On that busy Friday morning, Martinez and her classmates separated into three groups, each exploring the nuances of Middle Eastern, Caribbean, or Kosher food. Martinez concocted a Caribbean chicken recipe with rice and vegetables. At the end, she sat down with her classmates to taste each other's culinary creations for a true immersion into world cuisine. Opfer explained how they could slightly modify unhealthy recipes to improve the diets of their future clients.

"Obesity is a great problem in the United States," said Sumiya Salmeen, a transfer student who joined Lehman after hearing of its dietetics program. "I would like to advise people on how to change their lifestyle by eating better food."

Lehman’s degree in dietetics, foods, and nutrition trains future dieticians to interact with clients from all walks of life. Some will choose to do community work for wellness programs, while others may join food banks, hospitals, or food pantries. But for most of them, Lehman’s kitchen is the first exposure to a professional cooking environment.

“Knowing about the different cultures is really the most interesting part for me because the previous classes dealt more with the science," said Lizette Martinez, a senior student in dietetics. “This one is actually dealing with the way people actually eat, so that’s interesting to learn what appeals to the people you’re cooking for or preparing a menu for. And this is a good way to do it because, especially in New York City, you meet a lot of different cultures, races, and religions.”
In her research Prof. Goral, who was recently awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for teaching and research in Buenos Aires in the spring, is specifically interested in understanding how aphasia works in people who speak multiple languages. In those who have had a stroke, for example, she considers whether more than one language became impaired, were patients proficient in one language more than another, did they learn the language(s) as children or later in life, do the languages come from the same language family (Italian and Spanish) or share the same script (English and Italian). The list of variables goes on, but by understanding these she is better able to target the rehabilitation process.

“The question that I am seeking to answer in my research is this, if I work with a bilingual person in one of their languages would the benefit of the treatment cross over to the language that we did not work on,” explains Prof. Goral.

“It’s called cross-language treatment generalization and what we’ve found recently is that while there appears to be progress across all the languages when they are treated, if a patient speaks one language better than another and treatment is given in the weaker language then the stronger language is inhibited.” The implication for bilinguals and multilinguals with aphasia is that they may not be able to communicate in their dominant language immediately following treatment as well as they would have otherwise.

While Prof. Goral stressed that this outcome was a possibility and that it would likely be temporary, it would play a role in any treatment strategy for such patients. For speakers of more than one language, especially older immigrants whose strong language is not English, the inability to communicate in their native language could be especially isolating and detrimental to their recovery.

Prof. Goral’s current research, titled “Facilitation and competition across languages in multilingual aphasia,” is supported by a four-year grant from the National Institutes of Health’s SCORE program for Hispanic Serving Institutions and the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

There are two parts to the study: the first is theoretical and seeks to understand the different variables and how they interact in multilingual aphasia and the second part aims to identify the conditions that create cross-language facilitation and competition between languages.

A graduate of Tel Aviv University, Prof. Goral holds a Ph.D. from the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She completed her post-doctoral fellowship at the Department of Neurology at Boston University School of Medicine and the Language in the Aging Brain Laboratory at the Harold Goodglass Aphasia Research Center in Boston VA Healthcare System.

Linguistics has been an academic passion of Prof. Goral’s throughout her career. She says she first became interested in the field out of an interest in language and communication and communication break down. “Naturally, I find the brain and what it does to be fascinating, but on a more clinical level I enjoy helping people regain something that is really essential to all human beings and that is the ability to communicate.”

—Yee ra Rosenthal

(Don’t) Pump Up the Volume

If you’re listening to rap, hip-hop, or rhythm & blues—or other types of music—on an iPod or other device, chances are you are listening too loudly.

This is according to a recent experiment led by Professor Sandra Levey of the Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences Department aimed at understanding why iPod users may pump up the volume while listening to music. The article, “Portable Music Players Users: Cultural Differences and Potential Dangers,” was published in Noise & Hearing, a bimonthly inter-disciplinary international journal.

For her experiment, Prof. Levey and her team examined the volume level of portable listening devices (PLD)—such as Smartphones or other MP3 players—used by individuals on a college campus and on a busy street corner in New York’s Union Square. A total of 196 individuals from a variety of ethnic backgrounds participated. The final analysis showed that young iPod users and African-Americans listening to rap or hip hop did indeed listen the loudest and were more likely to exceed recommended listening times.

Prof. Levey and her researchers believe the reasons behind the ethnic disparity can be found in the culture and the surrounding environment. For example, PLD use is more prevalent in urban environments than in rural ones. Urban dwellers tend to use their PDLs as isolation booths, a way to create distance from fellow passengers on trains or to break away from the noise of the city.

In its own way, the music itself demands to be played loud. In the article, Prof. Levey and her coauthors cite a book by Tricia Rose, a professor of Africana Studies at Brown University. In Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America, Rose discusses how the technology in music production of the 1970s and 1980s allowed rap artists to amplify the bass, which emits a low-frequency sound. As a consequence, rap music is often played at a higher volume by fans in order to appreciate it more fully.

Still, despite findings that African-Americans listen longer and louder, this group reports lower incidences of hearing loss than white participants. Researchers believe this may have something to do with the presence of melanin, which some believe plays a role in the structure of the ear canal. “This was really an important experiment,” says Prof. Levey. “In the end, I am interested in the effect that hearing loss has on language, especially for young children whose learning may be affected by a hearing loss. The understanding that loud and long listening to music is necessary in my quest to lower or even to eliminate noise-induced hearing loss.”

In the meantime, she recommends that everyone listen up and lower the volume.

—Yee ra Rosenthal

(Opposite) Students utilize Lehman College’s newly refurbished kitchen lab as their classroom.