.

There is a Special Education program at Odyssey High, which offers classes for students with mild to severe disabilities, and has three full time paraprofessionals who work with the special education director in small classes of no more than 12 students. In addition to having a Special Education director they also employ a full time teacher who works with students who have autism. She provides these students with a highly structured curriculum and exposure to the general high school program. This program covers the standard core subjects such as math, science, language arts, and history. The curriculum also includes important topics such as social skills, pre-vocational skills, vocational skills, speech therapy, occupational therapy, and activities of daily living for these students. When the school initially formed this department there was concern of how the rest of the student body would accept these children; however, they were welcomed and there were no major incidents or complications.

In accordance with the “adequate yearly progress” under the No Child Left behind (NCLB) act, the school is meeting the standards for English Language Arts; nevertheless, not all students are aggregating for Mathematics. In both categories the school was not making progress for students who are eligible for free or reduced price lunches. And under both of these categories the school was listed as “restructuring” in following the NCLB guidelines.

## **II. Classroom**

The classroom that I spent my time in was a freshman physics class, which meets Monday through Friday during second period from 8:33am - 9:28am for a total of fifty-five minutes. The class has a total of thirty-two students, of which eighteen are female and fourteen are male. The majority of students enrolled in this class are minorities. If I had to estimate from my observations I would guess that the majority of them are Black and Hispanic. There were only two white students and two Asian students in this class.

It is not an inclusion classroom and Mrs. Cardoña does not have any other personal or support staff in the room to assist her. Mrs. Cardoña is a fully licensed and accredited teacher in Massachusetts. She also teaches two other freshman physics sections, and a marine biology course. I once also sat in on her marine biology course, which

is made up of upper classmen who appeared to be much more focused and well behaved in comparison to her second period freshman class. In talking to me about her different classes she said that the freshmen classes have sometimes been difficult to handle and that she has been seeking help in trying to get them under control. She also expressed to me that the section I sat in on was the best behaved of the three. From my experience the students seemed to talk at a louder volume with each other at times, but there were no major discipline problems that needed to be addressed.

The classroom itself has two large dry erase boards in it spanning almost the entire length of two of the walls in the room. About half of each board is filled with information such as formulas, science project/fair information; the rest of the board is open for use during class time and discussion. There is a large locking storage cabinet at the opposite end of the room across from the entrance with the rules and expectations clearly posted. It is the same classroom that I used in the observations assignment that I submitted earlier in the semester. Most of the classrooms are laid out this way with two dry erase boards spanning the length of the walls. There is also a large classroom/computer lab with about 30-40 fairly new Mac desktop computers for the students to utilize.

### **III. Student**

The student I am focusing on is Bryan Bajandas. Bryan has not been diagnosed with any type of learning or behavior disabilities. I spoke with to the school's only guidance counselor Kathleen Cahill about Bryan to see what other information she could provide to me. Bryan is currently failing all of his classes except gym and his teachers have expressed their concerns about him to Mrs. Cahill. As of December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010 he has been absent fifteen days and tardy twenty-one times. Mrs. Cahill also spoke of Bryan's mother who has been working with DCF to try and keep him on track. She also said his mother seems to be a very nice woman and is very involved in her son's life. She also expressed her concern about the kids that Bryan has been hanging out with. His schedule was changed to help minimize the time spent with those students because there is concern that they will be a negative influence on him. Bryan is a first year freshman who came to Odyssey from the John W. McCormack Middle School.

The interview with his guidance counselor also revealed that Bryan might be experiencing or dealing with other issues outside the school environment that are effecting his potential ability to perform well in school. Unfortunately she did not have record of Bryan's middle school transcript so I was unable to know more about his grades before he entered high school.

### **IV. Interventions Already in Place**

At the time of my observations Bryan did not have any kind of intervention plan in effect to help him with his behavior.

### **V. Selection of Target behaviors**

My observations of Bryan during his physics class revealed that he needs a much more structured environment. During the first fifteen minutes of class Bryan could not sit down. He was hanging around the doorway talking and distracting students from the instructor. Bryan was standing around the doorway playing with a

piece of paper on the floor. He then balled it up and threw it out the door into the hallway. It was not until the instructor addressed Bryan in a one-on-one conversation just outside the classroom that he was able to sit down. However, once he sat down he did not pay attention to the instructor or the lesson. He began talking and distracting the students around him. After about ten minutes in his seat Bryan began to tap loudly on his desk. He also would yell loudly throughout the class on occasion. A time line of his actions in class is recorded in the flow log (see appendix I).

I also filled out an *ABC* assessment form and a motivation assessment scale to try and identify some of the motivators of Bryan's behaviors (see appendix II & III). From my observations I felt that Bryan did not have enough structure to keep him focused because as soon as the instructor was working with another student and not focused on Bryan, he would distract or fraternize with students near him, or leave his seat. The MAS form results indicate that the behavior of leaving his seat is mostly motivated by sensory or attention filling needs. I would agree with this as he tried to amuse himself or distract other students when he was leaving his seat and walking around the room and entering the hallway. I also think he was looking more for his peers attention rather than the instructors.

Other motivators for Bryan's behavior could possibly be some of his fellow students in his physics class as they were talking throughout the period. I also think that by his choice to sit in the back of the room he did not care to participate. I was unable to determine if his bark-like yelling was part of a conversation or if he was just making noise because he was sitting in the back of the classroom. Since Bryan is not passing the class, these may also be indicators that he does not understand the material and needs help. I also did not have a chance to speak with Bryan, which may also reveal other possible motivators for his behavior in class.

I think the most important behaviors that need to be addressed with Bryan are his inability to stay seated, his tapping, and his loud outbursts. These behaviors distract other students from the lesson and class work. By the end of the class there was a brief period during which the teacher addressed Bryan over three times within a five-minute span due to the noise he was making. These behaviors can be addressed in a number of different ways, and model behaviors need to be implemented to change Bryan's current behavior patterns.

A good place to start would be to have a sit down discussion with Bryan, his guidance counselor, and his teachers. This way, they can assess Bryan's current behavior in the classroom, determine how aware he is of his behavior, and decide how to help him learn new behaviors. Another intervention practice that Bryan's teachers can implement is to place more emphasis on and highlighting positive behaviors of his classmates. For example, during physics class Mrs. Cardoña could start by making mention of well-behaved students. She could also move Bryan's seat closer to the front of the classroom so it is easier for her to monitor his behavior and it may act as a signal disruption for him. She could also pair him with another student to help him with the class work, and even set up a reward system for Bryan to make up any work he has not done and to encourage him to behave correctly.

## **VI. Intervention Process**

Since Bryan is at an age where he is old enough to start to take account for his own actions, the first step is to sit down and draw up a daily report outlining Bryan's goals and then discuss with Bryan why this is important for him. The report is in appendix IV. The goal is to get Bryan's behavior on track so that he can participate in his

classes and avoid distracting other students. This is the first step in the larger process of bringing his grades up and preparing Bryan to continue his education, if he chooses to do so. Since I did not have the opportunity to speak to any of Bryan's other instructors I made the classroom contract a little more generalized so that it can apply to all classrooms.

This report will allow Bryan's mother the opportunity to communicate with Bryan's instructors on a daily basis and develop a stronger line of communication. It will also create an ongoing log of Bryan's behavior so that his instructors can track it and note any changes or decide whether or not to make changes to the behavior plan. Time should also be allotted during the initial sit-down to discuss and ensure that Bryan's mother is familiar with the behavior plan so she can carry over the desired behavior modeling from school to home.

The next step in Bryan's behavior plan is to use modifiers in the classroom. To help keep Bryan in his seat, Mrs. Cardoña can assign Bryan a permanent seat near the front of the class. This can be done during the sit down so that it does not draw attention to him during class time, avoiding potential embarrassment in front of the other students. It can also be an opportunity to separate him from any other students who contribute to his misbehavior. In conjunction with the move Mrs. Cardoña will also provide more positive reinforcements in the classroom to help model Bryan's behavior. This plan highlights well-behaved students and will act as a model for productive behavior in the classroom.

Bryan's teachers also need to make sure they provide Bryan with praise whenever it is due. This will help motivate him to complete his assignments and improve his behavior. His instructors can start by noticing Bryan's behavior within the first few minutes of class; for example, if he walks in and promptly sits down it should be commented on. On the other hand, if Bryan is uncomfortable with this it can be done just after the period is over or during a one-on-one meeting. An opposing system for Bryan's misbehavior must also be put in place as well, in the instance that he behaves improperly. If this happens and his behavior deteriorates he will be given two verbal warnings. The third offense will result in a visit to the office of the dean of discipline and Bryan's mother will be notified. If Bryan changes for the better, then the instructors can begin to vary the ratio of reinforcement with Bryan and continue to note his progress.

I did not think it was a good idea to try an extinction style route with this plan because it would involve too many teachers and students in the high school, and it could cause more harm than good on Bryan's social life. The idea of explaining to over one hundred students in Bryan's different classes why they should ignore Bryan's disruptions seemed almost impossible in my observations. The extinction plan would be ineffective unless all of these students agreed to follow it.

## **VII. Rationale for Intervention Plan**

The goal of this intervention plan is to help transform Bryan's current behavior in the classroom so that he can begin to work to his full potential. By getting his behavior on track it will allow him to begin focusing on completing his schoolwork, which is vital for him to be successful once he finishes his high school career. If he chooses to continue his education after high school, he will need to bring up his grades and maintain them so that he is a competitive enough candidate to be accepted into the colleges and/or universities of his choice.

The reasoning behind the particular choices made for his intervention plan are backed by a number of explanations. I chose to focus on a positive enforcement based plan because the long term changes and development will be very important for Bryan in real life applications after he graduates from high school. A plan that uses punishments and reprimands may only solve the issue on a short-term basis and it does not teach Bryan the behaviors he needs to succeed. It is also important to have a plan where some of the techniques can be carried over to Bryan's home life as well. The plan will develop his social skills by helping him control his movement and volume in public places.

The purpose of the initial sit down meeting with Bryan, his mother, and his instructors is to explain the importance of the plan and to let everyone have a chance to share their thoughts and input. In addition, any necessary changes can be made before the plan is put into effect. The daily report card serves as a formal method to begin tracking and document the changes that occur in Bryan's behavior. It is also a way to hold Bryan accountable for his actions and to develop communication with his mother at home and his instructors at school. The report card should be sent home and then returned the next day signed by both Bryan's instructor and parent. The records kept can show his mother and DCF the progress he makes. The focus on using positive reinforcements is to make Bryan feel good about the changes he is making, to develop Bryan's self-esteem, and to provide an example for other students who are acting out in the classroom. I oftentimes think that this, in conjunction with developing a child's social skills, is overlooked in the business of preparing students to pass the MCAS and other standardized tests.

#### **VIII. Effectiveness of Individual Behavior Plan**

The plan has not been put into effect. However, I will forward my work to Bryan's guidance counselor and his physics instructor Mrs. Cardoña for their consideration. If not implemented, hopefully they will take something from it and use it in their development of another model plan for Bryan. Since I work for another program that is on site at South Boston Education Complex I plan on following up with both of them to see how Bryan is doing. Yet, it was just announced that Odyssey will be closing at the end of this year and a charter school will open at its location in September of 2011. I am quite concerned for many of the other students at this location besides Bryan, because in the same announcement the BPS superintendent said that the other two high schools in the building would merge into one at the beginning of next year. The only other suggestion I have is that if this plan does not seem to motivate Bryan, then the implementation of a more tangible reward system should be put into effect. This may help jumpstart Bryan's behavioral changes and keep him motivated over the long term.

## **Appendix I. Flow Log**

### **Observations from Mrs. Cardoña's Freshmen Physics Class**

**8:33am** -After entering the room and placing his materials down on his desk Bryan walked over to the entrance of the classroom.

-He stood in the doorway, walked in and out, and fraternized with students sitting near him and out in the hall.

**8:37am** -He started playing with a piece of paper on the ground. He began to stomp on it and try to tear it up with only his feet

-He then picked up the paper crumpled it into a ball, and then threw it out into the hallway.

-He sat down and then changes his seat closer to the door.

**8:41am** -He shouted loudly making a yelp sound and then got up and started walking around the room.

-He disrupted students who were working on the assignment

-Bryan left the classroom and walked down the hall a little ways and then returned to the room.

-He opened and closed the door repeatedly.

**8:45am** -Mrs. Cardoña stepped outside and had a 1-on-1 conversation with Bryan and then he sat back down.

-He made another loud yelping noise.

**8:49am** -He began to quietly fraternize with the other students around him and distracting them from the assignment, which he also never finished.

**9:01am** -Bryan is tapping on his desk loudly making a beat.

**9:10am** -Bryan shouts again making another yelping noise.

-He stands up and walks in the rear of the room then returns to his seat.

-Teacher addresses Bryan by asking him to focus on the work at hand.

**9:16am** -He starts tapping his desk again not quite as loud as before.

-Teacher addresses him to please stop tapping and get back to the task at hand

-Bryan lets out another yelp.

**9:20am** -Teacher addresses Bryan again. "Bryan, Bryan."

**9:21am** -Teacher addresses Bryan again because he is being too loud. "Bryan, Please!"

-Bryan starts the tapping again.

-He begins stomping and tapping together to make a beat.

**9:24am** -Teacher addresses Bryan's noise level again. "Bryan I can't hear the question."

**Appendix IV Report Card**

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ **Instructor** \_\_\_\_\_ **Class** \_\_\_\_\_

**Rules & Guidelines for Bryan Bajandas**

1. Come to class on time and prepared to work (i.e. have all the required materials needed)
2. Stay seated during class time unless instructed otherwise by the instructor
3. Be respectful of peers and the instructor
4. Do not talk while someone else speaking
5. Participate in class (i.e. work on assignments assigned in class)
6. Complete and turn in all assignments on the official due date

Did Bryan arrive to class on time? **Y / N**

Did Bryan remain seated during the class period? **Y / N**

Did Bryan complete all in-class assignments? **Y / N**

Were all assignments turned in on time? **Y / N**

Comments:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Instructor Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent Signature)

## **Behavior Intervention Plan**

Bryan Bajandas

### **Objective:**

To modify Bryan's classroom behavior so that he be able to focus on his schoolwork, and allow his instructors to monitor and correct his behavior and develop his social skills.

### **Target behavior(s):**

1. Not staying seated during class period and walking around the room.
2. Distracting other students from the instructor by pounding hands on desktop, stomping feet, and shouting during class time.
3. Not participating in the assignment during class time.

### **Behavior Intervention(s):**

- For #1, 2, & 3 Bryan will have a daily report that is sent home to his mother. This will help build communication between his mother and instructors and create a log of Bryan's behavior to use for the future if needed.
- For #1 Bryan will be assigned a seat closer to the front of the class that separates him from other students who may contribute to his misbehavior.
- Bryan's instructors will provide more positive reinforcement in the classroom to help him model his behavior.
- Provide Bryan with praise when assignments are completed.
- Praise Bryan when he comes to class on time and remains in his seat through out the period.
- If Bryan does not behave on the third verbal warning he must go to the discipline office and his mother will be notified.
- Bryan will have a bi-weekly meeting with his instructor(s) and his mother to review his progress and discuss any issues, concerns, other topics that should be addressed.

## APPENDIX D: Counseling interview

Chris Ward  
Counsl 614  
Interview 2  
5/10/2011  
Levy

### 15 Minute Interview

#### The Cover Story:

As with my previous video recording I didn't try to write up a backdrop for a story. I asked a fellow student/friend to share something from their own life. I asked a number of people who might be interested in taking part to see if I could find someone who was interested to take part, and to have a back up partner in case my initial partner could not take part. I really liked this way of doing this project for a number of reasons. First, I did not have an idea of what the client is going to discuss. Second, I know that in class we have discussed and role played on some serious issues, which is very important, but I also wanted to get some real experience with people who might come to counseling for anything. Third, I felt that the responses and the topic of discussion coming from my partner would be much realistic, and my partner would answer with real passion when I gave a really good reflection. Finally, by not outlining a script or persona to play, client would not have any idea of the techniques being used in the interview (i.e. reflective listening). So the background of this interview is my interviewee sharing some concerns he is having about his work, and the issues that have arisen in having a disconnect with the upper management, which has been affecting his work.

#### Transcription:

Me: Um, okay so like I said like you know it's just a basic 15 minute session and feel free to talk about anything that's on your mind, anything that's interesting you, troubling you whatever, we'll go from there, um. You know you don't have to get too personal or anything again, I'm not a licensed counselor. You know we're not here to solve your life problems in 15 minutes.

Client: Solve my life problems in 15 minutes. Sounds fair.

Me: Um, but yeah so I don't know if there's anything in particular you want to start off with, or, what...

Client: Ah, it's not necessarily personal, well it's more of an observation that I've been noticing at my work place, which is the incompetence of senior level coworkers.

Me: M. Hm.

Client: And, the inner workings, or politics that place them there, which is ah, I'm finding it both interesting and frustrating at the same time.

**\*Me: So you feel like your upper level management and senior positions kind of don't really belong where they are.**

Client: Not at all. Based on what we do their level of expertise is not in that realm. Um, the easiest way to put it is we work in a digital agency and a lot of these people come from print. So they don't, they didn't really make the transition, and no one's made a move to educate them or bring in new people who do have that expertise. So I feel that hinders our final product at the end of the day. Our work is directly affected by upper level and the decisions that they make, and I just feel a lot of decisions are not being made correctly, so its, its, hard when you're working on something you know its not being done properly, or in the most efficient way.

Me: So these people aren't really qualified for their job.

Client: I would say no in 70-80% of the cases.

Me: So if this were your choice to, say you went out and started your own company or you went to a new company what would you change about the upper level senior management there?

Client: Hopefully it would not be the case in a company I was joining you know. If I was going somewhere new I would be looking for you know people that are in leadership roles or are in senior, not even in senior, executive positions to really have a strong grasp of the product we're putting out, and to have a forward thinking attitude as to not just do what everyone else is doing, but to actually innovate and do what people haven't done. And it's just not the case really where I am.

Me: So you people in these positions that are much more forward creative thinkers and individuals with a vision to do something new.

Client: Yeah, or at least have the drive to do something new.

Me: So these people really aren't going anywhere with the company.

Client: I don't believe so, no, at all. It seems as though a lot of people have been there for a long time because the company made a transition from print to digital, and now its all digital. And these people have been there for a long time, and its, they just really seem complacent with their own mediocrity I guess. Their just, there's nothing really going on that's new and exciting, and I think we're, it's costing us in the long run. So in some ways I feel that their incompetence is not only a direct reflection on me because I can't put out a quality product, or a really game changing product. Whereas we're just doing the same old thing just to play it safe because no one is really making, no one is really aspiring to make that change, and to really look at what we do in the world that we work in and to look at the opportunities to do something more. So I feel that their lack of drive directly reflects my work, which shouldn't be the case. It should be enhancing my work.

**Me: So they're really just kind of there for a paycheck.**

Client: Yeah, yeah, that's a good way to put it. They just clock in, clock out, and call it a day. While at the same time not understanding the time and effort that goes in to create certain things. So in some cases they're like, "Oh it took us, we were in a meeting for half an hour, and it only took us half an hour to think of this so it should only take half an hour to execute this. They don't really have a grasp on the media that we work in and how the production process works so it's very sloppy, and uh, it hampers work flow. I'll just say that.

Me: So they, you feel there's a real disconnect between the brainstorming that goes on and the actual execution of putting that into real work.

Client: Yeah, I wouldn't, I guess you wouldn't call it brainstorming its mostly marketing so I would say that it's more strategy than brainstorming. They're kind of like, "oh whats, what works? Okay let's go with what works" and slap it on this one idea. Instead of being like, "Let's take this and say what if we try this and if we can do that way." And it just doesn't really happen. In 70% of the cases. 30% of the cases there are some people that are very competent and that they do great work, but at the same time it's few and far between. Wow. Hi. (cat makes a brief appearance)

**Me: Um, in regards to these people and these challenges do you think that um, or what do you think are some things that could be done to maybe change their outlook, or their work ethic?**

Client: Funny enough, I was talking to a few people who i work with we honestly feel the best idea is to just go in, and cut off the problem at the head, and just get rid of that 70%. And bring in talent that's experienced that understands what it takes to really create new ideas, and um, if we want to be you know a top tier company, which we are, but to truly a top tier company, to be a leader, and create innovations that um, that will kind of set the benchmark for what we do we'd have to go in and just wipe it out. Just, you know it's like cancer. Cut out the cancer and start new.

Me: So you don't think that they should be like retrained, you just think you should boot them.

Client: We talked about, we had talked about opportunities to do that, and we've brought it up and its never come to fruition and it's been a few years and... If it's not going to happen now then. And they're not going to put forth the effort to learn it then I don't feel that they should be there, personally. Just because at the end of the day it makes me look bad. It makes my work sub-par, and that's frustrating.

**Me: So these people really don't seem to care their other co-workers, or people they...**

Client: NO, definitely not at all. It's pretty interesting. It's kind of a frat boy situation whereas one executive is at the top they push up all their friends, and they've all been there forever so they're all buddies. And they're all pretty comfortable just not really doing much. As far as progresun... progression. My enunciation is horrible. It's been a long day.

**Me: It's okay they're just words. So it's kind of like this, there's a little clique of people there that kind a sort of like the cool group that ah, does their own thing, and doesn't let anybody else in.**

Client: not necessarily, it's. You can't really not let anyone else in because of how many people actually work there, and how many people go into creating these projects. But they head it up. They're the spearhead, and it's weak. That spearhead is dull.

Me: So they just kind of come in and sign their name and dot their I's, say thank you very much.

Client: Oh yeah, completely. Just very vague, basic um, in their approach. And they're very happy just putting out mediocre work. They don't really have that drive I don't think. You know they wanna go in do their time and get out so they can go to their kid's soccer game or go to the barbecue, or go to the beach. You know they don't... I don't know.

Me: They're definitely not putting the effort in then.

Client: Yeah they're not there for the work. And that's kind of what it's all about so its frustrating, and I've spoken my concerns to a few people nothing's really happened. And I've talked to coworkers and a good amount definitely feel the same way. And its caused a lot of people to leave the company. And it's frustrating cause now when people, so many people have left and gone through this revolving door that now we're bringing in a new work force, which is all kids fresh out of college, which is great because they have great enthusiasm, and they're happy that they have a job especially in today's economy at the same time they're no experience and you know I think the company knows that, but they can pretty much pay them peanuts and over work them. Which I think is pretty unfair and at the same time is it really is their first job experience a good one if they're walking into this you know sub-par level of creativity and work? So it's kind of disheartening when I see these kids. I'm like "hey welcome to the party." You know and they're all happy, but you know a couple months later they're burnt out. And it's I don't know I think it's just kind of unfair to these kids, and as a whole. And it's not about necessarily being fair, its just about doing what's right for a company.

Me: Right.

Client: And it just seems like their lack of understanding of the product in the media and their work ethic combined just is a recipe for just disaster. Disaster.

Me: So not only do they not care about their own jobs, but they really, they're not thinking about the other people that are coming in there. They're actually ruining these you know people that are fresh out of college they're kind of you know ruining their experience in the career that they've chosen right off the bat in a way.

Client: In a way yes. I think they're just, you could look at it that way, or you could just look at it as they're just showing you how not to do it. You know and its tough. It's tough to watch. And at the same time it's just tough in general because it makes our job harder. Because if they say, "Oh yeah we can do this in half an hour" that's theoretically would be a two week job that has to be turned around in 48 hours. But they promised to the client with no understanding of the production process therefore the production team has 48 hours to do two weeks worth of

work. So not only is that ridiculous, but at the same time it's sacrificing quality for quantity because we just crank this stuff out, and its, eh, alright. But, its not great. It's not the work we should be putting out.

Me: So because of their lack of experience, their lack of communication your work has really suffered.

Client: Yeah, and its surprising because they literally have meetings about meetings. They're in meetings all day you know they're not, you know they were, I'm sure they were designers at one point or in production, and moved through the ranks over time, but over time production changes you know, concepts change, like every day. So if you're not right on it then you are going to miss it, and everyone suffers.

Me: Right. That sounds like it would be pretty frustrating.

Client: It is, with out a doubt. But at the same time its, its good to be able to do something like that. Like to do 2 weeks worth of work in 2 days. And find, work around, solve problems and go through that. Its good, it's like cross training kind of, you know its like a fire drill, but everyday shouldn't be a fire drill. You know. And you would think that they would learn their lesson, but then they're just like, "oh we can get it in 48 hours now all the time!" So thats like the norm. So it's just, it's crazy, it's really crazy. About how these things operate. So 70% of the time we're doing mundane work, with a ridiculous work schedule, like the window of production is just nuts. But then the other 30% we're actually doing really great stuff, and I just don't see why not only these people that are really doing much aren't seeing this, and being like, "we need to get our act together", but at the same time they don't have to worry because they're not going to get canned because their buddy is the boss. So they can just sit around and do whatever. And one would think that executives would see this and do something about it. But its not the case. So it's kind of either "roll with the punches" or find another place to work that doesn't have this. So, who knows.

Me: Who knows.

Client: Yeah, it puts me in a place where either I can sit and try it make it better, or not. Or keep trying to make it better because its a definite problem and it gets brought up its not like I'm sitting there quietly just... You know angst ridden and just frustrated with these people, its, I've gone and I've said things but its just, its not, nothing is really happening. So, do I stay for the 30%, knowing that the 70% isn't going to change, or you never know global might see it and just hack the executive. Then all of his buddies get fired. And then that would be removing the cancer so to speak. And maybe starting fresh would be the better option. I definitely think so. I know people that have been there that were brought on for a specific job that weren't utilized and left within 2 months, and advised me to do the same because it was so blatant coming in to it so fresh and seeing how its run and who runs it that they didn't feel confident enough, didn't feel comfortable staying there. Knowing that their work is going to be directly affected. You know it's like any of this work that comes out you don't really want to put in your portfolio. Because you don't feel it directly reflects what you can do. Or its just doesn't look good. So, its a bit of an interesting circumstance, but at the same time you can't help but feel overlooked and feel good about that. So , yeah.

Me: Alright, well ah, time is just about up.

Client: Okay.

Me: I appreciate it

Client: Thank you for listening to me ramble.

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**Analysis:**

Overall, I felt like this mock session went very well. In my responding to the client I felt like many of my reflections "hit the nail on the head" so to speak. However, I felt like I could done a better job summarizing after a number of reflections. I certainly felt much more comfortable walking into this recording than the last. As Jeff mentioned in class the reflective listening and motivational interviewing seem much easier to execute than any of the ACT strategies. The only issue I had with this recording was that my room mates cat interrupted us a few times, but it was nothing majorly distracting.

My first highlighted response definitely gave me a confidence boost at the beginning of the interview, and made me feel less anxious. Furthermore, I wasn't thinking about where my response was going to lead to. I found myself simply being focused on listening to my client talk about his experience and give a strong reflection back to him. My reflection seemed to really get him to open up and talk about what was going on at the work place, and as the conversation continued from there it seemed to have a natural flow to it.

The second response I highlighted in which I reflected that some of my client's coworkers were just at the workplace for a paycheck seemed to clarify his thoughts when he responded by saying that my reflection was a good way to put it. Again I didn't have a direction that I was particularly trying to steer the client in. I was however, trying to better understand his situation so in many ways my reflections to him were a way for me to better understand what was going on in his life as well.

In my next response I tried to see if I could get some change talk, or ideas of how to address/solve some of the issues the client addressed about what he is dealing with in the work place. He did provide me with some possible answers to the problem, which were not quite what I expected. I was definitely thrown back for a moment when he went on to say that these upper level management/executives should just be fired. This was definitely one of those moments where I found myself in a place where I did not expect that response. But I tried to just roll with the punches and maintain a non-judgmental attitude and environment.

My next response about the lack of caring from the upper level management was intended to move right back into giving good reflections and continue along with letting the conversation flow. However, looking back at this point I did notice that in this conversation the client hasn't really told me how he fits into this whole situation at his work place. That is one area I wish I had gotten the client to talk about.

The final response I chose was one in which I felt my reflection was a bit off, and where I gave a response that hinted at ACT. In my client's previous response he mispronounces the word progression and then says his pronunciation is horrible. My response was to let him know they are just words. My response was to continue to promote a safe and judgment free environment to the client. Furthermore, I felt like my reflection was a bit off right after I responded. This was a good moment for me to become comfortable with not always providing a dead on reflection. While reflecting back on this point I could see how the conversation still goes on and the client went on to clarify what he meant.

As I stated before I felt a much higher level of confidence going into this interview session than the previous. I felt like I was able to sit down and focus on listening to the client, and provide some really good and simple reflections. One of the most important learning pieces for me this time around was when some of my reflections weren't quite on the mark the client corrected them and the conversation continued on. In realizing that the conversation still moves forward even when a reflection is off has allowed me let go of a great deal of stress in trying to have the perfect reflection, and to focus on the client.

I also got some good feedback from my partner afterwards. He first stated that he found the whole piece really interesting because he assumed I would be prying him for information, but rather he was a bit surprised when as he put it, I started confirming what he was saying, and summarizing his thoughts so he could hear them in a more organized way than to how he stated them. After his response I explained to him the technique of reflective listening, and he expressed that he thought most of my reflections were a great example of my knowledge of how it worked. I feel as though I have taken a great deal from the coursework in this class. Especially, in working with kids, because the practice of reflective listening has been a great way for me to connect with the kids I work with. This course has been a great start to further developing important skills needed not only in doing counseling work, but also for my interactions with people on a day to day basis, and the feedback provided from my interviewee helps in telling me that I am moving in the right direction.

## **Appendix E: Interview w/ a Family Therapist**

Chris Ward  
Cou 621  
Interview  
Arora

### **Interview with an AAMFT Family Therapist**

In finding a therapist to interview for this project I think was quite lucky to have the opportunity to sit down with Dr. Joyce Pavao, who has been a pioneer in working with families who are affected by adoption. Being an adoptee herself, Dr. Pavao grew up in a time when no one discussed the issues surrounding adopted children, and the challenges they faced. So when I arrived at her office to conduct the interview I was very excited because this was a topic I that I was not all that familiar with, and I felt that she would provide me with a unique perspective that I might not be able to get anywhere else.

I arrived at the Center for Family Connections in East Cambridge about ten minutes before my interview. I was warmly greeted, and after only a few minutes of sitting in the waiting area found myself sitting down with Dr. Pavao, who was very happy to share her time with me. I started by giving her some background information about myself, who I was, and why I was here. Then I dove right into the interview asking her about her background, and why she chose family therapy. She began by talking about how she was adopted and the role that played, and how no one seemed to talk about it with her when she was a child. It was the elephant in the room, so to speak, and then as she got older and became interested in pursuing therapy she found her interest in family therapy because it was so new at the time, it didn't have the recognition or respect that it does now, and was this very refreshing and exciting area of research and discovery.

She then discussed her own experience, and how she had the opportunity to be exposed to so many mentors in the field when she was in school. She expressed a strong gratitude to work under such great people who were pioneers during their time. People like David Kantor, Don Bloch, and Norman Paul helped to guide and mentor her in her work. She talked about her time at Harvard under Eric Erikson, and how he understood her experience and viewpoint as an adoptee, and her work in the field around families and adoption. This meant a great deal for her because he "got it." In her reflections Dr. Pavao revealed how she has seen the field grow from its earlier beginnings to where it is now. She talked about how it was sort of strange and

bittersweet because she had recently gone to the funeral of Norman Paul, who had been very influential in developing and understanding trans-generational family systems, and in working with families and schizophrenia.

Another interesting insight I learned from her during this part of the interview was that before the field of family therapy had been established was if a therapist met with a family they were thought to be doing “family therapy.” It was a moment for me where I found myself thinking; “Whoa, I didn’t really think about what was going on before family therapy had been around.” While listening to Dr. Pavao I found myself reflecting on some of the difficulties and challenges her mentors may have faced during this time from being ridiculed and insulted, to simply being ignored in some cases. But, that also means there were great opportunities and moments for excitement during the beginnings of all this.

From this point I went on to ask what she thought were the most challenging parts to being a family therapist on a personal scale, and/or overall looking at the bigger picture. Her response to this was there are two major challenges she often encounters in her work. The first challenge is getting everyone in the family to come in so she can see and better understand the family and its framework, and the second major challenge is getting people to make a commitment to return. These were the most difficult things for her starting off in her career, and they still are today, however, she now feels like she has a better understanding of how to handle these types of situations when they present themselves. She provided me with an example of how she might address a father on the phone who might not be very willing to come in to her office. I found her tone of voice and mannerisms in her phone call example to be very soothing, polite and eloquent, and she was for lack of a better term “very good at buttering people up.”

I need to backtrack for a moment here because Dr. Pavao provided me with a really great example about getting families together, but this example was also part of her reflection about her experience in the field, and it intertwined in a way that answered different parts of different questions I had originally thought of for the interview. So before the phone call example she spoke about a family therapy session she did once outside in a Cambridge park with a woman who was schizophrenic. Her brother had adopted her child because she was mentally unfit to take care of it herself. Dr. Pavao had asked for the extended family to be there as well, including cousins, aunts, uncles, and grandparents. She discussed the complexities of in-family adoption and its impact on families, and how families must deal with trauma. Before families can do

anything they must be able to deal with trauma. This was a really important point in the interview because it shed light on one of the basic points of what a family therapist has to be ready to deal with. A family therapist has to be ready to help families deal with trauma. I think it also shows that families themselves have to be ready to face trauma.

Another important part of this experience for Dr. Pavao was how she worked with the family to help set important boundaries especially because the child's birth mother was schizophrenic, which means those boundaries have to be incredibly clear well laid out. This was an important point in her career in knowing how to understand the systematic framework of families with adoptees, and working with families who deal with severe trauma.

The story about holding a therapy session in the park was a great transition to the next stop in our discussion, which was on safety. After discussing the park example Dr. Pavao talked about how she felt that house calls were not a good way to conduct family therapy. She did say that she felt it could be useful to visit a family in their home setting to get a better understanding of the environment they live in, but that conducting a therapy session there should not be done. She provided an example of when she had done so and it did not work out well when she went to a housing project in Roxbury. It was almost impossible for her to work with the child she was visiting because there was another male figure in the apartment whom continuously interrupted them and was constantly staring down the two of them, and at times Dr. Pavao was sure he was conducting drug deals. It was clear that she could do little in an environment where neither she, nor her client felt safe. She thought that house calls were best suited for social work rather than family therapy.

I found this part of my interview to really connect with my own work with students in the education field. Working in education is very similar in some ways to family therapy because as Dr. Pavao said you need to make sure the client feels safe, which, like working with students you need to make sure they feel safe as well. Otherwise, teaching and learning can be much more difficult. The bigger piece to this is environment, and working with students can be hard because you can't control the environment outside of the classroom. On the positive side to this her stories and reflections reveal that therapy can take place outside the office in a park; just like learning can happen outside the classroom.

Moving forward our next stop was briefly talking about "brief long term therapy," which is something I found really interesting. Dr. Pavao also said that this was one of the more

rewarding parts of her work, and that it was amazing to see people over a long period of time. So what exactly is this? It's pretty much just what it sounds like, or to put in car terms its like an oil change or basic maintenance every couple thousand miles. A brief check in, and then the client is off back into the world feeling a bit more refreshed.

The conversation naturally flowed into me asking what else creates drive and motivation for her to continue career in the field. She said she finds a great deal of motivation in writing, teaching, and supervising family therapy students because at the moment she doesn't see too many clients because of her rigorous traveling and work schedule. She talked about how at here at the CFFC she was able to have anywhere between 3-5 people under supervision, and that she often takes people from different types of therapy so that they can connect and interact. It was at this point that she made a truly amazing point to me that connected to my own work in a way. Dr. Pavao showed me why intermixing her students was so important because her students work with children and families from all different backgrounds, cultures, and ethnicities. She then talked about how she had an art therapy student at the CFFC at one time who was able to connect with non-native speaking students through drawing and painting whereas none of the other therapy students were able to make strong connections because of the language barrier. This was a huge "aha" moment for me in thinking about working with the ESL students at the high school I work at!

I was sort of blown away by the end of the interview because my last few questions were focused around education and family therapy, but I didn't need to even ask them because Dr. Pavao had answered them through her previous answers. I found it really interesting that the her major connection to the family therapy field at the moment was through the education and supervision of students at the CFFC. She also made a great advice to think about and that other students can take as well; the thing about working with children is to remember they are all attached to families. The second piece of advice she gave was to always step back and reflect on the bigger picture.

As for the interview I also noticed that Dr. Pavao had a very strong and clear understanding of frameworks and systems, and it was a recurring point she made again and again. I found this very similar to working in education and trying to understand the motivations behind why students act, or do the things they do in the classroom. This time spent with Dr. Pavao has allowed me to see some very interesting and important connections between two

fields, and I think it is very valuable. In fact the point about having ESL students work with an art therapist gave me an idea to look into some potential development in regards to the students I work with. I think that if there was an outlet created for ESL students to come and connect through making art and to develop their language skills it could be the potential for a high impact outcome. I think this interview along with my other course work has continued to help my broaden my horizons, expand my understanding of things in a larger framework, and making stronger connections between different systems in the world.

## **Appendix F: High School Survey and Reflection/Thoughts/Analysis**

Name:

School:

1. Where were you born? If you were born outside of the United States when did you emigrate to the U.S.?
- 2.
3. Do you have to translate for your parents/family?
- 4.
5. Are you involved in after school programs/activities? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?
- 6.
7. Which family member/friend do you feel was or have been most involved with your education (K-12)? How are they connected to you?
8. What barriers/challenges did your parents experience in being involved directly with K-12 school experience?
9. Reflecting on your time spent at South Boston Education Complex (SBEC), what are some of the resources or programs you found most helpful?
- 10.
11. Reflecting on your experience at SBEC, what aspects of your school life could have been better?
12. Reflecting on your education at South Boston please share a meaningful learning experience.
- 13.
14. Reflecting on your experience with AGP, how have you benefited from being enrolled in the program?
- 15.
16. Reflecting on your experience with AGP, in what ways would you like to see it improve?
- 17.
18. What has the college application process been like for you?
19. Where will you be attending college/university? What's your major of interest? If you are not going on to post-secondary studies, why not and what are your plans?

### **Research Survey/Questionnaire Thoughts/Reflection/Analysis**

As part of the requirements for completing my AsAmSt 497 course this semester and to better understand the school and students I work with I developed a twelve question survey with the guidance of my teacher/advisor

Professor Peter Kiang, and my direct supervisor for the AGP program, Andrea Dawes. My focus in the survey questionnaire was to capture each student's experiences within and outside their school. In doing so these students shared some very interesting, powerful, and insightful moments that I have had the opportunity to reflect upon. While developing this project I tried to keep two main goals in mind; the first was to develop a project relevant to AsAmSt 497 with the potential to pass my work on to assist in the development of the AANAPISI project. The second was to develop feedback, which would be relevant to myself and Andrea to find ways to improve the AGP program for current and future students. Originally I had thought that I would only survey the Asian American seniors enrolled in the program, but upon further examination I decided to try and survey all the seniors enrolled because it would only serve to provide me with information on how I might better serve all students.

In administering this survey I met with the students in small groups, or individually depending on their schedule. I handed out the survey and explained that by answering these questions they would be helping to make history and change the future, which could help other students. I told them to write whatever came to their mind; that their answers were important no matter what they might think, and that if they didn't like something they should say that. The goal at this stage was to validate the students answers, and have them understand that their voice counts because their input could change how AGP and UMass serve them and their community. It was also another great opportunity to gain further insight into who these students are.

In my work the most common barrier which consistently came up in the student's answers was the barrier of language, either for themselves or for their parents. This answer was closely followed by the response that parents were unfamiliar or lacked an understanding of how the education system works here in the United States. All of these students who have to face the difficulty of language have also had to act as a translator for their parents at times. The native language of most of these students is Vietnamese, while other languages that were listed also included Spanish, Cantonese, and Mandarin. These answers show a major gap in the communication between family and school, and a potential solution to help relieve this would be to meet with parents and have some speak in to them in their native language, and/or provide a translated copy of documents for them in their language. Another possible idea, yet it might be a bit of a stretch due to resources might be to offer English lessons to these students and their families. I know that SBEC does have staff who are fluent in both Vietnamese and English, so there might be the possibility to pair up with them and translate some of these documents. In conjunction, these educators may also be available to come to UMass to speak about their experiences as teachers/educators. I was able to confirm that some students and their families who speak Vietnamese are in contact with those teachers that also speak Vietnamese.

More than half of the students who answered the questionnaire stated that they felt that they had at least one family member or more who was involved in their own education. The rest of the students' answers were split between having a close friend to help them, and having no one at all. Even for students' whose parents are hindered by the barrier of language they still found a way to play a role, and to convey the importance and value of education to their children. Yet, through this process I am not aware if this role has had a positive or negative impact, nor do I know to the extent of the involvement this person/these people played in the student's life.

Almost all the students took advantage of, or were able to gain access to other programs and/or resources during their time at SBEC that existed outside of the classroom. These resources included programs such as Urban Scholars, AGP, ACCESS, PIC, Let's Get Ready, and the Federal Bank of Boston Program. In conjunction with these resources these students were involved in after school clubs and programs such as Robotics, MUN, Summer Search, Reading Club, Choir, Theatre, Yearbook, National Honors Society, and Student Government. However, because a number of these students have to translate for their parents. This could mean that only the students have direct access to many if not all of these resources, while the parents end up taking a sideline-like position.

I also had a few Vietnamese students who's first language is not English leave a number of questions blank on their survey. This raises concerns for me because I am curious to know if they do not understand the question, or do not want to answer them. I am also concerned that by handing out this survey I may have made some students feel ostracized or uncomfortable through this process, especially if they did not fully understand the motivation behind it, or they did not feel comfortable sharing their stories and/or experiences.. At the same time I felt because I had developed relationships with many of the senior students who are Vietnamese, or Vietnamese Americans that connection made them feel comfortable enough to answer the questionnaire as best they could.

In having conversation with many of the students before and after they filled out the survey I asked them what their impression of UMass Boston was like. All of the students enrolled in Upward Bound and Urban Scholars said that they liked the University, but that they preferred to go to a different college because they wanted to experience something new and UMB was too familiar. I wonder if there were some way to change this perspective so that students would rather continue to develop the relationship they have with the University. This response made me think of when I completed my undergraduate degree at UMB and then took a year off. When I returned to go for

my Master's I was so excited to be back at the University. I also reflected upon what Chancellor Motley said at my commencement about UMB being a place for students, alumni, and the community to return, renew, and rebuild. When I came back I felt as though the Chancellor had somehow been talking directly to me. The other great piece of information that the seniors I had conversation with shared was that they wanted AGP to connect more often with them. Andrea and I discussed this and have been thinking about possibly holding quarterly meetings with students after their grades come out to check in with them and see how things are going.

Without trying to over-conceptualize my experience this semester I have to say that it has been a very profound one. I have learned so much about myself and students through our interactions and reading the short insights they have shared about their themselves through the survey/questionnaire. I hope that this information collected can be used in some way. At the very least for UMB to connect with the students that are enrolling in classes there for the fall. This final paragraph in my project touches upon a theme that Professor Kiang continually stressed inside the classroom and it was something that was very important for me this past semester; connections. Between the connections I made with my classmates in AsAmSt 497, to the students I worked with at SBEC, to the discussions and brainstorming with my director Andrea Dawes, to the material and work from both Peter and Shirley's class coming together this past semester, to connections outside the classroom and work with friends and family, I feel as though I have gotten so much more out of this semester than I ever expected.

## **Appendix G: CCT 692 ESL Research Project**

### **A More Holistic Approach to Supporting English Language Learners**

#### **A. Context, Background, and Introduction**

In November 2002, Massachusetts voters approved Question 2, a new educational policy for English Language Learners (ELL) that took effect in September 2003. The new policy would turn over a 30-year practice of Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) and Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) would take its place. The purpose of the SEI program was to teach English language acquisition and content instruction in conjunction with the goal of transitioning English Language Learners into a standard curriculum program after one year. Almost eight years later on September 30, 2010, Boston Public Schools (BPS) would sign an agreement with the U.S Department of Education, which urged BPS to address the inadequacies that existed in regards to the services provided to English Language Learners, “inadequacies that the federal agencies judged were ‘implicating the District’s obligations under the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974.’”<sup>16</sup>

The current state of this system has created a triple challenge for English Language Learners, their teachers, and the schools they are enrolled in: students need to be taught and learn English at a level of proficiency that is strong enough to allow them access to academic content; they must be taught and learn academic content that is equal to their peers who are English proficient; schools and programs must engage students to foster learning so that they can go on to graduate from high school.<sup>17</sup> The challenges created by the implementation of Question 2 and the need for the Department of Education to intervene show that there is an urgency to find new ways to support ELL students.

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<sup>16</sup> Uriate, Miren; Karp, Faye; Gagnon, Laurie; Tung, Rosann, Sarah; Chen, Jie; Bernadino, Michael; Stazesky, Pamela; de los Reyes, Eileen; and Bolomey, Antonieta, “Improving Educational Outcomes of English Language Learners in Schools and Programs in Boston Public Schools” (2011). *Gastón Institute Publications*. Paper 154.  
[http://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston\\_pubs/154](http://scholarworks.umb.edu/gaston_pubs/154) pg.2

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. pg.6

My awareness of the difficulties ELL students face first surfaced midway through my graduate program at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. Between my graduate studies and an assistantship for the Admissions Guaranteed Program (AGP) at the South Boston Education Complex (SBEC) I was able to gain a deep understanding of how UMass Boston has been fulfilling its urban mission statement, and how my role plays a critical part. The AGP program serves students enrolled at six BPS high schools located in Dorchester, South Boston, and Roxbury. Students who complete courses in the required subjects and meet the specific program criteria are guaranteed admission to the University.<sup>18</sup> As the graduate assistant at SBEC, some of my responsibilities are to recruit new students, assist students in developing clear educational goals, increase awareness of potential opportunities for students, and provide support with college application process.

UMass Boston is dedicated to serving its community and residents to create healthy social fabrics, economies, service organizations, and civic and cultural institutions. My experience at SBEC has exposed me firsthand to some of the gaps that exist in the BPS system, particularly the struggles that non-native speakers of English encounter. By enrolling as a graduate student in the College of Education and Human Development, I agreed to become an active and engaging member of my community who is thoughtful, responsive, and an agent of social justice.

My position provided me with the opportunity to develop close ties with the staff of other pre-collegiate programs at UMass Boston. In a conversation one day with Akunna, the recruiting counselor for the program Urban Scholars, he expressed his concern over the fact that he could not admit a number of Vietnamese students because there were no tutors, teachers, or staff members in Urban Scholars that spoke Vietnamese. This conversation brought to my attention that UMass Boston did not have an after-school program to assist ELL students from all backgrounds in developing their language skills at the University. It was frustrating to hear this, and I couldn't just walk away from this issue without trying to find a solution.

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<sup>18</sup> The requirements for AGP for students to guarantee admission are that they must graduate with a 2.75 GPA that is weighted only on their core courses (English, Math, Science, Humanities, and Foreign Language), and have a combined score on their math and critical reading SAT sections of 800.

It just so happened that I had enrolled in a course, “Teaching and Learning in Asian American Studies,” taught by my advisor, Dr. Peter Kiang. The course focused on developing conceptual approaches and practice relevant to pedagogy and curriculum design in the field of Asian American studies. Needless to say I promptly contacted Dr. Kiang about the issue with Urban Scholars. He asked Akunna to come speak to our class about the matter so that we might find a means to address it. Through the activism that followed we were able to locate some graduate and undergraduate students who spoke Vietnamese and were more than willing to volunteer their time for Urban Scholars.

Through conversation with the director of my graduate assistantship, Andrea Dawes, and my responsibilities at SBEC I became increasingly aware and concerned at the need to serve these students. The high school I served during the 2010-2011 academic year had a student body that was predominantly comprised of students whose first language is not English (54%).<sup>19</sup> To fulfill the grading requirements for my class with Dr. Kiang I designed a short research questionnaire for the high school seniors I worked with in AGP that were non-native speakers to learn more about the students’ experiences at the SBEC.<sup>20</sup> Although the number of students who participated was very small it provided these students with a voice, and gave me some insight into working with future students. The answers showed that the most common barrier for these students encountered was language.

With the guidance of my director I began to formulate potential avenues of exploration in research and development of a theoretical model for a potential pre-collegiate after school program that could become its own program or weaved in alongside such programs as Upward Bound, Urban Scholars, Admissions Guaranteed Program, or the Health Careers Opportunity Program, which are already established on the UMass Boston campus.<sup>21</sup> The after school program model I envision is a combination of UMass Boston pre-collegiate program structure and classroom content-based instruction that are paired with additional social, cultural, and financial comprehensive reinforcement that will develop students’ English language skills. It is vital in understanding the barriers which exist between ESL students and college education are

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<sup>19</sup> "Student Data." *School and District Profiles*. Massachusetts Department of Education. Web. 17 Nov. 2011. <<http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/profiles/student.aspx?orgcode=00350522>>.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix A for a copy of the survey questionnaire

<sup>21</sup> The Upward Bound Program has received continuous funding since 1965

not just issues of language, but there are also structural, economic, and linguistic factors that each play a role in inhibiting ELL students' access and participation.<sup>22</sup>

The research process was an opportunity to learn more about the student body I have been engaged with for the past two years. I had started by investigate past research on English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum development, which led me to Bigelow's Content Based model of instruction that is based on years of previous work. Dr. Kiang was also very helpful in forwarding me two recent publications from the Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy that discuss the needs of ELL students and the impact of language policies on the educational outcomes of ELL students. Other research published by Kanno and Varghese were the most vital component in the development of my own work because it linked the classroom to the bigger picture, demonstrating that a more holistic approach is needed in language acquisition for ELL students.

When it came time to the actual writing process, I found it was much easier for me to reference the outline I made in a previous class during CCT 692 and focus on one section at a time. By putting everything else to the side, I noticed that I spent less time worrying about the project as a whole. I was able to focus on the actual expression of the thoughts and ideas that were on my mind at that moment. The process of writing whatever I was thinking and then editing later was rather unfamiliar. I found this new process was helpful because it allowed me to get everything that was on my mind down on paper so that later on I was actually editing and not distracted by trying to cram in more ideas. I'm not sure if I like this style of writing in comparison to how I normally organize and write a research paper. In the past, I typically spend more time fine-tuning my outline so when I write the paper there is less editing to do near the end. The PD workbook was especially helpful in breaking the research process down step-by-step, which caused me to move at a much slower pace and spend more time reflecting.

## **B. Connections Content-Based Instruction (CBI) Model**

The CBI model was created to prepare ELL students to have the skills needed for learning mainstream academic content. The model designed by Bigelow, Ranney, and Dahlman is a proposed solution to offer ESL teachers a tool to aid them in the problem of how deliberate

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<sup>22</sup> Kanno, Yasuko, and Manka Varghese. "Immigrant and Refugee ESL Students' Challenges to Accessing Four-Year College Education: From Language Policy to Educational Policy." *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 9.5 (2010). pg. 311

attention to language (syntax, pronunciation, vocabulary) is lost when instruction shifts towards a content-based syllabus. This model presumes that content themes have been selected and offers three different points of entry in CBI: content materials or tasks; language functions; linguistic structure; with the entry point dependent on the circumstances and context of instruction. The model includes flexible movement between the three points to ensure that they are linked in curriculum and instruction.<sup>23</sup> It was created through dialogue with ESL teachers, and is a model that facilitates language teaching in a wide variety of settings. Based on the previous research conducted it takes the elements of CBI and organizes them to address language and content, but to be adaptable to a variety of contexts.<sup>24</sup>

The model has three key and interwoven elements for any contextualized language lesson: *the content*, the content texts and tasks that students are asked to perform; *the language functions*, which are present in the content and the students carry out in tasks; and *the language structures*, including grammatical forms and vocabulary that are found in the content and used in the process of accomplishing the task and performing the task-based language functions.<sup>25</sup> The relationship between functions and structures is one where the structure represents the linguistic or grammatical form and the function characterizes the functional intention of the structure, its meaning and usage. Another key factor of the model is how the components are linked together through the strategies that allow teachers to go back and forth between the three so that they can be properly aligned. This is especially important that teachers are able to make connections

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<sup>23</sup> Bigelow, Martha, Susan Ranney, and Anne Dahlman. "Keeping the Language Focus in Content-Based ESL Instruction through Proactive Curriculum-Planning." *TESL Canada Journal* 24.1 (2006): 40-58. Web. pg.41

<sup>24</sup> Ibid pg. 45-46

<sup>25</sup> See appendix B for diagram of CBI Model

between the learning strategies and the language functions, language structures, and the content as seen in appendix B.<sup>26</sup>

In using the content as a starting point in the curriculum such as in a sheltered-content class Bigelow, Ranney, and Dahlman provide a sample text using text from a chapter of *Arctic Transect*, that discusses the Inuit (*Arctic Transect*, Doenng, 2004, Unit 4).

*Seasonal Travel.* Traditionally, the Inuit lived in small groups of related families. Communities were located close to important seasonal hunting grounds. Living and surviving meant traveling to find and harvest animals. Families moved inland in the fall to hunt caribou. Later, during freeze up, they fished for arctic char. Seal hunting was done in winter and spring along coastal areas and summer meant finding bird eggs. (pg.2)

This text provides ELL students contact with some of the more common academic language they may not find in less formal texts. This text contains within it the use of a passive voice (*hunting was done*), nominalization of gerunds (*living and surviving*), and the use of several nouns and pronouns that refer to the Inuit. Therefore, ELL students may need instructions that focus on these particular language structures for them to be able to understand the meaning of the text. From this departure point using *content* the teacher could then consider the *function* of gathering information, and then move on to the *structure* of the reference in the reading. The next step would be to plan strategies to scaffold students' understanding that *Inuit*, *communities*, *families*, and *they* all refer to the same group. To aid students in understanding the passive voice the teacher could then aid in the development of learning strategies like cultivating background knowledge to understand that the hunting is being done by people, and then instruct students in mapping out and organizing the pattern of the sentence. The teacher has then identified the content, the functions, and the structures through mapping and guided reading.<sup>27</sup>

After completing this exercise the teacher could hand out different hypothetical situations to students and have them discuss in groups what they might do in the situation they are given. Before allowing students to start the teacher focuses on the use of the conditional in describing unreal, hypothetical events, and provide a few examples in practice. This step ensures that students are able to accomplish the presented academic functions develop their knowledge of academic language. Through this exercise students have also learned how to use the strategy of deduction in applying rules to hypothetical conditions, as well as cooperation in group work.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid pg.46-47

<sup>27</sup> Ibid pg.50-51

The function of *hypothesizing* in this exercise is also a function in goal 2 of standard 2 of TESOL standards. Thus, the activity can also be structured to have students develop other needed skills to meet the goals of the TESOL standards.<sup>28</sup>

The teacher could instead choose to start with *structures* and then move to *content* and *functions* since ELL students often have trouble with word endings. To do this the teacher could highlight certain words within the sample text above and ask students to use the strategy of inference to make connections between adjectives and related nouns (i.e. seasonal and coastal in the sample text). The students could then practice the vocabulary in a content task where they would need to describe the Inuits using adjectives from the text and others from the inference activity. By starting with *structures* teachers are able to provide instruction and address common problem areas for ELL students of particular first languages, and therefore can also choose texts and tasks that use these forms. Teachers can also align texts and tasks to concentrate on *structures* that students might avoid, such as writing more complex sentences. The focus on *structures* and linguistic forms has another underlying motivator, which is for teachers to have their students meet specific language goals established by the BPS district, the state, or the Department of Education. From the structure teachers can then decide on where to move the instruction next into the area of content. For example, having students develop and formulate questions from the reading.<sup>29</sup>

Finally moving from *functions* to *content* and *structures* allows teachers to align course work with TESOL, MEPA, or similar standards as well as starting from content texts because academic language functions are inherent and articulated in the objectives and tasks presented in curriculum materials. For example, students might be asked to compare and contrast a specific text. The tasks of comparing and contrasting are rooted in the functions, therefore, understanding the content of the text is linked through language functions.<sup>30</sup> Teachers should focus the learning on structures that will help students to become proficient in academic English. They can then assess this by observing students completing the required tasks through the language they use. To complete such functions like *comparing* students will need to learn and know comparative structures and connectors such as *unlike* or *on the other hand*. Another example for the function of *infer* can be completed with conditional sentences or with modals such as *may*, *could*, and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid pg.51

<sup>29</sup> Ibid pg.52

<sup>30</sup> Ibid pg.52

*might*. In developing the curriculum and planning beforehand the teacher should compile a variety of language structures that can be used to carry out language functions so that students can practice and become familiar with language structures that are commonly found in academic discourse.<sup>31</sup>

By creating a setting and space where students can focus on learning language, content, structures and functions in this form would allow students to learn in a cyclical pattern where these forms would be introduced, revisited and practiced on an ongoing basis. Teachers could keep lists of forms that receive adequate attention, or from a checklist from a set of curricular guidelines. Teachers can also do this to keep on track of students' performance and development. As well as to understand where students maybe having trouble, ignoring, or avoiding certain forms. The pedagogical tools used in instruction need to be varied and provide a range of corrective feedback, along with task and text modifications. This fluid approach allows for a more natural integration of grammar with content.<sup>32</sup>

For educators using this model they can align their class work to help students make connections between what they learn about writing with practices that they may need to write later in their academic career.<sup>33</sup> In a study conducted by Julia Carroll and Helene Dunkelblau they wanted to know how well the advanced ESL curriculum reflected the actual writing requirements their students would face after completing the ESL sequence. Although it was a preliminary study their found that ESL writing instructors can best prepare their students for the types of writing tasks that they are most likely to encounter by providing challenging assignments that require students to directly engage with a text, which can be done through the CBI model. Writing instructors who use a CBI approach could organize coursework around a particular theme, or a number of smaller themes, which students can begin researching at the beginning of a semester. The instructor can break up the assignments into smaller lesson plans and springboard from there. However, writing instructors should try and plan their content around future academic writing assignments. What is most important is that instructors provide their students with the tools they will need to be successful in their future endeavors.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid pg.53

<sup>32</sup> Ibid pg.54-55

<sup>33</sup> Carroll, Julia, and Helene Dunkelblau. "Preparing ESL Students for "Real" College Writing: A Glimpse of Common Writing Tasks ESL Students Encounter at One Community College." *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* 38.3 (2011): 271-81. Web. pg.271

<sup>34</sup> Ibid pg.278-279

### C. A More Holistic Approach

It is vital that teachers and administrators understand that educating ELL students cannot simply be done by a small group of well trained professionals, but that their education must be addressed by schools, districts, communities as a whole. This is an important factor when considering what barriers exist between ELL students and a college education because focusing on language and language policy will only have a limited impact on developing students' access and success. Therefore, a much more holistic approach needs to be undertaken that can address the structural, economic, and linguistic factors that ELL students face in their access to education.<sup>35</sup>

In a study by Yasuko Kanno and Manka M. Varghese, they identify major challenges for immigrant and refugee ELL students in higher education: linguistic challenges, structural constraints, financial struggles, and self-censorship. Their theoretical framework is heavily based on Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction to offer a useful perspective to gain a better understanding of these challenges. Bourdieu's theory states that schools contribute to the reproduction of existing power relations in society, and that this is privilege is granted to students of the dominant cultural class. Therefore, only students of the dominant class have access to it, leaving working-class and minority students with an inherent disadvantage. "By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give."<sup>36</sup>

Bourdieu's theory has another key piece addresses different forms of *Cultural capital*. *Cultural capital* is composed of the types of knowledge, dispositions, and educational qualifications that are highly valued in a particular society. Bourdieu places *Linguistic capital* as a subset of *Cultural capital*, and defines it as the competence in a socially powerful language. This *Cultural capital* is deeply intertwined with other forms of capital such as *economic capital* (money, property), *symbolic capital* (status, legitimacy), and *social capital* (networks, connections). Thus, students who have limited access and/or resources in these different forms of

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<sup>35</sup> Yasuko Kanno & Manka M. Varghese (2010): Immigrant and Refugee ESL Students' Challenges to Accessing Four-Year College Education: From Language Policy to Educational Policy, *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 9:5, 310-328. pg.311

<sup>36</sup> Ibid pg.313

capital are left at a major disadvantage, and leave the educational system with much smaller gains than those students of the dominant cultural class.<sup>37</sup>

Kanno and Varghese distributed a survey in ten first-year classes at a major public research university that were taken by large numbers of ESL students. It asked questions about the students' background, ethnicity, language, age of arrival in the United States, parent education level, immigration status, and financial aid status. They also conducted 60 to 90 minute interviews with participants that focused on the college application process, and academic and social experiences. The main purpose was to gain insight into student perspectives, but they also interviewed seven university administrators and instructors centrally involved in the admission and instruction of ELL students; an admissions officer in charge of ESL students' admission to the university; the director of first-year writing programs; the director of writing for the College of Arts and Sciences; an academic advisor of the Educational Opportunity Program; the past directors of the Campus ESL Programs; and the testing coordinator for the ESL Programs. Important documents such as curriculum guides for ESL classes, ESL enrollment numbers, policy guidelines on English requirement, and admissions application forms were gathered and analyzed.<sup>38</sup>

There were three major areas students identified experiencing trouble within the linguistic challenge; reading and understanding content of required readings and specialized vocabulary within the readings; writing as a whole was challenging; many participants identified that they needed extra time to complete academic tasks. The level of difficulty in reading was oftentimes dependent upon a students' prior knowledge of the subject matter making it more difficult to understand if a student was unfamiliar with the topic. Operating at a slower speed during timed tests was highly detrimental to students. However, the students felt that the challenges they could manage on their own were not as much of a strain as the problems they believed were beyond their control.<sup>39</sup>

These students also encountered a number of structural constraints that were distinct to these ESL students. The first was in the eligibility requirements in applying to the university, which specifies that students need at least three years of high school English. This is also a standard requirement at most public and private post-secondary institutions within the United

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid pg.313

<sup>38</sup> Ibid pg.315-316

<sup>39</sup> Ibid pg.316-317

States. This requirement can be incredibly detrimental to immigrant or refugee students who arrive in the United States at an older age, particularly in the middle of high school where they will be enrolled as ELL students and taking ELL courses. These students are left with few options in which they can either enroll in summer English college-preparatory classes, or they must enroll in and go through a community college before going on to a four-year university.<sup>40</sup>

For students who were accepted into the university they faced the challenge passing an English language requirement in order to graduate. The study revealed that many of the students found this to be unfair and stigmatizing because it was a requirement only for ESL students. Especially because being a native English speaker does not guarantee that one has college level academic literacy skills. In order for some students to pass this requirement they must enroll in and pay tuition for ESL courses, which they receive no academic credits for completing. These stipulations in turn left a number of students with an overwhelming sense of resentment.<sup>41</sup>

Another problem these students face is the stigma that is attached to being an ESL student. Although the ESL course is not explicitly labeled as being a remedial course, this is known by both the instructors and the students. For many immigrant students this identity is dissonant from what they were used to before immigrating to the United States. Thus even though the ESL program was meant to help develop ESL students to become more successful academically, it was perceived by students as a hindrance to their participation and legitimacy at the university.<sup>42</sup>

Financial struggles were the second largest factor creating difficulty for students to reach a four-year university. Many of these students came from middle-class backgrounds in their home countries, but experienced a financial downturn when their families moved to the United States because their parents did not speak English. Because of their upbringing and strong education in their homeland students were able to enroll at the university, however, few had the economic means to support their education at the institution. Two thirds of the students in the study who received some form of financial aid still struggled to financially to pay for their education.<sup>43</sup> These constraints can affect students' choices in majors and careers, especially if they saw the struggle their parents faced after immigrating to the U.S..

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid pg.318

<sup>41</sup> Ibid pg.319

<sup>42</sup> Ibid pg.319

<sup>43</sup> Ibid pg.320

Self-censorship is an area that leaves many ESL students feeling trapped and withholds from them taking advantage of potential opportunities and resources at their disposal. This experience is called “ESL Habitus” - the propensity for self-censorship because of one’s ESL status. Because of this many students self-eliminate themselves by not ever applying to four-year universities under the assumption that they will not be accepted. Even students who participated in this study had doubts about whether they had the ability to attend and compete a program at the university. Other students said that after being admitted their sense of intimidation still existed, and many of the participants reported they were afraid to speak up, or ask questions in their classes. However, this fear dissipated when the ESL students felt that there was no pressure to compare themselves with native English speakers.<sup>44</sup>

Students who transferred from community colleges to the university also felt a change in standards from being comfortable asking questions at the community college to feeling hesitant in the university environment. The process of cultural reproduction in Bourdieu’s theory requires students’ acquiescence, and here it is evident that ESL students are acquiescing to the culture of the university institution, which frames the lack of English proficiency as a deficit. Unlike the community colleges that accept students who have underdeveloped academic skill sets, which create an environment where it is acceptable to ask questions focusing on language content, structure, and/or function.<sup>45</sup>

The issue of self-censorship does not only put limits and constraints on ESL students in the academic realm, it affects their socialization patterns. Of the 33 students that Kanno and Varghese interviewed only 5 were actively involved with student organizations, while 17 identified as having no involvement with any organizations. Influential factors for this lack of socialization include commuting long distances from home, working a part-time job, and/or studying for many extra hours.<sup>46</sup> ESL students were also hesitant to take part in what they considered “main stream social networks.” This in turn causes ESL students to use co-ethnics for social backup and support. One participant expressed how important her co-ethnic friendships were:

It’s a lot easier for me to make friends with Chinese people somehow. ... And it’s a lot harder for me to make friends with American people because it’s just every time I talk, I

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid pg.321-322

<sup>45</sup> Ibid pg.322

<sup>46</sup> Ibid pg.323

worry about like, do they understand me or not, do they really want to talk to you. It's just that I don't know if people can understand my culture or not. It's a challenge to try and to talk to them.

These networks and associations of co-ethnic friends is an important resource of social capital, and it was through those networks that many of the study's participants learned which courses to take, where to find information regarding financial aid, and how to navigate the university. Kanno and Varghese's data reveals that students did not always rely on this by choice, but because they believed that access to social networks that required speaking English were inaccessible.<sup>47</sup>

Kanno and Varghese argue that these students who are members of the "elite" immigrant students who reach leading universities like the one in their study still experience hardships in gaining access to higher education because of their ESL status, and once they reach that realm of higher education they face a new set of challenges that very few native English speakers ever encounter. Furthermore, these challenges are based less upon the ESL students' lack of language skills, and more so on institutional, sociocultural, and material disadvantages.<sup>48</sup>

This argument is not to underestimate the linguistic challenges ESL students must overcome, but to highlight the other challenges that these students face that are outside of their control, and to understand that a more holistic approach is needed in addressing these issues. Although language proficiency may be the most prolific challenge to this student population it is not the only factor withholding their access to college. Students who are LEP (limited English Proficient) in the United States and of high school age generally means that they are also poorer, older, and more likely to be from a minority group than native speakers.<sup>49</sup>

The findings from Kanno and Varghese suggest that a shift is needed from focusing solely on language policy to a more comprehensive and complete set of educational policies that will also address their social, cultural, and linguistic capital, and the structural barriers that ELL students must confront. They suggest a number of potential solutions, including having an alternative to remedial-model ESL programs and to create a separate ESL track for freshmen composition courses; giving ESL students academic credit for ESL courses as recommended by TESOL and the Conference on College Composition; creating a strong effort for staff and faculty

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid pg.323

<sup>48</sup> Ibid pg.323

<sup>49</sup> Ibid pg.324

to believe the notion that every teacher is a language teacher; creating educational opportunity programs specifically targeted ESL populations; and developing better partnership between community colleges and four-year institutions.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid pg.325

## D. Conclusion

The content-based curriculum model provides ELL students with contact to the linguistic culture as Kanno and Varghese described, which will allow students to better succeed in an academic setting. It also allows teachers to align their curriculum goals with the TESOL, TOEFL, and other standardized tests. Teachers can then focus on what skills their students need to further develop in order to score higher marks on such tests. The CBI model provides instructors with a great deal of flexibility in how they decide to structure the curriculum. The CBI curriculum can also be aligned with opportunities outside the classroom where students are exposed to other forms of *capital*.

Kanno and Varghese bring up an essential point; that a more holistic approach is needed in supporting non-native ELL students. Their work with students at the college freshmen level only reiterates the fact that there is a real need to provide students with greater support at an earlier age, especially those who have limited access to potential resources. This concern about the future development of ELL students provides the University of Massachusetts Boston the opportunity to strengthen its connections with the community and to deepen the impact of its Urban Mission statement. By creating a program that caters specifically to ELL students UMB would be closing the gap that programs such Urban Scholars, Upward Bound, Admissions Guaranteed, and Health Career Opportunities may have difficulty in supporting.<sup>51</sup>

By expanding the partnership that UMB already has with Boston Public Schools it creates a number of opportunities both for students and for the University. First, it allows ELL students to gain access to vital *social capital* (networks and connections) at the University level and provides them with a direct connection to the college experience. The creation of such a program would also fulfill the space of *symbiotic capital* (status and legitimacy) because the program itself would be acknowledging ELL students as a group, and thus the give them a platform to express themselves. As with the other pre-collegiate programs there is a space for UMB to develop new grants and bring new funds to University that might not have existed before through such a program, and provide the students enrolled with a potential stipend, or as Kanno and Varghese label it, as *economic capital*.

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<sup>51</sup> See Appendix C for a potential list of guidelines other pre-collegiate programs use when recruiting students for enrollment. This could be a starting point, but may also be difficult for students when it comes to writing a personal essay.

UMass Boston's location in the city of Boston can be used as a learning tool in the curriculum, and provide the students with more social networking and connection making while allowing them to explore and become more familiar with the *cultural capital* that already exists, while learning about a city that has deep and rich history.<sup>52</sup> In my work with the Health Careers Opportunity Program, field trips and guest speakers allowed the enrolled high school and middle school students to get hands on experience, and learn about different careers in the medical field. One particular event I remember was a trip to the Mass Bay Community College forensic lab where the students were able to meet the department chair and learn about the different aspects that their work entails. Had they not been enrolled in the program they would have had direct access to any of this information.

The city of Boston provides a number of educational opportunities for students to learn. Curriculum lessons could focus on a number of different topics that are aligned to meet TESOL standards, as well as state and federal guidelines, and then visit and explore these places to continue learning. Students could learn about the rich cultural history of Chinatown; the diverse works, styles, and collections of art in Boston's museums; or the cutting edge of medicine and Boston's historic Longwood Medical area to start. By learning about these locations through the CBI model students in the program could then go and visit these places. Teachers could put together a curriculum where students read and learn about these locations, and then through the University take field trips, or have guest speakers come and provide more information. This holistic approach provides students access to a greater forms of the different types of capital addressed in Kanno and Varghese's work outside the classroom, while the CBI model keeps students learning inside the classroom.

As for next steps of my research I would like to continue to examine other areas in regards to developing a potential program such as; what qualifications are needed for teachers/staff who would be working with these students; what kinds of themes might be emphasized. Another step could be to begin using the CBI model, and see the affects it has on students. It would be an excellent opportunity to conduct and record the results for record keeping, and for others to refer to later on. Another important step in this process is for me to begin to understand how a program like this might actually set up and put into action. I have

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<sup>52</sup> See Appendix D for basic outline of what a potential curriculum calendar might look like for students enrolled in such a program.

already begun to think about potential people at the University with whom I could speak to about this. However, I have two major concerns, the first being my own constraints of my research thus far, and second, being able to schedule time with these individuals to discuss the next steps in the process.

One other major piece to discuss with my sources at the University is if such a program were started how the program be promoted to students. If there was the opportunity to receive a grant to develop such a program students could receive a stipend, which could be used as a possible hook or catch to get students interested. Other potential avenues of interest for students could be the potential of having access to resources at the University level including, but not limited to faculty, staff, and facilities. Programs already in existence at the University already have a strong “word of mouth” from students currently enrolled in those programs. On the opposite side of the spectrum the University could have interest developed through the potential for new students and stronger ties to the community.

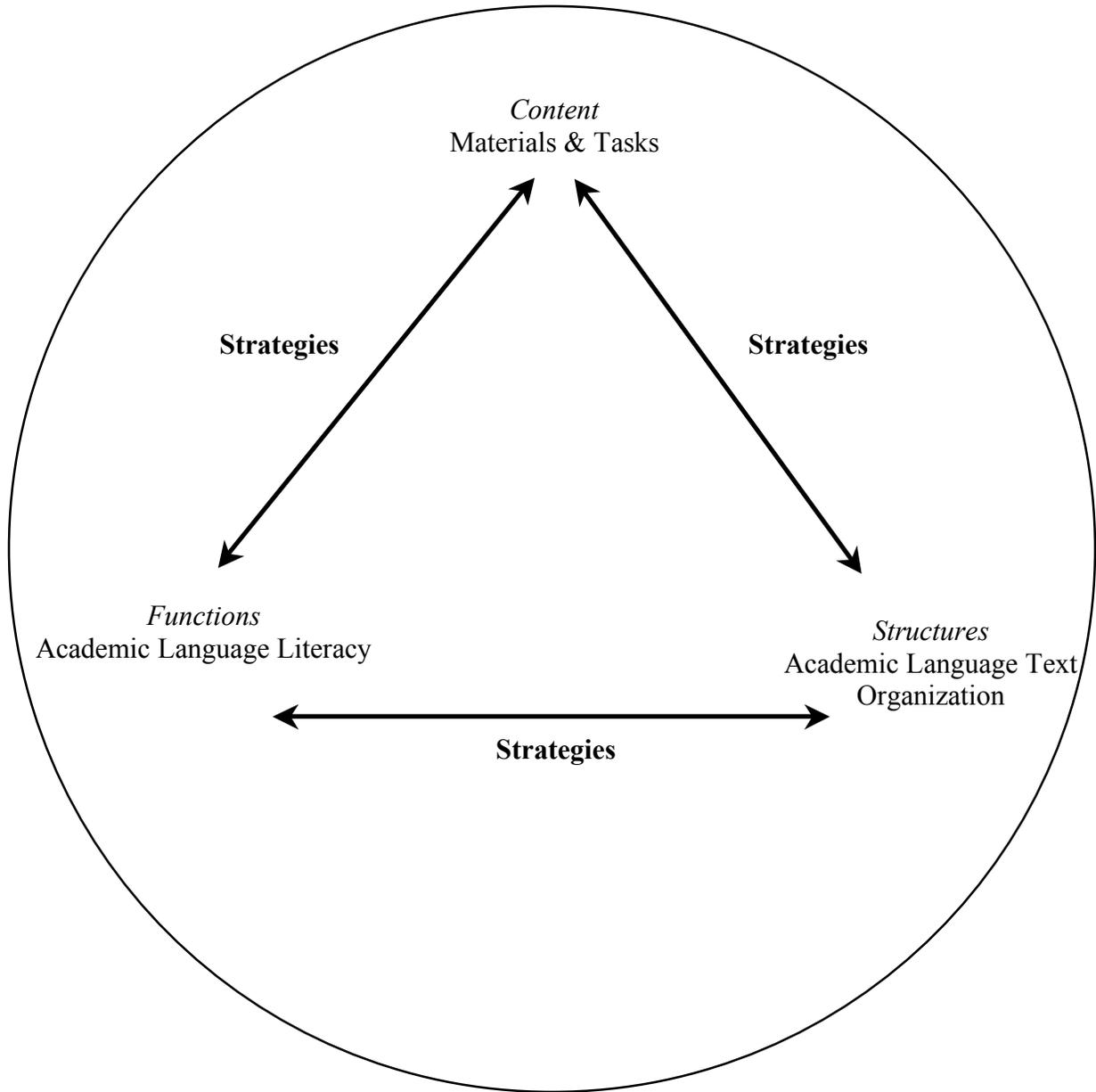
## Appendix A. Survey Questionnaire for High School Students

Here are the questions that students answered in the questionnaire I handed out to gather data for my class with Dr. Kiang:

1. Where were you born? If you were born outside of the United States when did you emigrate to the U.S.?
- 2.
3. Do you have to translate for your parents/family?
- 4.
5. Are you involved in after school programs/activities? If yes, what are they? If no, why not?
- 6.
7. Which family member/friend do you feel was or have been most involved with your education (K-12)? How are they connected to you?
- 8.
9. What barriers/challenges did your parents experience in being involved directly with K-12 school experience?
- 10.
11. Reflecting on your time spent at South Boston Education Complex (SBEC), what are some of the resources or programs you found most helpful?
12. Reflecting on your experience at SBEC, what aspects of your school life could have been better?
- 13.
14. Reflecting on your education at South Boston please share a meaningful learning experience.
- 15.
16. Reflecting on your experience at SBEC, what aspects of your school life could have been better?
- 17.
18. Reflecting on your experience with AGP, how have you benefited from being enrolled in the program?
- 19.
20. Reflecting on your experience with AGP, in what ways would you like to see it improve?
- 21.
22. What has the college application process been like for you?
23. Where will you be attending college/university? What's your major of interest? If you are not going on to post-secondary studies, why not and what are your plans?

Appendix B. Connections Content-Based Instruction Model

# Content Theme



## **Appendix C. Potential Application Process Guidelines for Students**

The application process for students interested in joining the program would be structured and stream lined in accordance with the other pre-collegiate programs that already exist at UMass Boston. Another reason for this structure is that if adding another program to the pre-collegiate department is not a viable option, another possibility could be to incorporate an ELL component into one of the programs that is already in existence. This application process would be made up of six essential components. This rigorous and in-depth application process is to ensure that students who apply are really motivated and want to be a part of the program. The final decision of whether a student would be enrolled into the program would ultimately be decided by the program staff.

- 1) Students must be enrolled at one of the partner high schools within BPS that are served under the Urban Mission Statement of UMass Boston. <sup>□</sup> The partner high schools served are Jeremiah E. Burke, Dorchester Academy, Tech Boston Academy, and Excel High with recruitment open to students from ninth through twelve grade. It should be noted that students who are accepted into the program will be expected to keep their grades above a B average (3.0). However, the application process is not weighted on a solely on a student's GPA.
- 2) Students must also be nominated by a teacher, counselor, principal, alumni, a community member, or anyone who knows the student. Students can also nominate themselves if they choose to do so.
- 3) Nominated students would then be invited to an information session where they learn more about the program, have the opportunity to meet program staff, ask questions, and receive information pamphlets, contact information, and an application form(s). Information sessions would be done on site at the school by a member of the program (i.e. counselor, director, etc).

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<sup>□</sup>The mission of the Department of Pre-Collegiate and Educational Support Programs is to provide low-income and first generation students, students with disabilities and students who are underrepresented in graduate education with the skills, knowledge, and motivation to successfully pursue post-secondary and post-baccalaureate education. This mission is achieved through programs that are designed to address a range of learning needs and serve pre-collegiate students and UMass Boston undergraduates.

- 4) Following the information session students must complete an application, which includes writing an essay and two letters of recommendation. Students should focus on the content of their essay. This program is to help develop, grammar, structure and content writing so the staff is aware of the difficulties non-native English speaking students face when writing. The other major component of the application requires the student to obtain letters of recommendation, one of which must be from a teacher. It might also help if the student has one of their persons of recommendation proofread their essay.
- 5) The program staff will schedule an interview to meet with the student to discuss his or her application. It's also a chance for the student to showcase their desire to be in the program, leadership potential, work ethic, and any other talents, or items of importance the student wants to share.
- 6) This program would be in place to provide students with opportunities from the partner schools, low-income families and/or first-generation college students. Students will need to obtain a copy of their transcripts, while parents will need a grade release form and income verification documentation. This information is solely used to determine qualifications and is not shared with anyone outside of the program staff.

A stipend award similar to the Urban Scholars program would also be beneficial to these students in offsetting their transportation costs to and from the University. But, for students to receive this award they must meet basic guidelines; attend and participate in classes and activities, complete all homework assignments, and receive tutoring if their GPA falls below a B average (3.0).<sup>53</sup>

#### **Appendix D. Curriculum Outline Example**

Below is a potential outline of how the after school program might be organized with students meeting twice a week for CBI instruction and tutoring. Then towards the end of the curriculum unit the students might take a field trip to help supplement the CBI learning.

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<sup>53</sup> The guidelines listed here have been based upon the basic guidelines in accordance with the Urban Scholars Program: [http://www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/support\\_programs/urban\\_scholars/admissions/](http://www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/support_programs/urban_scholars/admissions/) and Health Careers Opportunity Program: [http://www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/support\\_programs/health\\_careers\\_opportunity\\_program/pre\\_collegiate\\_scholars/](http://www.umb.edu/academics/vpass/support_programs/health_careers_opportunity_program/pre_collegiate_scholars/)

Sun	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat
		Class 3-5pm Lesson Unit on Art		Class 3-5pm Lesson Unit on Art		
		Class 3-5pm Lesson Unit on Art		Class 3-5pm Lesson Unit on Art	Field Trip: Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA)	
		Class 3-5pm Lesson Unit on Art		Class 3-5pm Lesson Unit on Art		
		Class 3-5pm Lesson Unit on Art		Class 3-5pm Lesson Unit on Art	Field Trip: Museum of Fine Arts (MFA)	

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**Getting the Most Out of A Mentor: Developing an Action Research Plan for Reflective Practice on a Graduate Student Mentee-Mentor Relationship**

**Background / Inquiry**

My interest for this project first emerged from an off-the-cuff comment made by Peter Taylor in regards to reflecting on the mentors that I have had throughout my life during one of the first class sessions this semester (Spring 2012) in my Critical and Creative Thinking 693 course; Action Research for Educational, Professional, and Personal Change. This comment was really intriguing to me because Peter Taylor said that I could focus my action research on a more micro aspect, while still applying that to a life long goal. He said something about looking at the mentors in my life and how that could be applied to my work with ESL (English as a Second Language) students. I remember going home that evening and as I lied in bed trying to fall asleep I couldn't stop thinking about different people I had come into contact with through out my life that had left a positive impact on me.

I thought about people I considered to be good mentors who stuck out in my mind. I tried to see if there was some sort of progression in my decision as to why I chose the people I did, and if I was even able to evaluate these choices. I started to feel overwhelmed because of all the memories flooding my inner thoughts. Memories of people and interactions that had left me at great highs and lows, but nonetheless, had provided me with personal insight and change.

As I thought more and more about the different people I have encountered in my life. I began to really think about the situation that I wanted to clarify, change, and improve upon. This lead me to focus on the current weekly meetings I have with Andrea Dawes, the director of the Admissions Guaranteed Program (AGP), my supervisor and mentor. I decided that I wanted to get more out the interactions and relationship. I thought that by developing a strategy for this through action research I might also be able to apply it to other situations later on or outside of this specific relationship because I know that sometimes I tend to rush through things to stay on track.

As for the weekly meetings my normal routine is that we have a face-to-face meeting at least once a week to discuss my professional work in regards to the AGP program, but this

dialogue time tends to transition to a number of other topics related to graduate coursework, other aspects of my life outside of the classroom, which can be very personal. After these weekly meetings I noticed that I found my self struggling to recall the highlights, and points of importance. I felt that my normal reaction was to send a follow-up email or phone call within twenty-four to forty-eight hours because I had not retained everything from our encounter. Although there was nothing wrong per se I felt that I was missing out getting the most out of the relationship, dialogue, and interactions between Andrea and myself. The act of having to follow up with an email gave me the thought and feeling that I was not working at my full potential, or making the most of my time.

This CCT course provided me with an opportunity to take a new approach to how I might normally handle such a research project. The action research approach brought my own experience to the forefront of investigation, which was something I had not been taught in my formal education as high school or undergraduate student. Initially, I felt uncomfortable about this because of my unfamiliarity with the format, and the complexity of reflection and investigation into one's self. Yet, having to focus on myself was also one of the driving reasons behind my desire to engage in this project. What follows uses the format of ....

### **Reflection & Dialogue**

In trying to evaluate my current situation I began to investigate my inner self through a solitary dialogue between my past self and my future self to see if it would shed some light on where to focus my action based on Schmuck's description in action research for change.<sup>54</sup> I began listening to what my past self had to say. I noticed I felt frustrated about my current situation with my supervisor, and mentor. As I thought about the interactions and dialogue at our weekly meetings I couldn't help but think that I wasn't getting everything I could out of this mentor-mentee relationship. The next step in this dialogue was to listen to the response of my future self. The dialogue continued and my future self began to ask questions and investigate into finding potential avenues of change.

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<sup>54</sup> Schmuck, R. A. (1997). *Practical action research for change*. pg. 7.

*Future Self:* I have gained more from the mentor relationship I have now with my mentor because I created a space for reflection. I defined space by both a physical space and a time frame.

Listening to what my future self had to say I chose two spaces that I could use for reflection. The first being my work space at home because I know that it is clean, quiet, and I am familiar with the location of materials and supplies. The second space I chose is an office near around the corner from my mentor's office. I know that space is also quiet and available during the afternoons after our weekly meetings. It is clean, quiet, and I am also familiar with the layout and organization there, which will help to minimize distractions. I chose to put aside at least forty-five minutes for reflection, and based on what happens the length of time can be adjusted for future sessions. In my current situation I have an open and free schedule after my weekly meeting making sure I have enough time is not a major issue, but I felt setting a minimum was a good way have some type of baseline. However, defining a space for reflection only gets me so far. After my initial inquiry, reflection, and dialogue I continued into deeper reflection, and evaluation. I found myself facing the issue that I needed to bring something to the reflection, or structure it in some way so that I had some kind of plan and/or focus.

*Future Self:* I get more out of my reflection time by coming prepared. That means that I also have to be prepared when I engage/interact with my mentor. Some ways I prepare for these interactions, and carry the important aspects over into my reflection is through the use of being prepared to listen and take notes.

### **Building Constituency**

My past self began to feel as though this reflection and dialogue session was a good beginning into moving forward to begin brainstorming and creating and action plan. I had found a space and time to reflect, but now the challenge was that I needed to figure out what to bring to that space. I noticed a few things taking shape at this point in time. First, I felt as though my past and future self were beginning to fall into alignment with one another. Second, I noticed my frustration becoming a form of motivation as began to think about the proposing and planning of

the actions I wanted to take moving forward. This was a good beginning to building a constituency base, which consisted of myself

Yet, through a dialogue with Jeremy a new form of constituency became clear to me. Our conversation helped me to see the important relationship that existed between myself and my peers, particularly outside the classroom. Besides working for a pre-collegiate program at UMass Boston I am also very involved in nightlife and event planning at local bar. It is through the events and activities I co-organize that I have access to an entirely new community of people that I engage with. Many of the acquaintances and friendships that have emerged from this work have now become an important support system for me during my graduate studies. Many of the people who I have come to know through my event planning are aware of my graduate studies so when I encounter them at these events they engage me in a dialogue inquiring about my studies and progress as a graduate student. I realized how important these people are to me in maintaining my focus in school.

There was also my classmates from both CCT 693 and 694, and my capstone reading group, which consisted of four people including myself. This small group was a great place to present and give feedback to each other. It was also great to have support from these people who were going through the same process as myself. I think this format allowed all of us to work together and help each other better understand what was required in assignments that were due each week.

### **Proposing & Planning**

I have divided the the proposing and planning into two parts; the first part is to develop a plan to be better prepared for meeting with my mentor, and the second part is to be prepared and engaged in the reflection.

#### **Part 1 Preparing for the Meeting:**

- Bring a pen and notebook to weekly meeting to write down important information / ideas / questions / tasks etc...
- Come to the weekly meeting with an open mind and the intent to actively listen and ask questions.

## **Part 2 Reflection:**

- Ensure that the reflection space is clean and quiet before starting the reflection.
- Take a moment to relax and get my mind clear and ready to focus.
- Review and organize notes.
- Write down any questions that might arise to be clarified later on during a follow up

### **Reflection, Dialogue, & Evaluation**

This next reflection and dialogue process was incredibly valuable because I received some excellent feedback from my classmates during my work-in-progress presentation. One suggestion was that I could audio record the meetings and then review the recording during my reflection time. By doing this I realized I could avoid any misunderstandings, miscommunications had I only been taking notes. I would also have a solid record to go back and review versus having to call upon my recollection of it. In an evaluation of the two methods I think that the recording format could save me a great deal of trouble shooting in the long run in comparison to note taking. From this point I returned to the dialogue with my future self.

*Future Self:* Through reflection on the recordings of my weekly meetings and some further background and inquiry as to how I define the values that a mentor holds I was able to create and use a guide sheet during my reflection time.

### **Background & Inquiry**

The next step in my action research was to define the mentor relationship and create a reflection guide sheet so that I was able to use the reflection time wisely. So I began to investigate how I might define what the word mentor means. But, what I found was that a lot of people had very different ideas about what that word means. A great deal of the research that exists on mentoring has come from the analyses of interviews with people who believe they have been mentors or, mentees. They have defined their mentors as mothers, fathers, gurus, rabbis, guides, or teachers to name a few. All of the labels given elicit a special and specific meaning for both interviewer and the interviewee. However, these meanings are subjectively based, and the problem that arises is that one individual's definition might be accepted by some groups of

people, but not others. Hence, a commonly agreed definition of mentor has not been clearly established.<sup>55</sup>

As I continued to look at the research that was out there another problem came into view, which is based on the fact that different of research in defining mentoring have different goals and methods as to how they define the mentor-mentee relationship. The mentoring relationship between two people in the field of business in comparison to education is quite different. The business mentor-protégé relationship tends to have one person who oversees the career and development of another person, usually a junior. They provide the protégé with details, “insider information” and/or tips about business protocol, provide psychological support, protection, and promote or sponsor them. The root of the relationship thrives on the fact that both the participants expect their careers to be positively affected.<sup>56</sup>

The realm of education has a much different approach to defining a mentor in comparison. Instead of contributing to the career advancement or development of a protégé, the academic mentor apprentices the student to foster and develop the skills, habits, and mindset needed to be successful in a totally different environment. In this relationship both the mentor and mentee share a comradeship that transcends the normal teacher-student relationship. This relationship is often defined by three activities; 1) academic mentors educate their mentee in a particular subject or skill; 2) the mentor acts as a role model for ethics, values, and protocols in a given profession or discipline; 3) and finally academic mentors provide psychological support, acknowledging rigors of study, and success, while at the same time building self-esteem and confidence. It is a relationship that goes beyond simply advising.<sup>57</sup>

After trying to figure out what the word mentor meant to me I came to this conclusion drawing upon these five factors that I think best described what I was looking for in my mentoring relationship. The relationship has three broad components; 1) emotional and psychological support; 2) direct assistance w/ professional development; 3) role modeling. The relationship is reciprocal, which means that both myself and my mentor benefit from the relationship. And, the relationship is personal, but not necessarily intimate. It does involve an exchange of information beyond what is available to in public records. Finally, in relation to the

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<sup>55</sup> Kartje, J. V. (1996). O mentor! my mentor! *Peabody Journal of Education*, 71(1), 114-25. pg 115.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. pg. 117.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. pg. 118.

mentee, the mentor is able to provide experience, influence, and show achievement within a particular organization or environment.<sup>58</sup>

### **Proposing & Planning**

Once I had become clear on how I defined the qualities of the mentoring relationship I was able to further develop my reflection time by creating and refining a reflection guide sheet. After creating a first draft I received some valuable feedback from Peter Taylor to restructure the questions on my guide sheet in the ORID framework.<sup>59</sup> By rephrasing the questions I was able to keep away from answers that would have a simple yes or no answer. I tried to organize the question format to follow the dialogues that took place at my weekly meeting. The only exception was the very first question, which was to evaluate the quality of the recording to ensure that it was clear. This way I would hopefully be able to recreate or mimic my routine each week and end up with a clear recording for reflection. The next few questions were aimed at getting clear on what tasks I needed to complete for my professional work. The reverse side or second page of questions examines the mentoring relationship, and requires me to reflect on whether or not my mentor is providing me with the qualities I found important.<sup>60</sup>

### **Next Steps**

In designing this project I think have a good starting to point to begin my reflection process. From here I have been thinking about how I could address issues in the reflection process. For example, if my mentoring relationship is not providing me with the support I feel that I need then how might I go about trouble shooting that issue. I have not come up with a solution for this, but it definitely something I would like to investigate. Another part of the action research for me to think about and monitor is the reflection process. Once I have a number of recordings and reflection guides completed I can will then be able to examine them and determine if they need to be adjusted. I have thought about presenting my work to my mentor, and seeing what kind of input she could provide so that I could further fine tune my reflection process. In thinking about this I wonder if I might instead start designing a symbiotic reflection

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. pg. 120.

<sup>59</sup> Stanfield, B. (Ed.) (1997). *The Art of Focused Conversation*. Toronto: Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs.

<sup>60</sup> Appendix A shows the weekly reflection guide that I created. I have answered the questions based on the meeting I had with my director on May 3, 2012.

practice between both the mentor and mentee. The next steps I could take in regards to this project are very open depending on the direction I choose to move in, which I find to be very exciting, but at the same time it could become overwhelming if I start changing or re-evaluating pieces of the project.

Another form of exploration could be through the students I work with. By going through my reflection guide, the recordings, and continuing to work with my mentor I could begin to examine ways in which I could incorporate what I learn about this mentoring relationship into the work I do with pre-collegiate students. I would then be reversing my role and become the mentor. I could then take the reflection sheet I have created myself and potentially have my students complete it to see if there ways in which I could improve my mentoring skills. I like the idea of this as a next step because it seems to be more of a full circle action in my own development.

## **Appendix A: Weekly Reflection Guide Sheet**

**Date 05/03/2012**

### **1. Was the recording of today's meeting clear? Y / N What were the recording conditions like?**

-The recording is clear. I placed my iphone on the corner of the desk about half way between my mentor and I. This seems to be a good set up, and even with the door to the office open there was little to no foot traffic going by so there were no disturbances.

### **2. What upcoming tasks need to be completed for AGP (include due date)?**

- I need to follow up with Ruthie at Excel to schedule a freshmen class visit at the end of May. **ASAP**  
- I need to follow up with Vicki at BGA about scheduling a time to recruit freshmen **ASAP**  
- Meet with Veena from ACCESS and find out if she has any more college app info I'm missing for AGP seniors. **5/09 or 5/10**

### **3. Will any of these tasks require me to ask for assistance, if so in what way?**

- I have had some difficulty in getting an answer from Vicki because she is waiting to hear back from the 9th grade teachers about having me give presentations. It might be helpful to have Andrea send a follow up email.

### **4. What topics or questions do I have that need clarification?**

- There were no topics that I felt needed clarification from this week's meeting.

**5. What I did not discuss in the meeting that I feel like I need to follow up on?**

- I would like to follow up with Andrea about some of the suggestions she gave me earlier in the semester about resources for me to use in developing the curriculum for the summer course I am teaching. I need to get clear about resources that can help me guide the high school seniors I am working with in writing a college application essay.

**6. What parts of today's meeting are most important? Which items do I need address first, and how much time will I need to complete them?**

- The student visit and recruiting are the major items. Andrea, is in charge of setting the visit up, I only need to give Ruthie a reminder to follow up with Andrea.
- Meeting with Veena is simple I will see her at the school on wed & thurs
- Following up with Vicki could be difficult because her response is based off the answer of other people so it is somewhat out of her control.

**7. Looking back at the previous week's reflection guide sheet is there anything that still needs clarification or follow up?**

- There were no items from last week that needed further clarification.

## Mentor Relationship Reflection

### **1. How am I receiving emotional and psychological support from my mentor?**

- Today I expressed the stress of having to complete all my work for CCT693 as well as completing my capstone project. Andrea responded by saying that I have been thinking about my capstone for the past year and she knows I will get everything done. She was very encouraging and positive in regards to my potential of completing everything so I am able to graduate on time.

### **2. How is my mentor directly providing me with assistance in my career / professional development?**

- Andrea and I were began a dialogue to address how we could potentially expand the number of students to recruit at BGA. One potential action we discussed might be to throw a pizza party for the students who return their applications before or on the designated deadline. This also be a form of positive reinforcement for the students. And, it would give us some additional time during the pizza party to talk to those students about continuing their education after high school.

### **3. How is my mentor acting as a role model?**

- Andrea always makes time for me in just about any way she can, whether its in replying to an email, a phone call, or stopping by her office unannounced she always has a moment to for me. This also applies to the first question above. But, I think Andrea is a great role model who leads by example not only by her actions in regards to me, but with everything she does

### **4. In what ways could my mentor provide me with better support?**

-I don't have any suggestions at the moment