Intermittent Reinforcement



SPRING 2012 VOLUME 1, NEWSLETTER OF THE PH.D. PROGRAM IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY AND COMBINED CLINICAL AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

"Schare"ing Cognitions: In Honor of Vincent Guarnaccia

by Mitchell Schare



It is with great pleasure that we dedicate this issue of *Intermittent Reinforcement* to our friend, professor and mentor Dr. Vincent Guarnaccia. After 39 years of service to Hofstra University and the Ph.D. programs in Clinical & School Psychology and Clinical Psychology, our colleague has retired.

In my "ancient" days at Hofstra, long before I was tenured, the Psychology Department was located in the basement of Monroe Hall. Built as a concrete bunker and likely designed as a cold war relic, faculty offices were windowless, cinderblock-walled cells in which two professors shared these spaces. I was lucky to share some time there with Professor Guarnaccia.

As a good student of psychology, I was adept at observational skills and did observe Vin in many ways. As a young and brash behaviorist, I wanted to fight this psychoanalytic "enemy." Ah, but how foolish I was. In discussions with students he was a calm, guiding influence helping them on their research through Socratic dialogue. In our own discussions he subtly did the same to me. For example, in the domain of assessment I came to greatly value and respect his perspectives on projective testing and psychodynamics. He even published research on these topics! My own foolishness gave way to greater understandings on ego psychology and object relations, which, while I don't practice, I fully appreciate their influence, observations and contributions to our field. This content area has become a mainstay contribution to my thinking, appearing annually in my history course. That course always ends on a philosophical theme, a plea of sorts, to open one's mind across the barriers of theory and language systems that may inhibit us in truly understanding our psychology colleagues, regardless of their theoretical models. Thank you, Vinnie!

In the privacy of core faculty meetings where the inner workings of the program are discussed, Vin was always a critical and important voice. However, his voice had a particular flair to it as he could always be counted upon to be a student advocate. As in any group setting there might be times that a negative pall could

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fall over the discussion whether it be about a systemic program issue or the weaknesses of a particular student. And it was here in these meetings that I truly learned to respect Vin more than in any other way as he would, in his gentle but thoughtful and Socratic way, ask how could we effect change that would be helpful. He never simply wanted to "cut out the cancer" to fix a problem, but to find useful, educational, practical solutions to our problems. This was when I found out what a wonderful and sensitive clinician Vin is. This man is amazing in his observations of people and his ability to read them well and find useful solutions to their troubles. Those of you fortunate enough to learn family therapy from Dr. G know exactly what I am talking about.

As a colleague, Vin was a friend that I could count on. For years, Vinnie served the program as its assistant director, placing students in school internships and externships after our restructuring. He worked on the messy business of setting up training contracts, which I can assure you was not why any of us chose to study psychology. If I needed help on any program initiative or project, I could count on Vin's contribution. There

are lines written in our APA accreditation self-study that came from his writing. When I was asked to become the program director in 2001, I spoke to Vin to get his perspective on the position. His thoughtful advice then was taken deeply into my heart, and I am forever grateful for his guidance.

Collectively, we have many fond memories of Vin Guarnaccia; in his classes, at PERCC, during committee meetings, around the

department, or at those wonderful holiday parties at his home, hosted with the ever-so-lovely Aurora. Privately, we have our own remembrances. Some alumi have chosen to share these, which can be found in other sections of this issue. Now this is not a time to be sad, because you need to think of Vin today in retirement, keeping trim and tanned while playing golf on the PGA course in Palm Beach or any other course of his choosing. Not a bad life, eh? Vin, my friend — we miss you!

The Greatest Gift a Father Could Give by Cliff Guarnaccia, Ph.D.



I remember my first day of class in the Combined Clinical and School Psychology Ph.D. Program at Hofstra. It was Dr. Schare's Basic Concepts in Psychology (history of psychology) and it was scheduled early in the morning in a classroom on the second floor of PERCC. I was 30 minutes early and one of the first students to arrive. I took a seat in

the back and watched as my classmates arrived one by one. No one was talking as we were anxiously waiting for Dr. Schare to arrive. For 15 minutes the only sound that filled the room was the traffic coming from Hempstead Turnpike. The initial anxiety eventually wore off and we began making formal introductions. The atmosphere was beginning to warm up a little. Then, out of nowhere, someone said, "I think there is someone in this class whose father teaches in the program." I felt a pang of anxiety in my belly. Not knowing what to do, I raised my hand, smiled, and said, "That's me." I was on the spot. Somebody else chimed in and asked which classes my father taught, what he was like as a person, and whether he was hard, and I remember responding that I did not know because I never had him as teacher before. Looking back, I feel that I could have probably answered their questions, but I was holding something back. I knew that if I began talking about my father, I would have probably digressed into how he was an excellent clinician, a superb father to my brother and me, a wonderful husband to my mother, and how he was a great teacher (something I knew even without taking his classes). In other words, I wasn't ready to reveal just how much I admired him, which seems to uncontrollably shine through when he is the subject. I feared that my enthusiasm and admiration for him could possibly generate the impression of having an unfair advantage in the program through a special alliance with a faculty member.

Graduate Students in Clinical Psychology (GSCP) Past and Upcoming Events This Year:

▶ Welcome Back Luncheon: 10/12/11

▶ ABCT Hofstra Party: 11/11/11▶ Winter Holiday Party: 12/19/11

▶ End of the Year Party: TBD

I just didn't want to be seen as different from everyone else. As it turned out, the fact that my father taught in the program never became an issue. I made some very close friends and developed a deep sense of camaraderie with my classmates.

It is difficult to describe my relationship with my father without first telling the story of my family life. I grew up in a child-centered home where family life was organized around the needs of my brother and me. We spent a lot of time together as a family. For example, we always had dinner together, which was time spent talking and listening to one another. I remember my brother and I doing most of the talking and my parents listening carefully and responding with genuine interest and curiosity. My parents loved one another very much, and it was obvious just by the way they looked and spoke to each other. They had an alliance that seemed unbreakable. There was always a sense of security, trust, warmth and respect even in the face of frustrating circumstances and inconveniences. I always experienced my parents as unified regardless of the situation, and I attribute that to the incredible loving bond they have.

My father and I have always had a very special relationship. From an early age, I always knew where I stood with him, and that is something that has never changed. In other words, I always knew that he held me in the highest regard and admired me as a person despite any problems that I had. I never felt that I had to disown parts of myself in order to earn his approval. I knew that all I had to do was be myself, and that was good enough. Reflecting on my earliest childhood memories, I can recall the two of us bonding and having so many experiences together. He was always available and seemed interested in whatever activity I was involved with from sports and leisure activities to academics. Even today, my father knows me better than anyone. He is keenly aware of my deepest wishes and fears and in what ways those things sometimes conflict. I often seek his advice and counsel when feeling unsure of myself. One thing I am completely sure of, however, is that because of him, I know exactly what a good man looks like and what a great father and loving husband looks like. As I grow older, I am starting to see more and more of him in me. Sometimes it is subtle, like words coming out of my mouth that only he would say. Other times, it is much deeper than that. It is a recognition of something beneath the surface in the way I feel inside and the kind of man that I am. I am so grateful because I know this is the greatest gift that could ever be passed down from a father to his son.

Hofstra Homecoming for Dr. DJ Moran

by Jennifer Allen, M.A. (right) and Amber Ufford, M.A. (left)



In September 2011, Hofstra alumnus Dr. DJ Moran made a visit back to his old stomping grounds. He presented a day-long workshop on ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy) for faculty and students from the Clinical Ph.D.

and School-Community Psy.D. programs. Dynamic and full of enthusiasm, Dr. Moran had us at "hello" (at 9 a.m. on a Friday, coffee in hand).

Students and faculty enjoyed Dr. Moran's jubilant sense of humor, as well as his clear expression of expertise. The activities throughout the workshop kept everyone attentive and engaged. While the majority of the workshop was intended to be instructional, a major highlight included an experiential portion during which attendees paired up and acted as the "mind" of their partner — an exercise meant to demonstrate how our thoughts use language to get us to engage in certain behaviors. The partner playing the "mind" would attempt to convince the other person to do something, while the other tried to not do it. "Words are very powerful," explained Dr. Moran, "but they don't have to be." Amusingly, this resulted in Dr. Salzinger and Dr. Kassinove chasing one another around the Student Center.

The material discussed by Dr. Moran evoked questions from several faculty members, which spurred discussions reminiscent of the infamous debate that occurred at the ABCT Conference in 2007 between Dr. Moran (accompanied by Dr. Steve Hayes) and Drs. Leahy, Salzinger, O'Brien, and DiGiuseppe. As students, it was fascinating for us to observe how the dynamic between Dr. Moran and the Hofstra faculty has inevitably changed since his time as a student here. Although colleagues undoubtedly change when in the field, it was amusing to see Dr. Moran occasionally fall into the position of student again. It is hard for us students to imagine giving a presentation to the myriad of our seemingly "all-knowing" clinical faculty, especially as they represent some of the leading experts in our field, while we are merely humble beginners. Throughout his presentation, Dr. Moran demonstrated a graceful balance between his roles as former student and fellow expert.

During the lunch hour, Dr. Moran joined students in the cafeteria for good eats and fun conversation. Students had the opportunity to ask questions about ACT, as well as learn about Dr. Moran's professional career and what life can offer after graduate school. Dr. Moran discussed his new-found fame since appearing on several shows on TLC, including Hoarding: Buried Alive and Confessions: Animal Hoarding, describing how surprising it has been to be recognized from television. In this way, Dr. Moran demonstrated the many opportunities and incredible professional flexibility that a Hofstra education can provide. He has enjoyed several accomplishments since beginning his career, including founding his own private practice, pursuing a path in academia, and establishing his own consulting firm, indubitably setting a great example for us students. As he made evident, the degree we are pursuing at Hofstra can lead us down a variety of paths. In discussing aspects of ACT, Dr. Moran described psychological flexibility and the importance of thinking of ourselves as "selfas-context" rather than "self-as-content," meaning not defining the self in terms of, "I am _____" (e.g., "I am a poor graduate student"). Why, Dr. Moran questions, can't we just be. "I am. Period." Thus, we do not set boundaries for ourselves, and we leave room for flexibility in life, including our careers.

Before the conclusion of the workshop, Dr. Moran welcomed additional questions from students and faculty. It was eye-opening to hear different students' perspectives on applying ACT to their varying client populations. Examples of this included applying ACT to varying age groups (specifically children and adolescents) and how to handle defining and working toward personal values with clients coming from strong religious backgrounds, with strict moral codes shared by the community. Dr. Moran responded with insight and extensive knowledge, providing attendees with thought-provoking answers and suggestions.

All in all, Dr. Moran was successful at achieving a fine balance between being humorous and informative, theoretical and practical, as well as experiential and educational. His enthusiasm was contagious, and everyone in attendance learned a great deal about ACT and maybe something about themselves, as well. Perhaps after this workshop we can all be more effective in love and work. After all, according to Freud, that's all there is.

One Brief Semester by Mike Toohey, M.A.



I did not want to take Marriage and Family with Dr. G because the class was offered on a Wednesday. Even though it would be his last class before retiring, I tried every possible strategy to avoid taking the train in from the city every Wednesday. I fought the world. And I lost. Well, I lost the battle, I guess, but I am glad I did.

Dr. G has a lot to say about things. But man, I really enjoyed hearing his thoughts. Dr. G, in sweater vest/jacket with patches, is a man that is engaging, thoughtful, knowledgeable, creative, and flexibly structured. Dr. G knows better than anyone that teaching, at its core, is an art form, just like therapy. And Dr. G is an artist.

I think that one the most impressive things about Dr. G is the impact he was able to have on his students, myself included, given the very short amount of time we had together. I did not know Dr. G before Marriage and Family, and he retired right after. Yet, from knowing him for about two hours a week for 16 weeks, my outlook has changed on both therapy and teaching forever. Consider my perspective broadened.

Dr. G taught me how stupid I am. That's my own phrasing, of course, but that's essentially what happened. You don't know how ignorant you are until Dr. G rips you apart in front of the class for clearly not knowing how to observe and understand a patient in a recorded therapy session. Ah, memories. Love it or hate it, you learned. I realized how little I knew about my patients, and how much I could learn about them from their behavior in session alone. I had thought I was good at picking up behavioral cues, but I learned there was so much more to be learned from them. Dr. G really opened my eyes to a completely different aspect of therapy – knowing the patient. Seems obvious, doesn't it? Whether Dr. G meant to or not, he taught me that the quality of the therapist is much more important than his or her theoretical orientation. I can't say I'm completely sold on psychodynamic therapy (or CBT or any other school, for that matter). But I am sold on Dr. G.

I'm hardly one of Dr. G's closest students. More accurately, I am writing this article on behalf of the students that only knew Dr. G for a semester. Yet, I saw a clear change in myself in that short time, and it would be impossible for me to forget that. Thank you so much, Dr. G, for how much you have influenced me as a clinician, teacher, and as a person. I wish you the best in your retirement.

To Vincent Guarnaccia by Jacqueline D. Urcan, Ph.D.



It was both an honor and a privilege to be able to work with Dr. Vincent Guarnaccia, first as a student in his classes early on in my Ph.D. pursuits, and then in the final stages of working toward my Ph.D., as his last dissertation student. Both in the classroom and through my dissertation meetings, Dr. Guarnaccia's expertise in a variety of different areas helped

me learn skills that I carry with me today, and for many years to come, as a clinician.

From both his Marriage and Family Therapy and Personality Assessment classes, I (as well as many, many others) learned skills that I will utilize and carry with me throughout my career in psychology. The Marriage and Family class and clinic will not be the same without Dr. Guarnaccia. During these classes and supervision, Dr. Guarnaccia shared so much of what he learned through his years in the field, and as a therapist now I find myself utilizing so many of the skills I learned from these classes.

I could not have asked for a better sponsor for my specific dissertation topic. Dr. Guarnaccia's knowledge and expertise in marriage and family dynamics was both impressive and helpful, and I consider myself privileged to have had the opportunity to work so closely with Dr. Guarnaccia prior to his retirement. I am so appreciative for all of his support, timely feedback, and unique

ability to decrease my anxiety many times with his much needed sense of humor throughout the entire dissertation-writing process.

Perhaps the greatest skill I have taken with me from working with Dr. Guarnaccia is something that I continue to work on and that many who have not had the privilege to work as closely with Dr. Guarnaccia may not understand. It is the ability to talk to people and present psychological information in an "Oprah audience" manner. Not only does this phrase still make me smile to this day, but it has also helped me get through countless meetings with colleagues, as well as presentations and, of course, my dissertation oral defense.

Right before he retired, I expressed my sentiments to Dr. Guarnaccia, which I'm sure I share with many others at Hofstra. While Hofstra is losing one of its best when it comes to teaching and advisement, I wish him all the best in his retirement years as he moves forward after many years of leaving a "footprint" on the lives of his students, colleagues and many others that he has helped along the way.

Vin, after so many years of helping others in so many different ways, I sincerely hope you enjoy some much deserved relaxation during your retirement! While you may no longer be at Hofstra, so many of your past students carry with them pieces of knowledge that they learned from you, and I know that stories of you and your classes will live on at Hofstra long after your retirement. Thanks for everything, Vin. You will be missed!

Thoughts and Revelations About Dr. Vincent Guarnaccia

by Howard Kassinove, Ph.D., ABPP



This is just plain wrong! To place an article about Dr. Vincent Guarnaccia in *Intermittent Reinforcement* suggests that he only *sometimes* reinforced us by being a wonderful faculty member, colleague, and friend. Actually, his contributions were so consistent that I think my comments belong in a newsletter titled *Continuous Reinforcement*. But, I was asked to

write for this program newsletter, so here goes.

I met Vinnie 39 years ago, when he came to Hofstra as an assistant professor in 1972. He was armed with a bachelor's degree from City College (where he studied industrial psychology), and a master's and Ph.D. in school psychology from Teachers College/Columbia University. He quickly became an important asset to our Ph.D. program. Among his other contributions, he served for many years as assistant director for school psychology in our Combined Ph.D. program. I turned to him for support and guidance many times, especially during my own years as department chairperson. So, when he announced his retirement, I knew we would lose an important member of the core program faculty, and I knew I would be sad. That has turned out to be quite true.

Vinnie was well-known for having a psychodynamic bent. Most folks know that he was an advocate for projective testing and marital and family psychotherapy. Keeping with those specific interests, he eventually developed a Story Analysis Rating Scale for use with the Thematic Apperception Test. However, he was always a well-rounded scientist and practitioner. He was pragmatic in his approach to student and program issues and to the clinical cases he supervised in PERCC. Vinnie had a wealth of experiences that he brought to the Hofstra classroom. For example, he served for many years as a consultant to the Association for the Help of Retarded Children. He was a research consultant for the White Plains Public Schools and, prior to his Hofstra appointment, he worked in the Ardsley Public Schools and the Hewlett-Woodmere School District.

At the graduate level, Vinnie served as coordinator for the Qualifying Examination and as chair of the Department Ethics Committee. He was a member of the Hofstra Council on Professional Education and he worked collaboratively with personnel from Hofstra's School of Education and Allied Human Services (now School of Education, Health and Human Services) to help them prepare for their accreditation reviews. A special contribution to the Ph.D. program, in my judgment, was that for many years he and his wife, Aurora, held a party for second-year students in their home. I always went and ate too much, but I loved those evenings. There was piano playing, singing, and other such festivities.

His community and professional work was substantial. Over the years Vinnie spoke at SUNY Stony Brook on test anxiety, at Sewanhaka High School on family violence, and at St. John's Episcopal Hospital on marital therapy. He published in journals such as The School Psychologist and Journal of Personality Assessment, was quoted in various magazines such as Women's Day, and appeared on media programs such as cable TV's Telecare. His service to the field included work as an ad hoc reviewer for the Journal of Personality Assessment, Basic and Applied Social Psychology, Perceptual and Motor Skills, and Psychological Reports. He also gave presentations at ABCT and APA, and he published in surprisingly diverse areas. For example, Vinnie and his colleagues co-published papers about children's wishes (1979), the effects of physical restraint devices on self-injurious behavior (1980), response tendencies in OCD patients (1981), personality theory and assessment (1989), contingent reinforcement effects on the Holtzman Inkblot Test in prison inmates (1990), motivational correlates of life satisfaction in the elderly (1996), short-forms of the Stanford Binet (1998), and a paper about scoring accuracy when using the Rorschach (2001). Based on the multiple areas of these publications, it is easy to see that Vinnie's contributions covered both the psychodynamic and behavioral spheres, across the lifespan. In 1992, because of his many contributions, Vinnie became a fellow of the Society for Personality Assessment.

During his early years at Hofstra, my wife, Tina, and I would visit Vinnie and Aurora in their apartment. We got to know their two toddler sons, Greg and Cliff, and felt an affinity toward them since we also had two sons. We had dinners, skied together at Windham in upstate NY, and so forth. Actually, I knew something about their family before Vinnie came to Hofstra.

A little-known fact is that Vinnie's brother Vito had graduated from Hofstra's Ph.D. program in 1972. Vito was my student when I taught Group Psychotherapy, from the then-popular humanist-experiential perspective. That's a little known fact about me. Vito told me about having this brother, who would soon become my long-term colleague.

Little did I know that some 33 years after meeting the family, I would serve as the dissertation sponsor for their son Cliff, as he pursued his own Ph.D. in psychology. Following in his father's footsteps, Cliff worked on the assessment of social processing deficits from TAT stories. I thought it was an honor to work with Cliff, and he turned out to be a very good psychologist in his own right. Of course, I was told by Aurora that I had better do a good job with Cliff. I hope I did.

I want to add a bit about Vinnie's teaching, as he was always excellent in the classroom. Most graduates and students know him based upon his work with doctoral students. He taught

(continued from page 5)

classes on family psychology and projective testing, supervised dissertations and PERCC assessments, and sat on many committees. In my judgment, he was a tough but very supportive dissertation chairperson and committee member, whose thoughtful ideas were much appreciated.

Early on, however, he made less well-known teaching contributions to our undergraduate program. During his early years at Hofstra, Vinnie and I co-taught a large section of

Introduction to Psychology every semester — with a few hundred students in it. It was a great opportunity for me to hear his thoughts and to observe his teaching style. I learned from him, as I hope the students learned from us.

So, after 39 years of contributions to Hofstra, Vinnie has retired for the world of Aurora, Florida, golf, and all those other good things. Good for you, Vin. We miss you.

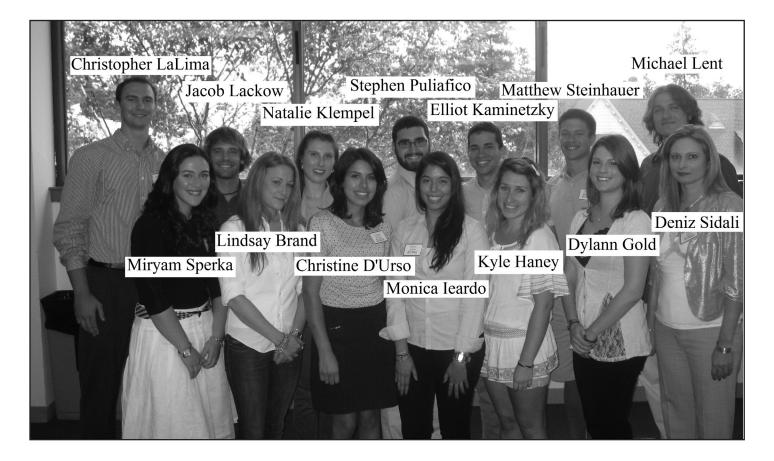
Congratulations to our 2011 Ph.D. Recipients!

(as of November 30, including those pending internship)

Samantha Dimisa Regina Lazarovich Steve Mehl

Robert Gruenfelder Jeninne McNeill Jacqueline D. Urcan

Welcome to the Class of 2011!











Alumni Moments With Dr. G

"When I was a student in Vinnie's Projective Measures class in 1992, I was a wisecracking kid who was flat against the use of projective measures, and wasn't shy about sharing my views. I'm sure I must have been a delight! Fortunately, many years later we became colleagues, and I was pleasantly surprised how often we agreed with each other when we served on dissertation committees together. Thank you for all of the wonderful memories, Vinnie. Best wishes to you."

- M. Joann Wright, Ph.D., '96

"By the time Vinnie interviewed me for the program, my enthusiasm for the interview process — even to attend graduate school — had waned. In one of the best demonstrations of interviewing to which I was ever witness, Vinnie reinvigorated my desire to continue my education by allowing me to be genuine."

- Shane Owens, Ph.D., ABPP, '03

"I remember Dr. Guarnaccia supervising a couples case ... high tension and conflict. The spouse traveled quite a bit on business and was often away for multiple days. The spouse was not crazy about this, but it was not a central complaint. So being the dense new therapist I was, I said, 'How do you feel or think about your spouse being away in strange hotels all over creation for days on end?' (I don't think I worded it quite that way.) When hearing the tape on the session for supervision Vin firmly corrected me, 'Don't bring up problems that the couple doesn't have to begin with.' I remember that bit of simple advice; it stuck with me. Thanks, Dr. Guarnaccia."

- Mark Sisti, Ph.D., A.C.T., '92

"One of my fondest memories of Dr. Guarnaccia was the day I orally defended my dissertation. It was a day filled with down-pouring rain, lightning, and thunder. A few minutes after I successfully finished and was called 'Dr. Soleymani' for the first time, Dr. G walks in from the outside. When I asked him how the weather was outside, he said, 'It's raining out there but it sure is sunny in here!' (alluding to my happiness from just having passed my orals). This quote is one I will never forget. Congratulations and good luck, Dr. Guarnaccia!"

- Nancy Soleymani, Ph.D., '99

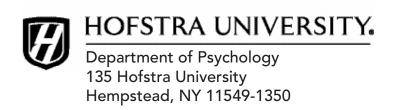
"Vin once related how he queried a suspiciously appropriate response on the Comprehension subtest about what to do when someone picks a fight with you. With very little pressure, the subject clarified, 'I'd bust that MF'er in the mouth ...'"

— Tom Kote, Ph.D., '01

Comments from two students made anonymously from a student survey in May 2011:

"Marriage and Family Therapy was one of the best learning experiences I have had throughout my graduate and undergraduate education. I learned a lot of techniques and subtleties that distinguish between someone working from a standardized treatment regimen and someone who is truly engaged with the client."

"I think future classes will miss out tremendously on the psychodynamic perspective without Dr. Guarnaccia."



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If you have any suggestions or ideas for future *Intermittent Reinforcement* articles, or are interested in writing an article, please contact Ms. Joan Connors at Joan.Connors@hofstra.edu.

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