

**6/2/2011**

## **MJohns Exit Self-Assessment**

### **I. "MY SYNTHESIS PRODUCT SHOWS THAT..."**

(adapted from the "Phases of research and engagement" in the Practicum course in the expectation that these are also relevant goals for students' work in moving towards the synthesis product)

A. I can convey who I want to influence/affect concerning what (Subject, Audience, Purpose).

Achieved well – The influence I have been concerned in making has been fairly consistent through my research and through continual improvement in reflection and writing I have become more confident and effective in conveying the power of dialogue process to create a voice that matters for underserved populations.

Want to work on further – I plan to continue putting my process and product out to care providers through parallel writing and speaking. As I seek to learn from social workers, healthcare providers, clergy as well as individuals receiving care; I plan, in turn to offer myself and my skills where and when they may benefit others.

B. I know what others have done before, either in the form of writing or action, that informs and connects with my project, and I know what others are doing now.

Achieved well – I have spent an incredible amount of time tapping into resources previously unknown to me, that have helped me develop as a lifelong learner and a change agent in the field of helping two important underserved populations. Had I not gone through the CCT692 and 693 processes of research I would no doubt be trying to discover ideas that have long since been proven effective or otherwise. Through building on the shoulders of others and becoming informed in what has been done before in my area of research, I think I have been able to advance the field of inquiry, even if only a little, in an area of great potential.

Want to work on further – Although I had not considered my project touching on community service as a learning and healing process, it did emerge through dialogue and for this reason I was more attentive to the service learning projects Jeremy P. and Andy did for their synthesis. Additionally, because I mentioned community service in my project proposal, Stephanie Hartwell made me aware of veteran projects in this area that are connected with UMass Medical, Massachusetts Department of Veteran Services and the federal department of Veterans Affairs. I barely scratched the surface in this area and look forward to learning more in this area.

C. I have teased out my vision, so as to expand my view of issues associated with the project, expose possible new directions, clarify direction/scope within the larger set of issues, and decide the most important direction.

Achieved well – Fortunately, because of exposure to Morning Pages, Reflective Writing, and the Writing Support Group, I have become a writer and through this discipline I have been able to work deeper into ideas and connections, which have helped to show me ways of more thoughtful, intentional innovation and learning. Through these methods of structured divergence and convergence I have been able to take emergent vision and purposefully advance through obstacles and opportunities, finding direction and taking action. I have also been able

to recover from failures and instead of wasting the time spent, have used these outcomes as journal writing inputs to guide development and direction.

Want to work on further – Moving forward I want to be more direct and focused beginning and throughout projects, at least enough that I don't fall into the trap of having diverged for so long that its difficult to bring the writing together in a neat and timely fashion.

D. I have identified the **premises and propositions** that my project depends on, and can state counter-propositions. I have taken stock of the thinking and research I need to do to counter those counter-propositions or to revise my own propositions.

Achieved well -

Want to work on further -

E. I have clear objectives with respect to product, both written and practice, and process, including personal development as a reflective practitioner. I have arranged my work in a sequence (with realistic deadlines) to realize these objectives.

Achieved well – For the most part I have been honest with myself and up front with others regarding my expectations in product and process for the greater part of my CCT studies and synthesis.

Want to work on further – I plan to work on Peter Elbows suggestion of spending half the time writing and half the time revising. I think this will help me to better come to closure.

F. I have gained direct information, models, and experience not readily available from other sources.

Achieved well – Through direct contact work, two interviews in synthesis and meeting twice a month in mutual Mondays, I have gained insights and experience that otherwise might not have been possible, nor would I have been led to some of the important discoveries I've had, such as the importance of balance in facilitation and new (to me) processes of evaluation.

Want to work on further – I want to now follow some of the books, references, leads and contacts that I've written down but, haven't been able to follow through on yet. Just as an example I have many notes in journal margins from Ruben, Steve, Steffi, my co-facilitator John and many others.

G. I have clarified the overall progression or argument underlying my research and the written reports.

Achieved well – It is my opinion that the complexity of issues facing the invisibly wounded and the resistance to seek therapy, underscores the need for alternative methods of helping them. In pursuing this stated problem I have focused on dialogue process as the central theme for peers to support each other. Although I have branched into PTSD treatment for myself, sought methods of improving facilitation of group process and shared parallel and additional developments throughout my writing and research, I have remained clearly focused on the complex issue and veteran dialogue as an avenue of resolution.

Want to work on further – Having diverged as stated above, I want to now concentrate more on using dialogue process to bring invisibly wounded veterans together and evaluate progress over time in several key areas. Key areas to evaluate are finding voice, leaving isolation, involvement in community and projects, as well as seeking specialized services as needed for PTSD, TBI and substance abuse.

H. My writing and other products Grab the attention of the readers/audience, Orient them, move them along in Steps, so they appreciate the Position I've led them to.

Achieved well – Comments I've received from work-in-progress presentations and from peer readers have affirmed my belief that my research and writing clearly illustrates the problem and educates the audience on the steps, as well as the proposed benefits of dialogue for building and helping a community help itself.

Want to work on further – I plan to use the GOSP acronym to help me as I continue to develop as a writer in my daily disciplined writing routine. My goal is to continue pushing myself to improve my voice through writing, in the way dedicated athlete trains, with the goal of having a more effective voice to share and address community issues.

I. I have facilitated new avenues of classroom, workplace, and public participation.

Achieved well – Despite a rocky start more than a year ago, I am pleased with the development that has taken place in Mutual Mondays as an innovative method that among other things, unveils the invisible, making it possible to acknowledge and address.

Want to work on further – I will continue the group process and plan to increase its size, with of discovering a diverse and more balanced voice of knowledge and understanding.

J. To feed into my future learning and other work, I have taken stock of what has been working well and what needs changing.

Achieved well – In a general sense, I have come to realize that I have a track record of taking on too much, and although I have heard it from many people over the years, it has been through personal reflection and writing that I now recognize this pattern of spreading myself too thin.

Want to work on further – Capitalizing on the realization above, before I take on more things that draw on my time, I am going to take stock and focus my time and energy on areas of highest priority so that I don't continue to erroneously convince myself that I can be all things to all people and be in two places at one time.

## II. DEVELOPING AS A REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER, INCLUDING TAKING INITIATIVE IN AND THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

1. I have integrated knowledge and perspectives from CCT and other courses into my own inquiry and engagement in social and/or educational change.

Achieved well – I am confident, especially now that I have used CCT thinking, communicating, learning and teaching skills effectively in making positive, and sometimes crucial, changes in non-profit and municipal process, especially in planning, meetings and collaboration

Want to work on further – I want to continue learning and teaching; and I want to continue pushing municipal employees I work with and committees I serve on to engage in open-minded thinking and open dialogue.

2. I have also integrated into my own inquiry and engagement the processes, experiences, and struggles of previous courses.

Achieved well – I have kept a summary of thinking tools from CCT courses on my desk as a reminder of the principles, disciplines, habits and skills that I have embodied in a short time for two reasons. The first is to bring them to bear in any project or task, and the second is to keep me mindful of what I can learn and use in the future if I continue to pursue personal and formal learning.

Want to work on further – Thinking on it now, it would be useful to review notes and summaries from two of my earliest courses; CCT 601 and 602.

3. I have developed efficient ways to organize my time, research materials, computer access, bibliographies, etc.

Achieved well – the use of Refworks and virtual office have made life easy. Through my last four courses especially (CCT 649, 692-4) I have discovered the world at my fingertips through the university library resources. Since CCT 692, when library research was cumbersome, I have become not only comfortable, but invigorated in research. The class in the library research center was a door opener.

Want to work on further – Once I return borrowed books and research materials to many generous individuals, I plan to reorganize my office library book shelves and label my journals, for future reference.

4. I have experimented with new tools and experiences, even if not every one became part of my toolkit as a learner, teacher/facilitator of others, and reflective practitioner.

Achieved well – I feel satisfied that I have tried every tool and skill I have been exposed to in my graduate studies, and fortunately in doing so, I am confident in using them when opportunities at work and otherwise come up.

Want to work on further – There were several elective courses that I would have liked to have taken, but through necessity I decided at one point to try and focus on one course at a time, I passed the opportunity. I would now like to take a course here and there, at a more comfortable pace, especially now that I'm settled into one job, and one where I hope to stay and continue to develop for some time.

5. I have paid attention to the emotional dimensions of undertaking my own project but have found ways to clear away distractions from other sources (present & past) and not get blocked, turning apparent obstacles into opportunities to move into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory.

Achieved well – At one point, working with veteran issues at work, researching them during my synthesis, facing them in Mutual Mondays and dealing with them personally at home with sons in the service, brought out ugly past experiences during my own military service that became a stumbling obstacle. I was fortunate to be able to seek assistance at the VA and support through my own Mutual Mondays group. What I thought was going to set me back a year in studies, actually became an opportunity for self-improvement and an opportunity to enhance the research I was already involved in.

Want to work on further – Although I have tried to erase memories of 21 lost friends during my service, the foolish loss during my last deployment <http://jacksonville.com/tu-online/stories/061397/2a1Helic.html> and the loss of my good friend Willy after I was out of the Navy <http://www.jsc.nasa.gov/Bios/htmlbios/mccool.html> have haunted me to the point that I know the best course is to face the emotions and the truth. I think in separating emotions from truth and understanding both, that I will start being better prepared to move into the future and be better prepared to learn, teach and move into unfamiliarity.

6. I have developed peer and other horizontal relationships. I have sought support and advice from peers, and have given support and advice to them when asked for.

Achieved well – I have sought and received more advice and support from others in CCT than I ever have in the past. Maybe this has been a key to greater success and satisfaction in this learning experience, than in previous years?

Want to work on further – I plan to build relationships where I can ask for honest feedback, continue to seek advice from those I have come to rely on in CCT and step further out on a limb to trust myself and others more to put my work out there, and honestly take in and consider input from others. I have found that I am quicker to give input and support on peer work than to ask for it on my own. As I continue to write, I will be considering whether I have held back in the past in asking for as much peer review as I could have because of insufficient trust in my writing, the quality of feedback from others, not wanting to intrude on others time or some other reason(s).

7. I have taken the lead, not dragged my feet, in dialogue with my advisor and other readers. I didn't wait for them to tell me how to solve an expository problem, what must be read and covered in a literature review, or what was meant by some comment I didn't understand. I didn't put off giving my writing to my advisor and other readers or avoid talking to them because I thought that they didn't see things the same way as I do.

Achieved well – I think I was open to comments from my peers, reader, advisor and editor; and in the process learned a lot that I would not have if I were close-minded.

Want to work on further – Although I thought I had planned out the semester well and started early in the Christmas break, I was set back by bumps in the road and want to work on better planning for all contingencies in the future, with regard to deadlines. I have learned that there needs to be a cutoff point to start serious revising to make a deadline, even if I think I have more I need to write about.

8. I have revised seriously, which involved responding to the comments of others. I came to see this not as bowing down to the views of others, but taking them in and working them into

my own reflective inquiry until I could convey more powerfully to others what I'm about (which may have changed as a result of the reflective inquiry).

Achieved well – I had great comments coming to me all the time which only helped with the direction of my writing, so I welcome them.

Want to work on further – Making my readers aware of the issue I was working on and my intended direction to address it, the comments I received were always helpful. Reflecting years back, I have not always had such good feedback, and the lessons I am taking away are; be clear about the issue, be clear about my intention and ask for feedback often and everywhere. I need to and intend to ask for feedback more often.

9. I have inquired and negotiated about formal standards, but gone on to develop and internalize my own criteria for doing work—criteria other than jumping through hoops set by the professor so I get a good grade.

Achieved well – I have been clear with myself, my professors and my peers that I am here for the fun and challenge of learning and not for the grades or even the degree. Being honest in this way with myself has kept my compass oriented toward learning and growing, which has made all the difference in the outstanding opportunity I have had to develop and continue learning during graduate studies and in life.

Want to work on further – I have pulled my life into my studies and vice versa, which was not the case in my undergraduate studies. I want to keep this in mind moving forward, to always capture the most from learning and growing opportunities.

10. I have approached the CCT synthesis course and the CCT program as works-in-progress, which means instead of harboring criticisms to submit after the fact, I have found opportunities to affirm what is working well and to suggest directions for further development.

Achieved well – As in number 7 – 9 above, I have found that openness and honesty with self is best for all involved and for teaching and learning to grow, there must be willingness from all to give and receive straight forward feedback, politely of course, even if it might be unpopular or unwelcome. If I am closed to giving or receiving timely feedback or criticism, then like likely I am also closed to many learning and developing opportunities.

Want to work on further – CCT and the synthesis course have been easy and comfortable environments for me to be honest and straightforward. Working in town hall and on committees is fraught with political agendas and at times superficial alliances. That being said, I have been straight forward, as I mentioned above and taken both praise and bruises for it; but being the new guy on the block, I have held back sometimes. Moving forward, I plan to be even more forthcoming in giving feedback that I think is in the best interest of tax payers, veterans, students, teachers and in general the overall community.