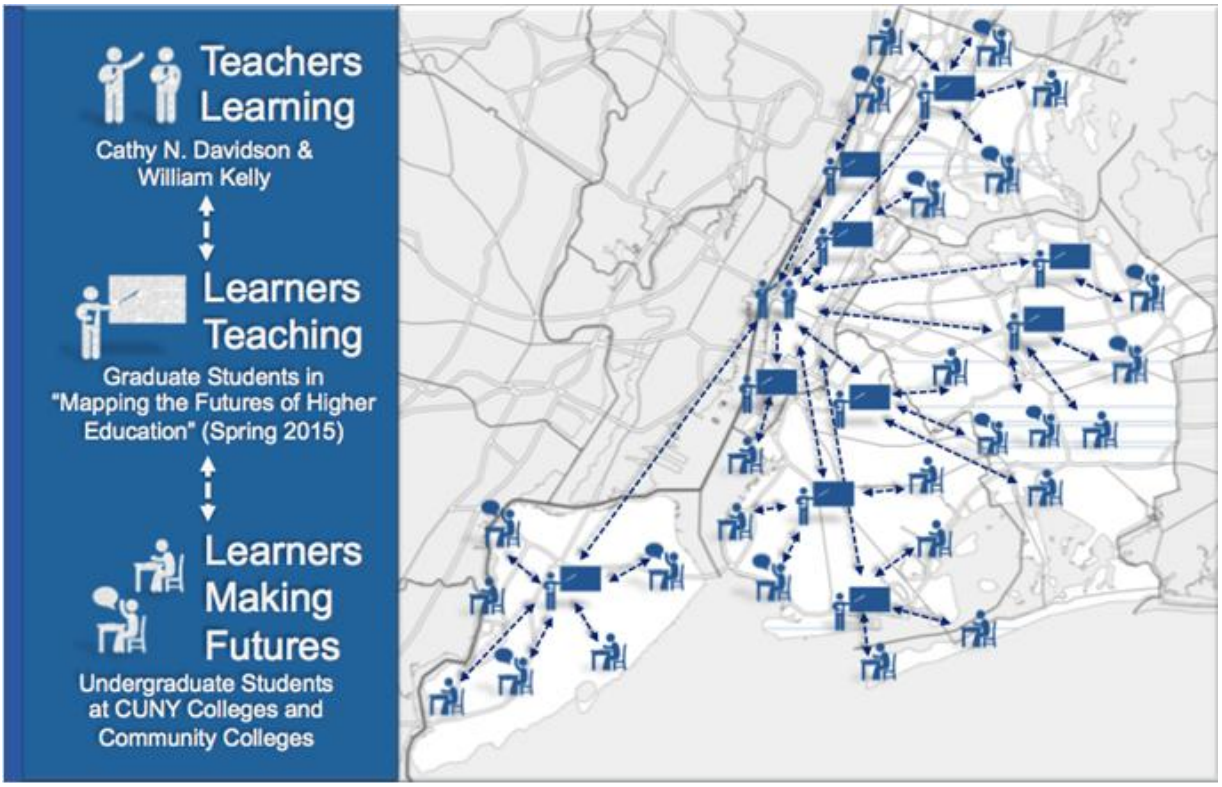
The Futures Initiative

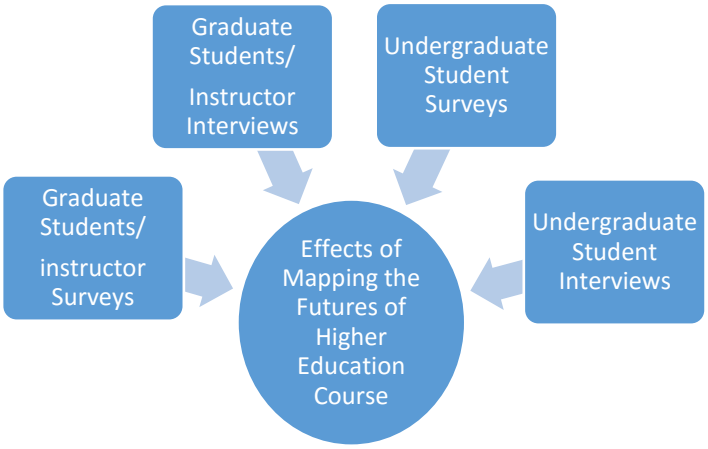
Summary Report: A Mixed-Methods Study on the Course "Mapping Futures of Higher Education" at CUNY

Emerging from The Futures Initiative, the Mapping Futures of Higher Education class provided an innovative teaching framework for the exploration and implementation of new pedagogies at the Graduate Center and across many of the two-year and four-year colleges at the City University of New York. It was a catalyst for promoting democracy in education and for transforming the higher education experience. The Futures Initiative's inaugural course offering during the spring of 2015 semester, effectively created an engaged community of faculty, graduate students/instructors, mentors, and students who are prepared to inject creativity and choice into the classroom.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of the implementation of a variety of teaching practices in the course, Mapping Futures of Higher Education (MFHE). Foremost, the initiative emphasized student-centered pedagogies and digital innovation and its practical application within diverse undergraduate classrooms at CUNY. This study investigated graduate student/instructors' experiences participating in a peer-led course at the Graduate Center as well as their experience implementing the pedagogies they learned with their undergraduate students. The research looked, in particular, to see if living the pedagogy while implementing it resulted in transformational learning experiences for both students and graduate students/instructors.



Data Collection



Data Pool	
Undergraduate students	365
Graduate student/ instructors	11
CUNY campuses	10

Data Collection	
Student surveys	104
Instructor surveys	10
Student interviews	4
Instructor interviews	9

This study uses a mixed-methods design. Survey data was collected from the graduate students enrolled in the "Mapping the Futures of Higher Education" course and from the undergraduates for whom they were course instructors. Participants were then asked if they would like to participate in a follow-up interview to talk about their experiences in the respective courses for which they were enrolled. This project involved 365 undergraduate students and eleven graduate student/instructors across ten CUNY colleges in the spring of 2015. Approximately 104 of the undergraduates participated in the surveys. The ten graduate student/instructors were surveyed as well. Following the surveys, nine graduate student/instructors and four undergraduate students participated in interviews.

The Mapping Futures of Higher Education Graduate Student Experience

> ***"I expected to go on an adventure in this course, and I was accurate in that expectation! I think what I didn't expect was to be so challenged and humbled intellectually and personally. I didn't expect to have my perspectives so challenged and in such a caring, compassionate and respectful way. In a sense, we all embodied "caring instruction" in this course and helped one another to do the same."***

> ***"Something is happening in this room, and it is really thrilling. I participated in it, but the change is really happening because of those students talking to each other. I would like to think that the pedagogies we did this semester helped."***

Students' expectations of the course ranged from a desire to broaden their pedagogical expertise to wanting to learn more about CUNY's unique role in higher education and how to work with students who come from underserved demographic populations and aspire to

economic and social mobility. All of these things were explored in the MFHE class. During the first class, students were empowered to collectively design their own course syllabus as a group brainstorming activity. This empowerment in the graduate students produced such a wide range of feelings, from fear to excitement, due to the fact that their professors Cathy Davidson and Bill Kelly were generously willing to let go of some of their "professorial authority." Graduate student/instructors reflected on how participating in a course as co-learners, along with their Graduate Center professors, cultivated an open and creative space for the work they would do throughout the semester.

> ***"I loved the student-centered format of the [MFHE] course and the way that we started the course with the professors leaving the room and the students thinking about the big themes we wanted to cover and then leading the next sessions [ourselves]. I thought that was a really successful format and that we were all very engaged."***

In creating their own syllabus, the MFHE graduate students/instructors broke the course down into four peer-led lessons that each lasted two class sessions: formative and summative assessment; student-centered pedagogy; life barriers and ethics; and space, movement and classroom dynamics. These lessons were intertwined with a combination of guest speakers and field trips. This allowed for a wide range of perspectives and teaching strategies to be explored in the course.

The integration of innovative teaching techniques and structures led to a unique course experience, but did graduate students find it to be effective in deepening their thinking and understanding of the topics in the course? The data revealed that on average, the graduate student/instructors rated the course in the effective to very effective range (4.11 out 5).

Although most of the graduate student/instructors in the course felt they learned much of what they had expected in the course, they offered suggestions to make the experience even more effective. Several stated they were not certain about their expectations for the course at the outset. Some of the graduate students/instructors wished to dig more deeply into pedagogical history, learning theories, and pedagogical and technological innovations. Almost all of the instructors commented in some way that they were excited to learn about new teaching techniques from their peers, especially across disciplines and campuses. They learned much from hearing about one another's experiences working with the CUNY population. One graduate student described the Futures Initiative as a "movement." They understood the value of this new community of like-minded teachers, leaders, and mentors in which they were now a part.

COURSE STRUCTURE

> ***"I like the collaborative effort…[t]he part of getting into groups and working on pedagogical approaches and coming back to teach the class and then having the class go out and incorporate it into our own classes and come back and give feedback. That was genius to be honest. I think that was something that was really good, not just for new adjuncts but for everyone."***

The graduate student/instructors commented most frequently on the sense of community and collaboration they felt throughout the course. They enjoyed working with other graduate students across disciplines. As one participant explained, "I really liked that it was very diverse. People from the different disciplines shared their experiences. I get a little insight into the disciplines and also just their approach to teaching. Everyone had something to share."

Digital tools also played a role in the sense of community. Many graduate student/instructors commented that the blog added to the sense of community by giving quieter students a comfortable place to share their thoughts and continue conversations outside of class time. A few graduate student/instructors shared that the live streaming activity actually disrupted the sense of community. Some believed this could have been a function of timing, as the live streaming was done early in the semester. Additionally, there were graduate student/instructors who were uncomfortable sharing or presenting in class during this session since it was open to the public and being broadcast online.

A distinct difference between the participant groups of graduate student/instructors and the undergraduate students is that the graduate students "self-selected" to be a part of the innovative and often experimental nature of the course. Undergraduates, on the other hand, were not aware that they were part of this type of course until after the semester began; however, the research showed that they generally understood and valued their instructors' use of new pedagogical methods and were open to experimentation. "Interesting" and "fun" were words undergraduates frequently used in surveys to describe their learning experiences. In an interview, an undergraduate student expressed his enthusiasm for the teaching methods his instructor had implemented. He appreciated the theoretical explanation the instructor provided about the methods she applied. One undergraduate explained, "This was the first course I participated in, that actually made it a priority to discover/create more beneficial learning methods for students, rather than sticking to the usual syllabus."

Instructors' Perception of Students' Affect Levels for Instructional Tools/Methods

	Anxiety	Motivation
Student centered pedagogy	2.56	3.76
Mapping activities	3.56	2.76
Peer-led instruction	3.75	3.75
Cbox Web Platform	3.33	2.78

**Likert scale ranged from 1-5 with 1 being "very low," 3 being "neutral," and 5 being "very high."*

The various assignments, techniques, and structures were new to many of the undergraduate students. The research investigated their impact on anxiety and motivation for the undergraduate students from the graduate student/instructor's perspective. (Undergraduates where asked about anxiety and motivation related to the specific student centered pedagogies implemented in their course. This data is integrated in the following sections). According to the data, the graduate student/instructors felt that the student-centered pedagogy was the most successful aspect implemented in terms of decreasing undergraduate student anxiety and increasing motivation while the mapping activities increased anxiety while decreasing motivation. Other aspects had mixed reviews.

Formative Assessment and Feedback

> ***"I realized that my job was not to stand there and lecture but to actually find ways to get them to engage with each other and the material. And so, the Mapping the Futures course really helped facilitate that process and especially talking about assessment. Doing little surveys about what they needed and what they liked and what they didn't like and also recognizing that the things they may not like are the very things that were beneficial to them- like group work. It's not always fun, but you need to know how to do it."***

Traditionally, assessment in a college course consists of a midterm and final paper or exam. Not only are these summative assessments high-stakes for students, but they do not come early and often enough for a professor to use this information to guide instruction. Formative assessment is on-going—it allows both the student and the instructor to see progress and areas of concern.

Both graduate and undergraduate students commented in surveys that the use of formative assessments were helpful in order to make improvements to the courses along the way. The graduate students had an opportunity to provide formative assessment in an early course evaluation (as part of the two-week topic on assessment), a mid-course evaluation and an end course evaluation. The MFHE professors, Davidson and Kelly, were able to make adjustments in their approaches to ensure the graduate students were learning and thriving in the course.

Feedback from the professors was provided after peer-led lessons in a class-shared Google document. One graduate student/instructor commented that it would have been very helpful to have more peer feedback from classmates, perhaps in the form of a student-generated rubric that could be used for each group. This approach would have given the MFHE professors a forum to provide clarification on their expectations by evaluating the rubric for peer-led sessions during the planning phase—as the lessons were taking shape—as opposed to after they were over.

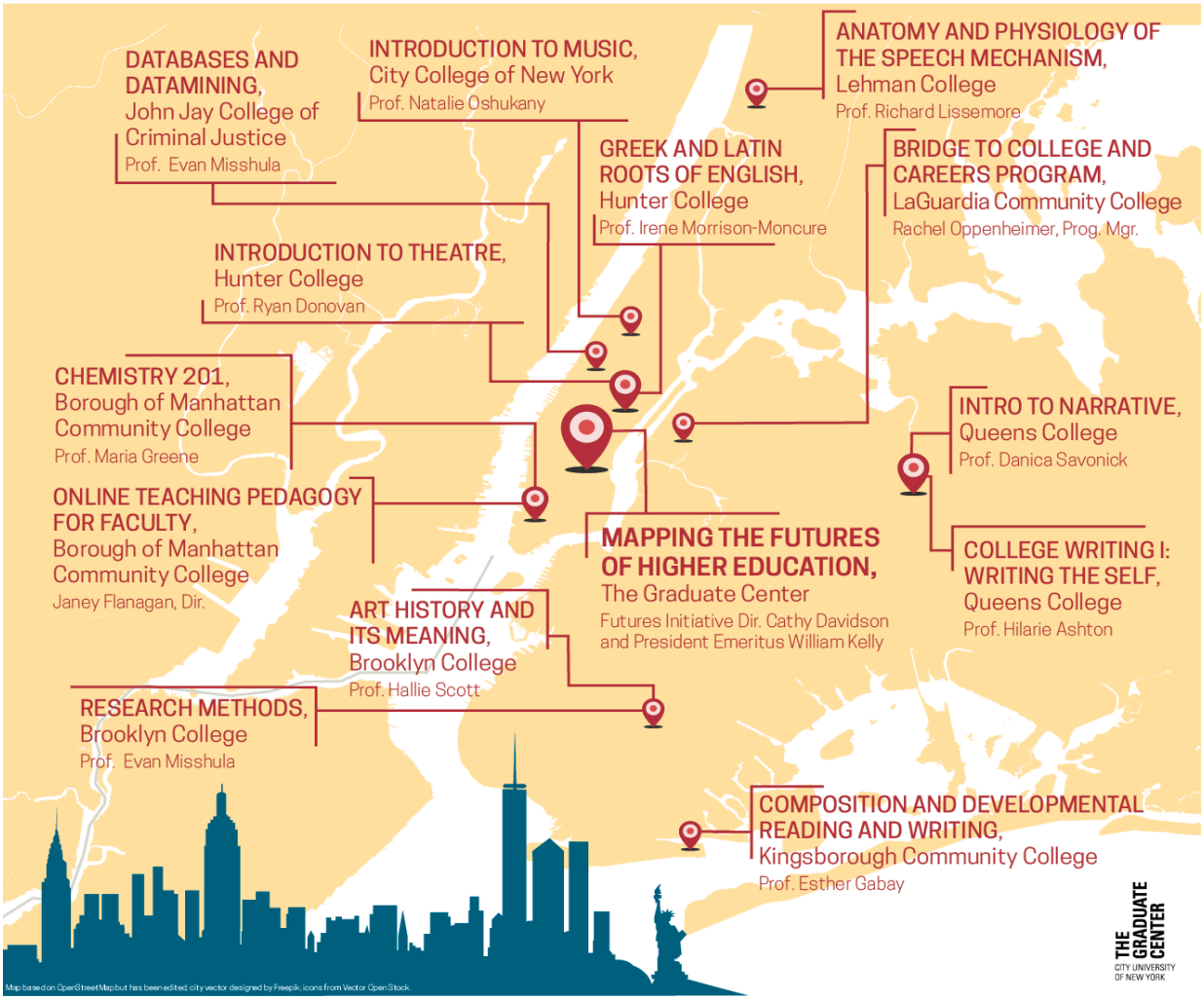
The Graduate students/instructors also made extensive use of formative assessment in their own courses. One undergraduate stated, "….the professor mold[ed] the course based off of student feedback. [It] was really helpful in creating more interest and discussion toward learning with this class." Another believed that the professor was able to take the threat and anxiety out of testing by using course review techniques presented in the class. That student commented, "Never had a course like this in CUNY ever."

It was clear when the graduate students/instructors reported back to the MFHE class (after they had implemented various types of formative assessment) several things occurred with their undergraduates. First, students were delighted someone cared about their opinions. Secondly, students were excited to know that their professors where really concerned about their learning and growth. Finally, they enjoyed having an anonymous forum for expressing their confusion and/or needs for additional instruction.

Mapping

> ***"It provided motivation to do text-based research. For them, being able to visualize their research on a collective map gave them a sense of pride in their work (and themselves since they mapped their own names)."***

Academic mapping projects are often used to help students visually represent information. MFHE graduate student/instructors as well as undergraduates were asked to learn how to represent various forms of data in persuasive ways, especially related to what the university offers to the community. As co-learners, graduate students and undergraduates were learning where data comes from, how to interpret it in meaningful ways, and how to use visual tools to enhance its analysis and presentation. The culmination of this work aimed to create a public contribution to knowledge and to society.



One instructor thought it was interesting to see how diverse disciplines could participate in a mapping project. For some professors it worked well with the specific courses they were teaching. Others found it challenging to link the mapping project to the content of their course. There were a few graduate student/instructors who felt the mapping project was peripheral to

the main themes highlighted in the course. For this reason, they had difficulty conveying the assignment to their students. The graduate student/instructors felt they needed more scaffolding up-front on how student projects might look and about the ultimate project goals. Another hurdle was that five instructors were uncomfortable with the technology they were asking students to use and felt students had difficulty using the mapping technology. Graduate students/instructors commented that special workshops dedicated to mapping software and the Cbox could make this process smoother for both instructors and their students.

The support provided by the Futures Initiative full-time staff, FI fellows, as well as additional supports in the form of an embedded librarian were critical in helping the graduate students/instructors fully implement the Cbox mapping project tools, as well as the blogging and communication platforms. The entire Futures Initiative team was extraordinarily quick to respond to requests for assistance with troubleshooting and implementing these technologies. It was integral because the Futures Initiative consistently emphasized the importance of digital pedagogy and the creation of virtual learning spaces for blogging, mapping, and the development of learning communities between students and students and between students and faculty.

The mapping application on the Futures Initiative Cbox platform seemed to have a larger impact in certain courses. Students commented that mapping etymology and art were fun. One student commented that the mapping tool was not easy to use, but it did help him learn the content in that specific course. For example, an undergraduate mapped the graffiti artist Banksy's work, which began cropping up in public spaces across New York City in 2013. Not only did the student map where the artwork could be found in the five boroughs, he also provided a description and commentary about Banksy's popular works of art. This project was a spectacular example of how a mapping project can help students learn as well as contribute to knowledge creation.

One instructor was able to utilize mapping as a tool for a project in his class in addition to the course assignment from MFHE. He said, "We did a mapping thing of a chapter as a study guide. That was something I directly took from Mapping the Futures. It helped students who were visual learners to think about the ways that things are connected other than someone who can look at text only."

The most successful aspect of mapping in MFHE was the CUNY flyover presented in the final event. Graduate student/instructors, as well as their undergraduate students who participated in creating the flyover, created a lot of energy and excitement, especially among the undergraduates who felt they were a part of something very special.

CONTENT

Student-Centered Pedagogy

> ***"I think that every graduate student should be trained in student-centered teaching methodologies and to be bringing them into their course and also being trained in what the student population that they will be working with will be like."***

> ***"At times, some students felt abandoned by this approach. It takes them time to trust that they're learning. Only when the semester ends do they walk out with a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment. I think the most challenging part is coming up with activities that will truly ignite thoughtful and deep learning through a student centered classroom. I've found that if the activity is challenging, stimulating and with the appropriate introduction, students (especially in quiet classes) become engaged..."***

Graduate students/instructors in the class had varying degrees of experience with implementing student-centered pedagogies, however, everyone felt there were opportunities to learn new techniques. They were interested in improving upon their teaching practices and being inspired for new ones. They liked the way student-centered pedagogy was implemented in the MFHE class with a combination of peer led classes, discussions, and professor contributions and feedback.

One instructor shared that student-centered pedagogy allowed her undergraduate students to hear different perspectives and have the opportunity to take multiple passes at information including "verbally, collaboratively and in writing." Graduate students/instructors explained that they worked in groups, and they worked as individuals. They learned that teamwork can be as hard as it can be enlightening. They were willing to let go of some of their anxiety about speaking in public and this led them to become more compassionate to their fellow students while setting new standards for achievement. Most importantly, students "learned how to learn" on a metacognitive level.

Graduate student/instructors agreed, however, that student-centered pedagogy requires a significant time commitment, up-front planning, and thoughtful approaches to successfully implement, especially on a consistent basis. Student-centered pedagogy is "pro-learning" as one MFHE instructor described it—it is a proactive approach to student engagement. Yet, at the same time, it requires an appropriate balance at times with more traditional forms of education. One graduate student/instructor wrote, "It's a little difficult when you're dealing with subjects like racial inequality. Students aren't used to having class conversations about these issues, and often need instructor-led guidance on how to talk about them. This is why student-centered pedagogy should be supplemented with more traditional forms of instructor-led learning.

Some of the undergraduates were excited by the energized nature of a student-centered class and others were simply "good sports" about it. It was reported that often students were open to student-centered approaches, but they were not yet comfortable taking responsibility for their own learning because it was new to them and they simply wanted to know exactly what they had to do to earn an A in the class. "Creative freedom" for some of them was fearful and for others it was stimulating. One graduate student/instructor commented, "I think a lot of people want to sit there and be told. I think some people wanted me to do more of what THEY expected and that is not what I was going to do."

After a semester of "living the pedagogy" while teaching it, graduate student/instructors reflected on their experience in various ways. The graduate student/instructors felt their ability to implement student-centered pedagogy increased (4.0 out 5) and they felt very confident that student-centered pedagogy can improve student learning (4.7 out 5).

Despite the newness of many of the approaches for undergraduate students, their instructors still viewed their motivation levels related to student-centered pedagogy to be in the high to very high range (3.76 out of 5) and anxiety levels to be in the neutral to somewhat low range (2.65 out of 5).

Average score for students on impact on motivation for student-centered pedagogies

Pedagogy	Motivation	Anxiety
Mediation/contemplative exercises	3.72	2.62
Rubrics	3.69	2.59
Speed-date debate	3.67	2.55
Composite of student-centered pedagogies	3.76	2.65

**Likert scale ranged from 1-5 with 1 being "very low," 3 being "neutral," and 5 being "very high."*

Of all the activities implemented with undergraduate students, instructors rated student-centered pedagogy as the major classroom initiative that produced the least anxiety and the greatest motivation among their students. The following sections will provide a breakdown of the data collected about each of student-centered activities that were implemented in a variety of ways by the graduate students/instructors.

Think-Pair-Share

> ***"[Think-pair-share]'s great because you hit all three levels. You have the students who want to work by themselves, and they have time to do that. And then I walk around, and I see that there are students who still have [the answers to the] questions blank and so they are looking forward to sharing their answers with someone else. By the time we are all sharing, they all have answers, so I can call on any of them, and they all have something to say."***

Undergraduate students surveyed particularly liked "think, pair, share" activities; however several commented that they were uncomfortable or experienced anxiety when asked to share with the class or serve as the reporter. One of the graduate students recommended doubling the suggested time of think, pair, shares, from 90 seconds to 3 minutes to help students engage more meaningfully and to help them "elicit and recognize the value in that moment." More time could enable students to organize their thoughts better, so they are more comfortable reporting back to the whole class.

One undergraduate student stated in a survey, "Generally core classes are expected [to] be boring, but with this class, this was not the case. [T]he combination of the teacher and the refreshing take on learning with this class, resulted in a very interesting class even though it was not something that I thought I would have enjoyed." Two of the undergraduates interviewed both indicated that they preferred classroom discussion over purely instructor led lectures. One of them found think-pair-share more "engaging" and the other found it more "effective." Another

undergraduate was impressed with the level of teacher/student communication related to think-pair-share. This student said, “Our opinions mattered!”

Life Barriers and Ethics

> ***“I know from my own experience here that when a professor [is] reaching out to you individually, it means a lot. And I know that not enough people get that experience.”***

The life barriers and ethics unit took on a different feel because it dealt less with pedagogy and more with classroom management and life circumstances. The graduate students/instructors seem to connect with the topics of this unit overwhelmingly, as they were all dealing with students who have similar life issues in a university system where 47% of undergraduates come from households with an income of less than $25K and where 76% of enrolled students are minorities and 38.2% are foreign born (CUNY, 2013). Working with an underserved demographic population requires specialized knowledge and professional development to ensure faculty are able to help students succeed in their coursework and persist toward degree completion.

One graduate student/instructor implemented what she learned from this unit by starting each class at the tail of the prior class as a learning checkpoint. She wanted to know if the class was collectively ready to move forward or if they needed to linger on a topic for a bit longer. She commented, “I was starting to think that compassion had no place in academia - that the teacher had to be strict and that the syllabus was a contract down to the word and that there is no room for leniency.” For many of the instructors it was a challenge to strike a balance between high standards and the realization that CUNY students often face life challenges far more complex than those of students at top tier schools.

Contemplative Pedagogy

This unit encompassed a variety of techniques under the umbrella of contemplative pedagogy. It included topics of mindfulness, meditation, and embodiment in education. These were unique new learning strategies for many of the graduate students/instructors as well as their undergraduate students.

Among the topics for discussion were ways to decrease anxiety, for example, before a high-stakes test, job interview, or even a teacher evaluation. Meditation and body stance proved to be a helpful tool for some of the graduate students in the MFHE course. It gave them a chance to stop everything and clear their minds before focusing on the task at hand. Some of the graduate students/instructors measured how well their students completed low stakes assessments before and after a meditation. One of the instructors who conducted this experiment said, “For me, it worked well. Other people didn’t think so.” As one might predict, the data analysis showed undergraduate students felt meditation or contemplative in-class exercises resulted in a slight decrease in their anxiety (2.62) and a slight increase in their motivation (3.72).

Blogging

> ***"The most valuable lesson I learned was how important the blog was in terms of connecting the students to one another. That was a new, exciting, and enlightening experience for all of us. The students were able to trade notes on studying tips, online videos, and things of that nature...and I think that was a tremendous value to them."***

Some graduate student/instructors found that the interactive blog gave students (or themselves) more of a voice in their courses. Those who tended to be quiet in class found the blog to be a safe platform to express their ideas, however, others found the semi-public nature of the blog to be intimidating, which limited their participation. One undergraduate student expressed anxiety about writing scholarly posts in a public forum alongside graduate students compared to the posts intended to build community. Others thought the blog was an important tool for reflection and debriefing.

The blog was an important aspect of the undergraduates experience since it created a stronger sense of community at a CUNY campuses made up mostly of commuters. They found the interactivity between the students and the professor and between students and students to be useful. In an interview, an undergraduate community college student said it needed to take on more characteristics of social media. He said, "It felt like a wall." Nevertheless, many undergraduates used the blog to encourage each other, share resources, to find study partners, to form groups, or to provide peer formal evaluations for one another's work.

At least half of the MFHE graduate student/instructors made significant use of the blog as a teaching tool with their undergraduates. One compared her use of the Cbox blog to her experiences with Blackboard. She reflected that when students posted to Blackboard, she was the only one who read them. She culled words from student posts to create a lecture, but the students were missing so much in the works they never read—she described the student work as "art." The Cbox blogging tool helps keep these posts open and fluid so students can easily read and respond to each other.

A very responsive undergraduate student exclaimed, "It allowed us to share our ideas! We were able to see everyone else's work and learn from it. It was definitely effective." Another stated, "I never had to blog for a class before. I like it because you get to see that there are other[s] experiencing the same struggles and anxieties as you are. It makes you feel like part of a group instead of all alone on your journey."

Graduate students/instructors also posted to the MFHE blog as a part of the course in which they were enrolled. The process of blogging was self-reflective, similar to a journaling activity, but was also part of a socially constructed learning activity because it allowed students to share and build upon ideas with each other as a part of a community of inquiry. A graduate student/instructor stated, "blogging made me sit down and voice everything that was going on in my head….It was like, making a lot of noise in class and letting that settle, and [then] let's sift through what we have discovered on the blog." In fact, according to the data analysis, meaningful connections using the blogging platform were correlated with overall effectiveness of the undergraduate course (instructor, assessments, and assignments).

Blogging received positive feedback as a student-centered strategy among many of the graduate students/instructors and undergraduates. The frustrations were not with the academic

activity, but at times with the technology platform. The next section will explore and evaluate the technology used in MFHE and graduate student/instructor course sections.

Technology

> ***"The function of the site did wonders for creating a cohesive group, or really a family, with the class. It made for an ongoing conversation throughout the semester, rather than the traditional segmented and fractured conversations that would otherwise happen just once a week."***

Many of MFHE graduate students/instructors found the Cbox a very useful tool for extending and deepening class discussions and about half of the class said they would continue using it in the future. One professor enjoyed its reliability, ease of navigation and all of the support that was available from the Futures Initiative team. She believed it was truly an invaluable tool for creating "vibrant learning communities. Another instructor found the interface to be clean and user-friendly.

Although most of the graduate students/instructors rated their digital literacy skills to be above average (3.4, where 3 is average and 4 is above average), there were some who believed that the interface needed some work and that more training was necessary in order to effectively implement within their courses. One graduate student/instructor stated, "the C-BOX site was challenging for them [undergraduates] to navigate and log onto. Because of the multiple layers of sites, it was confusing as to which and how they were supposed to post." The fact that it was new to the instructors made it difficult for them to provide support for their students. Additionally, Cbox support was not available at the CUNY campuses where it was being implemented in courses. In future semesters, perhaps the new student mentors could assist in this task.

Undergraduate students using the Futures Initiative Cbox site used it for communication, collaboration, and learning with peers, or they didn't use it very much at all. Students liked being able to easily connect with other classmates to form online study groups. Common words used to positively describe the platform were easy and interactive. Other students found it confusing and not very robust.

Several students commented in surveys that it was a useful and easily navigable site repository for the organization of materials, but one of those students said that he/she was not sure if it really had a major impact on learning the content of the course. One of the graduate student/instructors noted that the undergraduates were only as engaged with the Cbox platform as would be necessary to earn a participation grade. Although the graduate students/instructors indicated in surveys that they preferred Cbox over Blackboard, several undergraduate students remarked that they found gaining access and navigating Blackboard easier.

Impact

> ***"It changed me as a teacher."***

Two graduate student/instructors shared that they used techniques they learned from the MFHE course when they had their annual faculty observations. One graduate student/instructor used the meta-movement practices on the day of her observation and noted how the senior faculty member commented on how much he really liked the idea. He even encouraged her to dedicate more classroom time to contemplative pedagogy. Another graduate student/instructor was

observed by a faculty member who wrote the textbook he was using in the course. He felt excited to show her how he was able to engage his students with the text through these techniques.

> ***"When I got observed by the faculty observer for my class, she was impressed with the different pedagogical tools that I was using and the ways I was getting students to engage and discuss the material with each…I know all the other TAs did lectures generally, and I think I was the only one who didn't really do that."***

Overall, the undergraduate students found their courses to be effective, with all averages in the "effective" to "highly effective" range. Teacher dynamics clearly influenced the undergraduate students since they rated teacher effectiveness in the highly effective range (4.49 out of 5). The research aimed to investigate how the pedagogies from MFHE impacted students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness. It was clear from student surveys and interviews that students not only had positive interactions with their instructors, but, more importantly, they appreciated the various techniques implemented in their courses, (as referenced in previous sections), and how it engaged them as students.

Means of Effectiveness Ratings

Effectiveness of...	Mean (1-5 scale)
Class discussions	4.23
Teacher	4.49
Assignments	4.20
Assessments	4.11
**Likert scale ranged from 1-5 with 1 being "not at all effective," 3 being "somewhat effective," and 5 being "very effective."*	

Re-envisioning the Course

> ***"The class of students made this class awesome. Everything I learned, I feel I learned from them - their hard work. And whatever it was that they wanted to share was what we learned."***

One suggestion was to break the MFHE course into a sequence of two or three courses or perhaps even a certificate program. This recommendation was based on the inherent challenge that came with learning the pedagogy while implementing it, and at the same time being able to fully explain the purposes and strategies to students. The instructors themselves had not yet thoroughly mastered the techniques and theories of these innovative teaching methods.

Another challenge was that the graduate students/instructors had already fully developed their syllabi for their spring 2015 courses, and it was difficult for some of them to make significant adjustments after the semester had already started. As they worked through their pedagogical concerns, graduate student/instructors agreed, the syllabus adjustments were challenging because "the train had already left the station." The spring 2015 semester was already underway and it was difficult for the graduate student/instructors to implement changes after the semester started.

In addition, there were suggestions to include a session on how to incorporate lecture into a student-centered class. Some graduate student/instructors explained that the topic of their course or a particular lesson might necessitate a lecture, and they were looking for ways to either minimize the lecture or do it in a more engaging or interactive way. At times it is necessary for the professor to take over and lead the class with more direct instruction to clarify points, bring students together, and direct discussion in the form of mini-lectures. They need not be remarks for a lengthy expository, but short succinct points of clarification and redirection. More instruction on how to redirect classroom conversations and lectures would be very helpful for graduate students/instructors who are trying to expand their pedagogical expertise.

> ***"Another thing I would have liked to see us talk about is the value of lecture and how to integrate it. CUNY students don't think that [student-centered pedagogy] is how people learn, and it's a hard sell."***

Further suggestions for the MFHE included having additional readings about the theory behind the pedagogy to "tie it all together." The graduate student/instructors in the inaugural MFHE course expressed a desire to continue their communications and collaborations. One MFHE graduate student/instructor said, "I think that the Futures Initiative is very, very important for adjuncts. I think every campus should have something like that…Immediately, I thought about the Futures Initiative."

SUMMARY

> ***"I am so excited about the Futures Initiative. I think that every graduate student should be trained in student-centered teaching methodologies and to be bringing them into their course and also being trained in what the student population that they will be working with will be like."***

One remarkable aspect of the course is that as much as the MFHE professors were willing to relinquish professorial authority in the form of a peer led course, student-centered pedagogy, and a course held in the public eye, they were equally willing to open themselves to regular assessments and evaluations from their students, as well as feedback on a weekly basis. It turned the modern classroom on its head and holistically created a more team-based learning environment.

Although there were suggestions for improvement, overall, participants both on the undergraduate and graduate levels found the use of democratic pedagogies and digital innovation to be a positive experience that helped bring students together across CUNY to create a stronger sense of community. Both the undergraduate students and the graduate student/instructors felt that student-centered pedagogy increased motivation and decreased anxiety. Additionally, the undergraduates found their courses to be effective with "teacher effectiveness" being rated with the highest average score. Graduate student/instructors made statements about their eagerness to continue this work in future semesters. A few participants are continuing their work with the Futures Initiative by becoming part of the mentoring program.

The next stage of this research project will be to have interviews and/or focus groups with the graduate student/instructors in succeeding semester(s) to collect more data about their experiences implementing the pedagogy and digital tools now that they have experience doing so. Additionally, the research project will extend to the mentor program to see how the MFHE group can "work together to develop peer leadership skills and further explore student-centered learning...serve as peer mentors for the upcoming Futures Initiative courses, creating a network of student support across the CUNY campuses."

Respectfully submitted,

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