Apart, Together
Letter from the Chair
By KEN LEVINSON

Congratulations to the Research Committee for producing this engaging inaugural newsletter. It is inspiring to see what colleagues have been publishing and it shows how unique and focused our department is because so much of what we do is directly connected to student learning. Whether you work in philosophy, linguistics, developmental education or some combination of those fields and others, your work shows our mutual interest in learning and language, in academic and disciplinary literacy, language acquisition, in pedagogical practice and policy, and underlying it all, the fundamental questions of inquiry into what makes humans human.

In these last 13 plus months the challenges not only to learning but to maintaining our personal sense of meaning have been formidable. From my zoom and email perch I’ve been fascinated to observe the relocation, whether temporary or permanent, of so many of you, to new neighborhoods, out of the city, out of state. I’ve been deeply saddened by the losses and hardships you faced when your loved ones fell ill. And consequentially, partly due to the pandemic but also enrollment and remedial policy changes, we’ve let go of a large percentage of our part-time staff and have been frozen in our hiring of new full-timers. With the passing of our beloved colleague Mary Sepp, and the retirements of Ed Bostick and Yeghia Aslanian, we are at five vacancies that in the past we would have filled quickly. So we are a smaller department.

I know this was a hard time to get research and writing done; you had to cope with the demands of on-line learning and the reconfiguration of working from home often with partners and children in the same space. As someone who has written a lot – literally volumes – but published very little, I’m humbled by your bringing your work into print and “print.” I’m pleased to say for myself that my own writing has been more productive; in the summer of 2019 I began working on something in the genre of auto-fiction (for want of a better term), observations of the world that combined my socio-anthropological interests with my literary interests. At first I avoided recounting my personal life stories. And then events both personal and global shifted my perspective – my own experience with serious illness directly preceded the onset of the Covid pandemic; the political, economic and social justice crises in the States accelerated; and all at once, memory took on a different kind of urgency. I found different parts of my past compelling to examine from this new perspective of life’s tenuousness and what at times seemed apocalyptic – my prior conceptions of the past seemed naive. But now, the acute crisis could be fading as spring has fully arrived, fingers crossed. Not surprisingly, I have been far more productive in the intersessions than in the middle of the semester – the demands of the academic year do get in the way of writing!

When we are fully reunited, it will be in the context of having shared, while apart, a period of time that has profoundly affected us. Reentry will have its own challenges, but I hope that our shared experience will bond us closer, more attuned to what is precious. Life does, indeed, go on. New and old students will be there to spur us on.

Thanks for this newsletter! I’m looking forward to issue 2!

Achievements
Recent Books by ALL Faculty

The past year has seen several books published by ALL faculty. In their *Hebrew Infusion: Language and Community at American Jewish Summer Camps*, Rutgers (2020), our colleague Sharon Avni and her co-authors investigate how Hebrew has been deployed at Jewish summer camps to construct local, national, and transnational understandings of American Jewishness, and presents a unique case for examining the interrelationships between language, community, and religion. Sharon and her co-authors have completed ethnographic fieldwork at over 35 camps across the United States over four years, and conducted hundreds of interviews with campers, staff members, and camp leadership. Their book won the
Although we all have intuitive conceptions of what we mean when we talk about students’ “participation” and “engagement,” understanding how little we know about these in practice is a crucial step toward better pedagogy. Drawing on over 75 hours of video recorded classroom interaction, Christine Jacknick’s *Multimodal Participation and Engagement: Social Interaction in the Classroom* (Edinburgh University Press, 2021), shows how students are often engaged and participating when we think they are not, and likewise, students can appear to be engaged and participating when in fact, careful analysis of their actions shows they are not. In either case, teachers may find themselves encouraging what Prof. Jacknick calls “studenting” — the performance of being-a-student rather than actual engaged participation. The book reconceptualizes participation in terms of student alignment (with the instructor, the lesson, each other), and students’ close monitoring of the interaction as evidence of their engagement. It argues that teachers and researchers need to recognize (1) the multimodal complexity of student (non-)participation and (dis)engagement, and (2) how much of students’ participation and engagement is essentially unknowable to us. Our methods for measuring participation are imperfect, and as we move into new kinds of instructed-learning contexts, it is more important than ever for us to realize these basic facts.

**In her book, *Speaking of Race: Language, Identity, and Schooling Among African-American Children*, Lexington Books (2020), Jennifer Delfino explores the linguistic practices of African American children in an after school program in Washington, DC. The book advances a "raciolinguistic perspective," which shifts focus from what students do and don’t do to how they are seen and heard from an institutional perspective. This shift is important because it is a neglected aspect in assessing language proficiency and academic achievement. The issue is that even well-intended educators who seek to validate cultural and linguistic difference end up applying raciolinguistic ideologies that see and hear racialized minorities as problem students using ideas such as appropriateness and academic language. This leads them to advance assimilationist perspectives rather than pluralism. Prof. Delfino’s book is based on her dissertation research, and included a 9 month ethnographic study of 9-13 year-olds in Washington, D.C. The book was endorsed by three experts in the field: H. Samy Alim, Angela Reyes, and Arthur Spears. In addition to publishing the book, Prof. Delfino also co-edited a special edition of the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, Volume 265, Issue 265, focused on Racialization, Voicing, and Resemiotization in Raciolinguistic Perspective.

**Achievements**

**More ALL Faculty Publications**

Many of our faculty members managed to do research, despite the pandemic. Here’s some of what they published in the past year:


- **Finn, H. & Avni, S. (2021)** Combining Developmental Writing and First Year Composition


Faculty in Focus

John Beaumont

By JENNIFER DELFINO

Adjusting to the rigors and stresses of teaching remotely during the Coronavirus pandemic has not been an easy task, but Professor John Beaumont, an ALL veteran faculty member who was the recipient of the Distinguished Teaching Award in 2016, has helped to make it a bit easier.

In the midst of the transition to distance learning, Professor Beaumont has started Resilient Teaching, a series of synchronous and asynchronous workshops aimed at supporting faculty in the transition to remote teaching by focusing on trauma-informed, culturally sustaining, and other asset-based pedagogies and matching teaching goals with appropriate tools. Since June 2020, more than 600 BMCC faculty members have participated in Resilient Teaching. The next cohort starts at the end of May 2021. The Community Care and Share, Online Teaching Exchange and Hallway Hangout events are also meant to support faculty in related ways. He has formed these workshops in collaboration with Gina Cherry, Director of CETLS, and Jean Amaral, Associate Professor and Open Knowledge Librarian.

Professor Beaumont has noted the urgency of shifting teaching and communication towards a culture of care given the challenges facing both faculty and students. In a brief conversation about his experiences with teaching during the pandemic, he explained how important it is to think about teaching as care, drawing from recent pedagogical models such as culturally sustaining, asset, and trauma-based pedagogies. “I’ve learned so much... it has been ex-
hausting but also invigorating. After 30 plus years, I’m seeing teaching in a
new way,” Professor Beaumont expressed to me. He noted that he is
excited to learn how other faculty are adapting to the challenges of
teaching online. Professor Beaumont’s enthusiasm for continuing to
improve and adapt teaching has influenced over 600 participants in the
online teaching exchange that took place in summer 2020. When I asked
Professor Beaumont what he thinks faculty need most, he replied, “A clear
sense of community at and between all levels, shared purpose, and more
culturally sustaining pedagogies.” On the topic of culturally sustaining ped-
agogies, he noted, “How we teach should respect who students are now
and take them to where they want to go.”

Professor Beaumont is an enthusiastic and dedicated instructor who sees
ongoing improvement and learning as essential to teaching, and he has
done a remarkable job leading faculty development since the transition to
online instruction.

Student Highlights

Their Success is Our Success

One of the best measures of our success as a department is the success of
our students. Here are some examples of ALL students who went above
and beyond in their academic journey:

Maya Wong is a linguistics major who is graduating this spring. She
is interested in the intersections of race and linguistic appropriation and
completed her LIN150 honors project Judging By the Color of My Lan-
guage, with Professor Delfino’s mentorship. Maya’s project was chosen
by the BMCC Honors Committee to represent the college at the Beacon
Conference, which is a regional event that celebrates students at two-year
colleges in the mid-Atlantic region. In the coming fall, Maya hopes to con-
tinue her studies at Hunter College or Columbia University.

Giulia Michieli, a student in LIN100.6 Language and Culture
spring 2019, is graduating from the School for Professional Studies (SPS)
CUNY in May 2021 and will begin a master’s at the School of International
Public Affairs Columbia University in September 2021. In LIN100, Ms.
Michieli’s personal and professional interests in bilingualism resulted in a
project exploring the bilingual experience, a project she presented at the
New York State Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (NYS

A Studio Art alum from BMCC CUNY and current undergrad stu-
dent at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Fernanda Car-
valho has explored her interest in linguistics in the creation of an artifi-
cial language Aovrit Mahogick, which she presented at an international
conference ANUPI-COPEI in 2021. Ms. Carvalho also co-presented on her ex-
perience in the co-requisite Language and Culture (LIN100.6) as well as
the value of ePortfolios in language education at the NYS TESOL 49th
Annual Conference. Ms. Carvalho co-presented on ePortfolios with Dr. Cyn-
thia S Wiseman at ANUPI-COPEI in 2019 and they co-authored ePortfo-
lios: Tapping into the Imagination to Motivate Learning.

Melissa Sabal and Ann Gold, students of LIN100 – Language and
Culture, from Spring 2019, had their research papers accepted in the Lan-
guage, Society, and Culture Conference (CUNY LSC-5th Biennial Con-
ference) to be held at Kingsborough Community College in May
2021. Their topic is Genderlect Discussion Based on TV Commer-
cials and Text Message Emojis.

Almog Badash, A.A., BMCC, just graduated from Hunter College
in the CUNY BA program, focusing on Neuropsychology in the Pre-
Med track. It was a mere six years ago that Mr. Badash moved to New
York and navigated the difficult road to college since English was new to
him. Two years later, he enrolled in BMCC, where the first semester
he took ESL94. Through dedication and hard work, Mr. Badash mastered
written academic English and tested into English 101, well on his way to
the medical degree that he aspires to. Congrats to Mr. Badash!

Cynthia Ridyard, BMCC Class of May 2021, is majoring in Literacy
and Linguistics. In fall 2021, Ms. Rid-
yard will transfer to Brooklyn College
to continue her studies in linguistics. She also plans to enroll in an intensive
certification program at Cambridge University to earn CELTA certification,
the credentials required or accepted by many international schools
to teach English as a Second/Foreign
language.

City University of New York, Borough of Manhattan Community College. Department of Academic Literacy and Linguistics. Address: 199 Chambers Street, Room N-499, New York, NY 10007. Phone: (212) 220-1396. Email: ALL@bmcc.cuny.edu. Web: https://www.bmcc.cuny.edu/academics/departments/academic-literacy/