The Seventh Annual College of Education Research Conference
Saturday, April 26, 2008

The Cornerstones of the College of Education:
Honoring Inquiry, Promoting Mentoring, and Fostering Scholarship

The purpose of the Florida International University Annual College of Education Research Conference (COERC) is to enhance the existing research culture. The conference provides a meaningful vehicle for the preparation, mentorship, and presentation of scholarly work by students, faculty, and alumni.
Proceedings of
The Seventh Annual College of Education Research Conference

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Acknowledgements

The FIU College of Education Research Conference Steering Committee would like to thank the College of Education faculty and students for supporting the Seventh Annual COE Research conference. Special thanks must go to the Office of Research and Grants for their sponsorship under the guidance of Associate Dean Abbas Tashakkori, for the invaluable work of program assistants Liana Casbarro and Maria Tester. We would never have solved many logistical problems without the support of Liana and Maria.

We have had several firsts this year.

- Nella Roberts and Adriana McEachern led an amazing campaign to secure sponsors. They secured $1500 dollars in donations to sponsor lunch, breakfast, tables, and gifts for our raffle.
- Nick Benson suggested we include symposiums in addition to papers and 3 were submitted.
- The Office of Research and Grants is sponsoring awards for the best manuscript based on dissertation research and submitted to a journal for consideration and a second award for the best article based on a dissertation. Adriana McEachern has been instrumental in crafting criteria for these new awards as well as leading the committee to select the winners. She also chairs the L. R. Gay Award committee. Normally this committee has a half dozen student only authored papers to review for the award. This year 29 papers were authored by students.

The Graduate Student Network has assisted the conference for several years by volunteering at the registration table, putting together packets, and other odd jobs. For the second year, there will be an award for the best student paper sponsored by the Graduate Student Network.

Sarah M. Nielsen and Maria S. “Masha” Plakhotnik deserve deeply felt thanks. They have edited every paper in the proceedings for years. Sarah has done this since she was a doctoral student seven years ago. Masha organizes and records all submissions, sees that papers are tracked during the review process, and monitors accepted papers and authors responses to reviewers’ comments. Sarah and Masha also helped organize the program.

Hilary Landorf and Ann Nevin developed our review process and have managed this process for several years now. This includes locating faculty to review, prompting reviewers to return reviews, and doing additional reviews when needed.

Without the continuing support of so many, this conference would not exist, so thank you again for making our Seventh Annual Conference so successful. We are looking forward to next year.

From all of us on the COE 2008 Research Conference Steering Committee
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Assists schools in providing an excellent education for those children who are typically underserved, particularly poor children and children of African descent; develops initiatives to promote research and creative experiences that address critical issues of power and pedagogy in schools and communities, both locally and nationally; and supports existing College of Education programs that are congruent with the mission of the Center.

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GSN hosts events with great speakers, offers a community for writing the dissertation, and provides opportunities for socializing and sharing learning experiences among graduate students and faculty in the College of Education.

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Pedro J. Greer Jr. is a physician, professor, author, father, and husband. Dr. Greer Jr. takes his Hippocratic Oath seriously; his concern for those without access to healthcare has fueled his passion and allowed the creation of various free clinics for the homeless, undocumented, migrant, and poor of Miami. As a medical intern (1984) he founded the Camillus Health Concern, now serving over 10,000 homeless patients a year. The clinic also serves as a model clinic for the poor as well as a rotation for medical students. Due to the increasing number of undocumented aliens in the Miami area, he founded the Saint John Bosco clinic in 1991 and serves as its medical director. Medical students also rotate through this clinic, now located at Corpus Christi Catholic Church in Miami, Florida. Currently, he is Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs at the Florida International University School of Medicine. He also enjoys a private practice of Gastroenterology at Mercy Hospital with his father. He also has been advisor to President Clinton and President Bush, Sr.

Better known as “Joe”, he has written a book entitled “Waking up in America”, published by Simon and Schuster. It is an autobiographical account of his early years, recounting stories from under the bridges in Miami to the White House. He has published over 25 articles and book chapters, ranging from digestive disorders to issues of policy and poverty in America. He has been featured on ABC, CBS, NBC, Fox Family Channel, and PBS, hosted a segment for the Travel Channel, HBO’s documentary “AMERICANOS”, and the PBS/BBC series “Medicine at the Crossroads”, and has been a guest on various talk shows.

He has been honored with three Papal medals “Pro Ecclesia ET Pontifica” and knighted as a Knight of Malta and the Order of Saint Gregory the Great. He is the recipient of many awards, including the highly prestigious MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship and the Presidential Service Award presented by Presidents Clinton, Bush, Carter, and General Powell at the 1997 Presidential summit in Philadelphia. In 1994, he was named by Time magazine as one of America’s 50 Young American Leaders under 40.

The following year he received the CBS/Newsweek Achievement Award at the Kennedy Center. He was named the 1996 Doctor of the Year for teaching by the magazine Hippocrates: Health and Medicine for Physicians. Hispanic Magazine named him Hispanic of the year in December 2002. In 2005, he was honored as the Health Care Hero of the Americas by Pan American Health Organization in Washington, DC. He has lectured at such prestigious academic institutions as Harvard, Emory, and the University of Florida to name a few and has been commencement speaker for New York Medical College, University of Miami (Law and Business Schools), University of Florida Medical School, East Tennessee State Medical School, and Stonehill College as well as other undergraduate institutions.

He currently serves as a Trustee at the RAND Corporation (America’s oldest and largest think tank), a board member at the Mellon-United Bank of Florida, Chairman of the Hispanic Heritage Awards Foundation in Washington, DC, Comic Relief, and other national organizations. He has served on the Board of Dr. Pepper/7-UP, Physicians for Human Rights, and The Cuban – American National Council to name a few. Dr. Greer did his undergraduate studies at the
University of Florida, Medical studies at La Universidad Catolica Madre and Maestra, and all his postdoctoral studies at the University of Miami where he was Chief Medical Resident and a fellow in Hepatology (at the Center for liver Diseases under Eugene Schiff, MD), a fellow in Gastroenterology earning two post-doctoral fellowships, and a member of AOA (Honor Medical Society). He is currently in Fellow in the American College of Physician and the American College of Gastroenterology. He has received various Honorary Doctoral degrees. He is married to Janus, and they have two children, Alana and Joey, two cats, and a dog, and they live in Coral Gables, Florida.
The Lorraine R. Gay Award for Excellence in Research and Scholarship

The purpose of the award is to acknowledge, in the name of L. R. Gay, outstanding research scholarship on the part of students and their supporting faculty in the College of Education of FIU.

L. R. (Lorrie) Gay, the founding professor of educational research for the FIU College of Education, was dedicated to students, to the rigorous pursuit of educational excellence and to research scholarship. She chaired the first doctoral dissertation awarded in the College of Education. She published textbooks in educational research, tests and measurement, and educational psychology. They were published as L.R. rather than Lorrie because the publisher felt a female author would not be as accepted as a male, so initials were used. The educational research text became the best-selling book of its kind and her publisher estimates that 1 out of every 2 students in the field has used this text.

The recipients of this award walk in the shadow of someone who cared for every student, and fought to make our course in educational research the best of its kind because she knew this was the way to best serve students. If you have taken the course you know what it requires and as you realize the skills you have attained through her efforts, you appreciate her efforts to this day, years after her passing.

It is anticipated that one award will be presented annually to the student whose research best exemplifies Lorrie’s high standards. In the case of multiple authors for the same paper, multiple awards will be bestowed.

The awards are determined based upon papers submitted for presentation at the College of Education Annual Research Conference. Award decisions are determined by the judgment of the faculty members serving as the L. R. Gay Award Sub-Committee. Members of this sub-committee are to be selected by the entire Steering Committee. The current members of the L. R. Gay Award sub-committee are Adriana G. McEachern (Chair), Louis Manfra, Marilyn Montgomery, Ann Nevin, Sarah M. Nielsen, and Maria S. Plakhotnik.

L. R. Gay Award Recipients

2007  Liana Casbarro and Jemlys Jäger, *The Mistranslation of the ABCs: An American AIDS Education Campaign in Botswana*


2005  Victoria A. Giordano, *A Professional Development Model to Promote Internet Integration into P-12 Teaching Practices*

2004  Kandell Malocsay, *The Effects of Cultural Distance on Student Socialization and Departure Decisions*

2003  Sarah M. Nielsen, *High Stakes and No Takers: The Impact of Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) Writing on Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Writing*

2002  Loraine Wasserman, *The Effects of a Family-based Educational Intervention on the Prevention of Lead Poisoning in Children*
The College of Education Graduate Student Network Award

The College of Education Graduate Student Network (COE-GSN) was started by Debra Pane and Claudia Grigorescu in 2005 to unite graduate students and find ways to enhance the graduate student experience. During the last three years, GSN has held several fundraisers to support graduate student COE Research Conference (COERC) attendance, donate funds for those in need (e.g., Tsunami disaster relief), and provide a monetary award for best student presentation at the 2007 COERC and best student paper at the 2008 COERC. GSN hosts workshops throughout the semester, invites guest speakers to its general meetings, and supports the needs of fellow graduate students through activities such as the most recent creation of the GSN Dissertation Writing Group. As a student-run organization, GSN hopes to continue the spirit of academia by fostering, supporting, and altogether creating a graduate student culture.

Last year, COE-GSN had the Best Student Presentation Award at the COE Research Conference that was awarded to Sofia Bitela for her presentation “Band Queer: Lesbian and Gay marching, and symphonic bands and transformative and emancipatory learning experiences for adults.” This year, GSN is giving an award for the Best Student Conference Paper 2008. Under the guidance of the new GSN president, Jacqueline Pena, the GSN team conducted a blind review of all the student manuscripts and selected the winner based guidelines developed by the GSN executive board and its members.
College of Education
Peer-Reviewed Papers
Bringing ESL Students to Literacy and Social Integration: Barriers and Strategies
Heidi Steen Anderson
Florida International University, USA

Abstract: In this paper, the author explores the barriers that students of English as a Second Language (ESL) face in coming fully literate in English and fully integrated into American society. The barriers cited include inadequate training of reading specialists to work with ESL students, turf wars between reading specialists and ESL teachers, inadequate preparation of students for high school and higher education, as well as a lack of academic research on developing reading skills in ESL students. Strategies for overcoming these barriers include improvement in teacher training, understanding of the student population and students’ first language (L1), and promoting success in literacy.

This paper asks the question, “What are the barriers and strategies to bringing ESL students to full literacy and social integration?” Before this question can be answered, one must define the term literacy. Literacy is neither a simple nor static concept. Chatel (2002) defines literacy as “a dynamic and ongoing process of perpetual transformation.” She describes literacy as “change itself.” (p. 45) Chatel characterizes a literate person as having four defining abilities: (a) to know what search strategies to use for research, (b) to be a critical thinker and consumer of information, (c) to be aware of the many meanings inherent in media, and (d) to be a life-long learner, communicator, and user of technology. Wong-Filmore and Snow (2000) state the following on the subjects of language and literature:

Classroom teachers and other educators should be able to answer a basic set of questions regarding oral and written language. Underlying their knowledge should be an understanding that oral language proficiency developed first in the native language (and often in a second language) serves as the foundation for literacy and as the means for learning in school and out. Teachers need to know how written language contrasts with speech so they can help their students acquire literacy. (p. 1)

Why is this matter worthy of our attention as educators, parents, and citizens? The number of children in the nation’s public schools, between the ages of 5 and 17, has more than doubled from 3.8 million in 1979 to 9.9 million in 2004 (Brody, 2006). Students of ESL who are recent immigrants to the United States, or whose parents do not speak English, have the doubly daunting task of becoming literate in not one, but two, languages. Furthermore, while developing literacy in their second language, they must also navigate the socio-cultural aspects of American society. Linda Klippenstein (personal communication, 1991), ESL Instructor in the New Hampshire Public School System, states that her ESL students who are the adopted children of English-speaking parents progress in English at a much quicker rate than the children of new immigrants who speak only the family’s first language in the home. In addition to being exposed to English 24/7 by native speakers, the adopted children are being shown the social “ropes” by their parents. The English-speaking parents are already fully integrated into American society and, thus, are able to support and guide their children’s social integration as well. The ability of an adopted parent to teach “Ring around the Rosy” or “London Bridge” could save children
months of exclusion and frustration on the playground. In addition to knowing the words to the rhymes, the child must know the actions in order to participate. The playground can be a challenging place for a young ESL student, both linguistically and socially. Duff (2002) affirms this assertion with this quotation, “Children (and adults) who have grown up with the same narratives draw freely on them in their interactions with others as a means of establishing their in-group membership” (p. 482).

Chatel (2002) goes on to clarify the four qualities of literacy by referring to Kasper’s (2002) who classifies literacy into four types: (a) functional, (b) academic, (c) critical, and (d) electronic. Functional literacy is the ability to use the four language skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening comprehension) to gain knowledge and express oneself. Academic literacy is the ability to gain knowledge by reading and responding to scholarly materials. Critical literacy is the ability to judge the validity and reliability of a media source. Finally, electronic literacy is the ability to use non-print media to gain knowledge as well as to understand patterns and changing relationships.

**Barriers to Socio-linguistic Integration for ESL students**

What are some of the barriers to bringing ESL students to achieving full linguistic and socio-cultural integration? Grant and Wong (2003) feel there are two major obstacles. The first is the inadequacy of teacher colleges to train reading specialists to work with second-language learners. This deficit is a serious one. According to their research, 30-40% of ESL students in K-6 do not reach grade-appropriate reading levels in English by the time they complete elementary school. Students who did not achieve grade-level reading skills by the time they graduated from high school, rarely—if ever—continued to increase their ability to read in English.

I can attest to the research of Grant and Wong (2003) with an anecdote about my father who immigrated to the United States at age 15. He was not an English speaker, did not have English-speaking parents, and missed four years of school because of the events of World War II. No special education programs were available in his new U.S. school system, so he was simply “mainstreamed.” (Assimilation of new immigrants in 1949 was by the sink-or-swim method. Fortunately, my father swam—perhaps because Dutch is so similar to English.) Although he succeeded in graduating from high school and college on time, he does not find reading a pleasure. I have never seen him read a novel, in any language. His reading is limited to the newspaper, which is written at the 12th-grade level, or lower. This quotation from Edmondson (2001) addresses my father’s experiences as well as those of many students today:

> We want every child to learn to read and to enjoy reading for a variety of purposes. Yet much of the reform and standardization of reading education is aimed toward a select few; at the expense of a great many. It is important to consider who will benefit, and conversely who will be left out, from any given reform. (p. 626)

Murie, Rojas Collins, and Detzner (2004) take the position that many ESL students emerge from the K-12 experience poorly prepared for higher education. They draw attention to the need to design courses and give assignments that acknowledge the strengths of multilingual writers and that build fluency and academic literacy. Murie et al. document the creation of an interdisciplinary life history project where students were called upon to write extensively, gather data (do research), and synthesize personal and historical stories. The project acknowledged their expertise as bilingual, bicultural writers even without full mastery of English. The authors credited their success to the following strengths of the project: the audience and purpose were real; data collection was extensive; research was contextualized; student work was connected to
literature; writing was seen as a creative process; extended drafting and reader response created a safe place to develop fluency; students were able to find themselves in the curriculum, and the project rejected the deficit model of “remediation” (Murie et al., 2004).

The deficits in ESL students’ learning are the direct result of inadequately prepared reading specialists (Grant & Wong, 2003). Unless state certification and re-certification programs require educators to take courses and in-service instruction in ESL and the needs of ESL students, the present situation is unlikely to change.

Turf wars between ESL instructors and Reading Specialists need to be addressed with interdisciplinary training. Reading Specialists need to be educated in the special needs of English language learners, and ESL instructors need to be trained in the development of literacy. Grant and Wong (2003) suggest the development of “Literacy Practitioners” (p. 386): educators who are trained to be reading specialists as well as ESL specialists and who receive special training in diversity. The second obstacle they find is the lack of academic research on the subject of developing English reading skills in ESL students. When preparing their research, Grant and Wong were dismayed at the “paucity” of research available on their subject. They provide a list of suggestions they feel should be research priorities. Researchers should expand the scope of research on English reading to include language-minority students, move the research away from effectiveness studies that merely criticize ESL reading instruction without offering clear alternatives, develop a clear position on the danger of language loss and benefits of maintaining students’ first languages, provide substantive information for mainstream teachers about how to help students after they have left bilingual or ESL programs, investigate the linguistic differences between English and other languages for literacy development, shift attention to students who have other native languages, especially non-European languages, focus on critical literacy and teachers’ attitudes toward race, poverty, language, and power.

**Strategies for Facilitating Socio-Linguistic Integration for ESL Students**

Educators cannot begin to be effective until they become familiar with the stages of language development as well as cultural adaptation (Ernst-Slavit, Moore, & Maloney, 2002). They break down these stages as follows: (a) preproduction, (b) early production, (c) speech emergence, and (d) intermediate fluency. In the Preproduction phase students listen, watch, and communicate with very short phrases, such as “yes” or “thank you.” This period is virtually silent, but the student is taking in all types of information: linguistic and behavioral. The students may appear withdrawn, distracted, or even confused. Teachers can reduce students’ stress during this period by not putting them on the spot or asking them to do more than they are ready for, especially in front of peers. In the Early Production phase, students begin to assimilate the patterns and rules of English. The students’ level of literacy in their first language greatly affects their success in this phase. Students respond well to specific reading strategies such as pre-reading discussion especially on abstract concepts; pre-viewing key terms; and using techniques such as Venn diagrams, clusters, and other graphic organizers. Culturally, students’ frustration may peak during this phase. Ernst-Slavitt et al (2002) call this frustration “adaptation fatigue” (p. 121).

In the Speech Emergence stage students are at last ready to participate in small-group activities. At this stage, using literature is an effective way to have students relate their personal life experience to their academic assignments. Zigo (2001) even suggests using Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar* to address the concepts of ambition, betrayal, and idealism. From a cultural standpoint, students often feel relief during this phase. They have established a base and are now refining it. They have more control over their lives and participate more fully in their
environments. In the Intermediate Fluency stage, students engage in conversation. They begin to enjoy reading and writing because they can now use these skills to acquire new knowledge. Culturally, they have made friends, function well in school, and are able to critically examine information. Progressing forward through these stages is a difficult task for many ESL learners. Many become stuck in an early stage; many regress, and many never succeed in making it to the fourth stage. Making ESL educators aware of these phases and of students’ needs during these phases is an effective strategy for overcoming barriers to literacy.

Palmer, Chia-l, Change and Leclere (2006) say that it is imperative that ESL instructors have an understanding of their student population, of the linguistic differences between Chinese and English, and strategies for scaffolding language and promoting success in literacy. This article had particular impact on me and made me reflect on the first time I had a Chinese speaker in my ESL class. Although his fluency was excellent, he insisted on speaking only in the present tense. Our conversation went as follows:

Student:  Yesterday I go to Costco.
Instructor:  (Gentle correction, rephrasing the statement in question format without interrupting the flow of the conversation) Oh, really? You went to Costco yesterday?
Student:  (Frustrated) That’s what I say! I say, “Yesterday I go to Costco!”

I did not figure out where I was going wrong until another, more experienced teacher explained to me that there is only one verb tense in Chinese: the present. Time is indicated by markers such as “yesterday” and “tomorrow.” When you stop to think about English syntax, it is a bit redundant to say, “I went to Costco yesterday.” If it was yesterday, then of course the action took place in the past. Why change the tense of the verb, too? From this experience I learned that the concept of verb tenses would be much easier for a Spanish speaker to learn than for a Chinese speaker.

Another example of understanding differences in languages is teaching the verb “to be”. There are two verbs that mean “to be” in Spanish. Learning the English verb will be simple for a Spanish speaker (no choices to make between “ser” and “estar!”). However, there is no verb “to be” in Arabic. Learning the English verb for an Arabic speaker will mean learning a new concept. A good teacher can prevent a deficit learning experience by anticipating the situation and presenting the concept before teaching the verb and its forms. Palmer et al. (2006) call this anticipation by the teacher the prediction of error types and advocate using this skill to teach students about both positive and negative transfers from Chinese to English. They encourage students to use their linguistic knowledge of both their L1 and L2 to assess their development and analyze their own errors. They also find evidence that the following strategies best support the Chinese English language learners in their classroom: (a) recognize educational and cultural difference for Chinese ELL students, (b) learn contrastive analysis (language differences) for the two languages, (c) encourage the development of the student’s first language, and directly teach the positive transfers from L1 to L2, (d) develop the Chinese student’s reading, writing, listening and speaking strategies for English, (e) utilize cooperative learning groups, and (f) solicit support beyond the classroom.

Researching the topic of barriers and strategies to successful English language learners has been very informative and rewarding. The single most helpful idea I have acquired through my research is the idea of rejecting ESL education as a form of remedial teaching. It is even
more important to be an advocate and spread the word among other educators, administrators and students that ESL is not a remedial or special education class.

When my daughter Betty, a monolingual Spanish speaker at age 5, was a kindergartner in the public school system in New Hampshire, she was routinely pulled from class for ESL instruction. Her teacher did all the things that the scholars--whose work I have presented in my paper--advocate. In addition to vocabulary building and one-on-one practice in the four skills, her teacher made a point of developing her literacy. She familiarized her with the children’s literature and thus to the culture of the English-speaking world. It was not enough for her to be able to speak English, she needed to have something to talk about with her peers!

Despite the extreme success of my daughter’s ESL program, she still had to live with the perception from her peers that being an ESL student meant being a special education student (‘sped’ case) or remedial learner. Once she was even referred to as “that stupid Spanish girl who can’t speak English” by a kindergarten classmate. Eventually, Betty became a fully monolingual English speaker with no limitations on her ability to interact in American society. I owe this to the linguistic and literary skills that her ESL program developed during her K-2 years.

Reading the work of the scholars and researchers in ESL has made me realize that to be a truly effective educator, a teacher must consider the whole student and the whole language (L1 and L2). To be successful, an ESL teacher must not simply teach English but literacy. It is the attainment of literacy that gives an English learner access to the world of English-speaking culture and full social integration. The instruction cannot be contrived or irrelevant or it will be doomed to fail. The New London Group (1996) emphasizes the need for relevancy in the classroom. Students must use “real (technology) tools for real purposes, interaction with multiple forms of communication and text made possible by electronic technologies, and participation in collaborative learning environments” (p. 46). All of these are part of “engagement in meaningful tasks” (p. 46).

After reading the work of the scholars, my conclusion is that the Communicative method (Lightbown & Spada, 1999) of teaching would serve as the best strategy for achieving literacy and social integration in English language and other L2 learners. The Communicative method offers the practicality, relevance, and the immediate ability to use the language that the experts so strongly emphasize. Lightbown and Spada (1999) define the Communicative method as a methodology with its “primary focus on using language for meaningful interaction and for accomplishing tasks, rather than on learning rules....” (p. 40). For example, using the Communicative method students can act out short skits using common greetings like these:

S1: Hello. How are you?
S2: Hi. I’m fine, thank you. And you?

This information is infinitely more useful and immediately applicable to daily life than memorizing lists of vocabulary and verb conjugations. By having students stand up in front of the class and act out the skit, it also employs Total Physical Response (TPR), a learning strategy in which students “simply listen and show their comprehension by their actions” (Lightbown et al., 1999, p. 130). TPR is a learning method that is effective with a great many students.

The private school where I teach Spanish full-time changed to a new textbook this year that uses the Communicative method. The advances that students make are impressive. After just 3 months of formal instruction, the non-native learners of Spanish are able to write full-page autobiographical essays with skill. Researching and writing this paper has validated my
confidence in using the Communicative method as an effective means of achieving literacy and ultimately full social integration of language learners.

References
The Relationship between Civic Engagement and Health among Older Adults

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Abstract: This paper explores the relationship between civic engagement and health among older adults. As the U.S. population ages and people are living longer in the retirement phase, practitioners need to provide programs of growth and development for this population.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Aging reports that in 2005 13% of Americans were older adults (at least 65 years old), and this number is expected to increase by 39% in the next two decades (Fowles & Greenberg, 2005). “The ‘graying of America,’ a now familiar term, refers to the fact that more people are living longer than ever before in recorded history” (Hentschel & Eisen, 2002, p. 1). As a growing number of the U.S. population retires, the importance of providing a platform for older adults to continue growth and development activities such as volunteering in the later stages of life becomes more apparent. Boggs, Rocco, and Spangler (1995) define civic engagement as focused on the common good if, first they were working toward change in government policy or law or in conditions affecting the welfare of the community generally and, second, the good that was sought surpassed the self-interest of any one person and was collectively experienced. (p. 453)

For the purpose of this paper, we will focus on one particular form of civic engagement, volunteering. Civic engagement is the umbrella term in which volunteering is an aspect of civic engagement. The Harvard School of Public Health/MetLife Foundation Initiative on Retirement and Civic Engagement defines civic engagement as “actively participating in the life of their communities” through voting, joining community groups, and volunteering (2004, as cited in Martinson & Minkler, 2006, p. 3).

Sixty-eight percent of Americans older than 50 have volunteered for at least some of the time for an organized group in the last 12 months (Kochera, Straight, & Guterbock, 2005). For the purpose of this paper we will be discussing volunteering in terms of activities that are conducted in the community. Community is defined as people who live within a specific area, share common ties, and interact with one another (Kochera et al., 2005). Volunteering provides a productive component to aging and allows older adults to continue to be socially involved and to continue to grow and develop. In addition, there are health related implications to volunteering or civic engagement. Lum and Lightfoot (2005) report a positive correlation between volunteering or civic engagement by older adults and both physical and mental health. The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between civic engagement and health among older adults. First, the literature on civic engagement will be reviewed; second, we will discuss the role of civic engagement in health and, finally, implications and conclusion.

Civic engagement

Older adults who are given the opportunity to participate in community oriented programs may feel responsible for getting involved, making a difference, and continuing to work on their personal and professional growth and development. Programs and initiatives that promote civic engagement among older adults recognize their invaluable contribution to their communities. Henkin and Zapf (2006-07) write that “tapping the skills, knowledge, and

experience of older adults who are looking for ways to reinvent themselves, remained attached to their communities and engage in civic life may be our most effective strategy for revitalizing communities and promoting successful aging” (p. 72). The most common motivation adults cite for becoming civically engaged is an underlying feeling of civic responsibility or duty (Burr, Caro, & Moorhead, 2002). The belief of responsibility to others is a factor of civic engagement, which can be linked to the establishment of a sense of meaning and purpose in late life, shown to be a determinant of health and well being (Kochera et al., 2005). Additional factors that influence civic engagement are time, money, skill requirement, volume of activity, and ability to communicate information to community leaders and organizations (Burr et al., 2002). Older adults who decide to volunteer provide a significant number of hours to community organizations. Older adults are urged to volunteer because volunteering has been shown to benefit their personal health and well being. “Through civic engagement, older adults benefit others—individuals and the community—as well as themselves” (Hinterlong & Williamson, 2006-07, p. 12).

**Civic Engagement and Health**

The literature on older adults and civic engagement describes volunteering as a part of productive aging (Erlinghagen & Hank, 2006; Warburton, Paynter, & Petriwskyj, 2007). Several issues surround civic engagement: population shift, funding, and health. Population shift has brought the need for developing local leadership in communities. In rural communities preparing older adults for community leadership roles is crucial in filling vacancies left by young adults who move to urban areas in search of better opportunities. Research has found that older adults have the potential to contribute productively to their community (O’Reilly & Caro, 1994). In addition, older adults do not only participate as volunteers but also in leadership roles within their communities. Schultz and Galbraith (1993) found that older adults that participated in leadership development programs were more likely to engage in leadership roles in the community. Older adults’ capabilities and expertise from many years in the workforce are being tapped for leadership roles. Leadership development programs provide older adults with the tools, motivation, and confidence necessary to excel in community leadership positions. In addition older adult learner programs that incorporate leadership development are more successful in terms of participation (Luckie, 1999). Vandenberg, Fear, and Thullen (1988) defined leadership as the focus on community development: “Leadership is best conceptualized as involving the interrelationship among three dimensions: perception, process, and property” (p. 11).

As the funding for human services becomes scarcer, many non profit and governmental organizations are relying on experienced volunteers to fill the gap in the professional services they provide. Older adults supply experience and skills that may be cost restrictive when hiring. Finally, as older adults age, they can potentially face a decline in their health. Civic engagement in itself can help in improving older adults’ mental and physical health, therefore aiding in providing a better quality of life (Hinterlong, Morrow-Howell, & Rozario, 2007).

Self-reports of older adults demonstrate those that volunteer report having better physical health as compared to those that do not (Young, 1998). Although a direct relationship has not been found, links between volunteering and improved health and well being have been shown (Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Rozzano, & Tang, 2003). Older adults who use their talents, skills, time, and energy to get involved, foster social interactions, and create meaningful experiences are more likely to have enhanced physical and mental health. Moreover a connection has been shown between volunteering, happiness, and life satisfaction (Kochera et al., 2005). In
addition, volunteering has also been linked to decrease in both mortality and disability rates among adults that volunteer (Lum & Lightfoot, 2005; Musick, Herzog, & House, 1999).

An outcome of volunteering is the expansion of older adults’ social networks, which enhances both psychological and social resources. Hutchinson and Wexler (2007) conducted a study with older women who were part of a social activism group. The authors found that empowerment and social activism, which is an aspect of volunteerism, are positively related. Furthermore, the authors found that the women surveyed reported better health and well being than their counterparts. Goldberg and Beitz (2006) found that two stages of retirement. The first stage can be characterized as active and was linked to higher life satisfaction and better health. Increasing social networks and resources are seen as a protective factor that results in better health self reports, lower depressive symptoms and decline in functioning, and lower mortality rates in older adult volunteers in comparison to none volunteers (Lum & Lightfoot, 2005). Augmenting psychological resources aids older adults’ acquisition of coping strategies to manage a new medical diagnosis. Musick and Wilson (2002) attributed the beneficial effects from volunteering to increased social interactions among older adults who volunteered. Among older adult volunteers women are most likely to report a direct relationship between volunteering and a reduction in depressive symptomology as well as increased well being (Choi & Bohman, 2007).

**Implications and Future Research**

The purpose of this paper was to provide an overview of the literature on civic engagement and its relationship to health among older adults. The literature highlights the need for healthcare and adult education practitioners to work together in improving the quality of life of older adults (Knox, 2002; Martinson, & Minkler, 2006). The literature on civic engagement and health demonstrated a positive relationship between older adults participating in volunteering activities and their health (Choi, 2003). Older adults involved in civic activities report better mental and physical health. Civic engagement provides more social networks, therefore providing coping mechanisms.

Programs that provided the opportunity for leadership development had participants who were engaged in the program and who successfully completed the program and went on to seek leadership roles in their communities. Wilson & Simson (2003) found that older adults became more involved in their community after completing a leadership development program. The funding for leadership development programs for older adults is directly related to the success of the programs. Adult educators should include a component of leadership development in their programs to stimulates interest and then encourage the participants to apply what they have learned in their communities. In addition, new programs need to be geared at developing leadership skills in older adults. Preparing older adults for leadership roles in their community is important to increase participation in civic or volunteering activities. Health care practitioners should encourage older adults to be active in their communities and to seek activities that will enrich their lives and keep them active.

**Conclusion**

As the U.S. population ages, it is important to improve the quality of life of older Americans. Civic engagement is viewed as the hallmark of productive aging and through leadership development programs we can increase the amount of older adults engaging in civic activities. Adults that were involved in civic activities prior to entering the retirement phase of their life continue to be actively involved in their communities (Rocco, Spangler, & Boggs, 1998; Smith, 2004). Civic involvement provides for more social networks and support to help
older adults cope with the different situations that they face. Leadership development programs
provide the tools for older adults to be able to excel in leadership roles in their communities.
Future research needs to look at the relationship between civic engagement and self reports of
health versus medical reports of the participants’ health. Furthermore, future research should
explore the access of older adults to volunteering/community activities. In addition, researchers
should study the possible causes for limited access to older adults to these types of activities.

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“Who’s that Faggot at the Board?”: A School-based Intervention with a Gay Student

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Abstract: This article describes a successful intervention conducted in a public high school in Miami, Florida, to address an incident of harassment based on a student’s sexual orientation. The implications for educators and other school personnel to intervene in such instances are considered.

The media has recently reported numerous incidents of violence and harassment against lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students. Some of these incidents have occurred in school settings. On February 12, 2008, Lawrence King, a 15-year-old student in Oxnard, California was shot and killed by a classmate allegedly because of his sexual orientation and gender expression. In the latest FBI report, hate crimes against gays made up 16% of total documented hate crimes across the United States in 2006, up from 14% in 2005 (Federal Bureau of Investigations, 2006). Unsafe conditions at school are a reality for most students in the United States (Nansel et al., 2001; Nolin, Davies, & Chandler, 1995). National Center for Education Statistics (as cited in Nolin, Davies, & Chandler, 1995) indicate that among students in grades six through twelve, 71% reported having knowledge of bullying or physical attacks at their schools during the current school year; plus, 12% of them reported having been directly and personally victimized at school during the same time period and of these, the vast majority (8%) was victimized by bullying. More recently, 10.6% of students in grades six through ten experienced moderate or frequent bullying (Nansel et al. 2001). Consistent with the earlier study, males were more likely to be bullied and were more likely to experience physical attacks, whereas females were more likely to experience verbal or psychological abuse. A statistically significant racial difference was found: 70% of Blacks reported no experience of being bullied compared to 56.3% of Whites and 59.4% of Hispanics. There were no significant differences in frequency based on density of population: youth from urban, suburban, town, and rural areas reported similar rates of bullying.

Abuse of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth

Although victimization is experienced by students from all demographic categories, increasingly lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students are increasingly targeted significantly more often than any other group. The findings of recent studies are rather startling: self-identified LGB students were more than five times as likely to be threatened or injured multiple (four or more) times with a weapon at school compared to heterosexual students (Faulkner & Cranston, 1998). LGB students were more than three times as likely to have been in ten or more fights during the preceding year. Similarly, LGB students compared to heterosexual students were three times as likely to have their personal property stolen or deliberately damaged at school. Additionally, more than eight times as many LGB students reported skipping school multiple (four or more) times during the preceding thirty days because of feeling unsafe at (or on the way to or from) school. The disparity between self-identified LGB and heterosexual students on all of the above measures of victimization was statistically significant (P < .05).

There are gender differences amongst LGB students on various measures of at-school

victimization: 51% of males, compared to 32% of females, reported three or more incidents of verbal abuse (D’Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002). Plus, 12% of males versus 8% of females reported three or more threats of violence, and 6% of males and 1% of females reported three or more incidents of having objects thrown at them. Also, 6% of males and 4% of females reported three or more incidents of being punched, kicked, or beaten. Finally, 3% of males and no females reported three or more incidents of sexual assault. Gay male students were victimized significantly more often than lesbian students (D’Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002). The more gender atypical students appeared or acted, the more they were attacked; similarly, being openly gay or “out” led to attacks and once “out,” victimization of those students remained stable. These findings are consistent with literature that conceptualizes violence in school as an issue of masculinity (Burstyn et al., 2001; Mills, 2001). That is, homophobia, sexism and violence are all viewed as hegemonic forms of masculinity. Thus, those who step outside the bounds of accepted or even idealized gender roles are punished (Fone, 2000; Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Although verbal abuse was the most common form of victimization, stress caused by this type of assault cannot be underestimated. In fact, a national study of sexual harassment in high school by the American Association of University Women (as cited in D’Augelli & Patterson, 2001) found that being called “gay” or other synonymous terms was the most psychologically upsetting form of verbal harassment. This is indicative of the stigma associated with being a member of the minority sexual orientation. For adolescents to feel accepted by their peers is highly important.

Given the widespread abuse of gay students, it is not surprising that most LGB individuals do not reveal their sexual orientation until later in life (Savins-Williams, 2001). Those who do not exhibit stereotypical mannerism or appearance can blend in with the heterosexual population and most who can, do so. Remaining “in the closet” is also stressful, however, and has been correlated with multiple health risks (Meyer, 2003). For example, gay men who conceal their sexual orientation experience a significantly higher incidence of cancer and several infectious diseases (Cole, Kemeny, Taylor, & Visscher, 1996). Conversely, despite the heightened risk for victimization, being “out” is correlated with better health and well-being for LGB individuals (Meyer, 2003). Only by revealing one’s sexual orientation can the individual identify and associate with LGB peers. These social connections are an important source of support and relieve the sense of isolation experienced by many LGB adolescents.

Empirical studies are identifying the trends and incidence of LGB victimization in school. Case studies and/or qualitative research can provide richness of detail that allows us to understand the importance of this issue. Human Rights Watch is an independent, non-governmental organization that routinely conducts systematic investigations and reports on human rights abuses throughout the world. After interviewing 140 LGB and transgender youth and 130 adults (including youth service providers, teachers, administrators, counselors, and parents) in seven states from 1999–2000, Human Rights Watch (2001) concluded that U.S. schools are unsafe for LGB youth. Too many school officials condoned the cruelty perpetrated on these adolescents through inaction and in some cases were abusive themselves. Furthermore, they hold the government at the local, state, and federal levels accountable for refusing to dismantle laws, policies, and practices that effectively discriminate against these youth.

**Associated Risk Factors**

Researchers are beginning to study the risk factors associated with sexual orientation. Virtually equal proportions of LGB students and heterosexual students used moderate
(approximately once per month) levels of alcohol and marijuana (Faulkner & Cranston, 1998). Amongst students who use excessive amounts of alcohol, marijuana and other illegal drugs, however, LGB youth are significantly over-represented. LGB students (10.9%) are nine times more likely to report using alcohol on each of the past thirty days. They are nearly four times as likely to have used marijuana forty or more times in the past month and nineteen times more likely to have used cocaine ten or more times in the past month. Finally, a shocking 20% of LGB students reported having used intravenous illegal drugs, nearly seven times the percentage of heterosexuals (3.1%). Similarly, LGB students are eight times more likely than heterosexual students to attempt suicide multiple times and are four times more likely to require medical attention for suicide attempts. The reason for LGB youth making up a disproportionate share of the heavy drug use and serious suicide attempts is the level of victimization at school (Bontempo & D’Augelli, 2002). Consistent with earlier studies, these researchers found that victimization at school was disproportionately associated with LGB status. LGB students experiencing low levels of victimization were similar to their heterosexual peers on other risk factors (substance use, truancy, risky sexual behavior, and suicide attempts). LGB students experiencing high levels of victimization, however, evidenced significantly more health risk behavior compared with heterosexual students in the high-victimization group. Therefore, being victimized because of one’s sexual orientation is more damaging than other types of victimization. Even the most “flamboyant” LGB students experience little or no victimization at some schools. Generally, faculty at these schools do not tolerate bigotry of any form, including anti-gay harassment (Human Rights Watch, 2002). Faculty and staff promptly intervene on behalf of LGB students. Thus, homophobic taunting is not permitted to escalate in these schools.

**Intervention**

High school counselors face students crying, distraught over comments just made in their classroom about being gay or lesbian. This paper answers this question and provides a literature review of harassment of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth.

First, I (Javier Berezdivin) closed the door and listened to his story. Michael had participated in my support group for gay and lesbian students since he was a ninth grader, for the past two years. He knew that he could trust me and that I would pay close attention. He recounted how his teacher had entered the room after welcoming other students and asked him to go to the blackboard and write a journal entry. Suddenly, a voice in the background mockingly asked, “Who’s that faggot at the board?” With his emotions assaulted, his self-respect attacked, feeling frozen, he didn’t know how to respond. Gaining composure, he managed to ask his teacher if he could talk with a counselor, and the teacher immediately sent him to my office. After telling his story, he asked me if he could change this class since he hated the kids did not want to return. I acknowledged his feelings of being terribly insulted, and that it truly was not his problem that others were insensitive and uncaring of his feelings. I suggested going back to the class to speak with the teacher and students directly, but he said he couldn’t and didn’t want to do it. So I alone went promptly to his science class and spoke with the teacher. She was aware of what had happened, and when I asked her if she would allow me to speak with the students, she enthusiastically accepted my invitation. I asked her to stand with me in front of the class to provide support, given that I didn’t know them. The strength and motivation to do this came from running a gay-lesbian support group for the last five years in the school. I knew about the harassment students frequently face and I combat it. Also, several years before, I had taken a two-day Communications Course offered by The Yes Institute. This course was one of the best courses I had taken in my entire professional career; the course prepared me to address the
issues, not from a defensive and confrontational perspective, but from a collaborative and conflict-resolution approach.

I introduced myself to the class and told them why I was there: I was concerned about Michael’s incident. A girl snickered, “Why do we need to do this?” I proceeded to ask them to tell me what had happened, and to hear from different students about their perceptions. I explained that 10-20% of the population was gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender and many students in our school fell into this population and had to deal with offensive comments often. Their peers, mistakenly suspecting them of being gay, sometimes harassed straight kids. I sensed animosity towards Michael from at least six or seven students and responded in as sensitive a manner as possible. They commented, “It’s his fault. If he would have spoken up for himself, he wouldn’t be treated this way.” Or “We don’t like gays here.” I continually tried to acknowledge their uncomfortable feelings towards unfamiliar things that so many people consider “wrong.” At the end of the class I sensed there was still a good distance to achieving a resolution. I called Joseph Zolobczuk, an Education and Training Specialist at The Yes Institute, and invited him to come in the next school day; I received the teacher’s permission.

The next day, a few minutes before Joseph was scheduled to arrive, I got Michael out of his class and found out he was still very hurt. I spoke about the value of his presence in the class in question, not necessarily having to speak, and he accepted that. When Joseph arrived, about thirty minutes before the class started, we reviewed who would take what initiative/role, and then we went into the class. The teacher welcomed us, and again, could hear a disapproving remark from the same girl who had been against Michael the day before. She asked immediately why this issue had to be addressed again if we had spoken about it the day before. I responded that I felt the topic had been left unfinished. I introduced Joseph and what ensued was a lively discussion about what really had transpired. Joseph introduced himself and explained that as a younger person, he had similar experiences as Michael, and he was there to talk about their thoughts and feelings. He quickly established that what had happened was not so much “about Michael” but about the classmates. Negative feelings and fears emerged, as well as the idea that Michael was weak in not “standing up for himself”: if he had confronted whomever voiced the disparaging remark, he would have gained his classmates’ respect. Joseph responded by explaining that oftentimes kids are so hurt and fearful of the way they have been treated by peers in the past, that they simply do not have the emotional strength to “stand up for themselves.” A Latin boy commented to Michael that he had noticed Michael separating himself from the class as weeks went by, but that he had nothing against him. In fact, he had a gay boss with whom he got along very well, and he personally would welcome Michael back as a member in the group. He openly expressed his friendship and support to Michael. This comment shifted the mood. This student spoke with inner strength, voicing acceptance and genuine appreciation for Michael and a willingness to bring him into his personal space. At the end of the class, we thanked for their openness and commended Michael for his bravery in being there to listen to the conversation.

The following week, when I saw Michael in the LGB support group, he commented on the great change in the class since the intervention and that students were now much more accepting and welcoming. He was amazed since this had seemed like a far-flung possibility. His teacher commented several months later, “Michael has integrated into the class as a whole since this happened. He no longer isolates, and has developed more typical behaviors, both good and bad. I am happy for him.” Since I had never tried this intervention, I couldn’t predict its success, but its success led me to think that if it were to happen again, I would know how to proceed.
Implications and Further Questions

It is essential for school personnel to become informed and proactive regarding the problems LGB students face with bullying and harassment in the schools and to intervene promptly and effectively when a student reports such incidents. The National Association of Social Workers has stated in its official policy position that there is a need to encourage the development of programs, training, and information aimed at ending all types of violence toward lesbian, gay, and bisexual people (NASW, 2003). It is clearly within our scope and moral mandate as educators, social workers, and other school personnel to do whatever is necessary to learn about and implement interventions that minimize and hopefully eliminate incidents of harassment. As students learn to be more tolerant of their differences they will fight less, and a reduction in school violence will result in a climate that is more conducive for learning.

Several issues related to this intervention deserve further inquiry. These include risks, both to the students and to the teacher or counselor, parental notification, and follow-up. This type of intervention requires a degree of professional preparation and comfort addressing difficult issues. Courses such as the one the author had taken and an outside expert would help prepare professionals. Another issue is whether parents must be notified about the harassment. Since the student was not “out” to his parents, preferred for this to remain confidential, and was seventeen years old, his confidentiality was respected. If this happened to a middle school student, parental notification may be necessary. Parental notification and the legal parameters need further clarification, especially to comply with state Department of Education guidelines and local school board policies. Finally, such an intervention requires close follow-up of the student who was harassed. If not, the counselor would not know if the harassment had ended or how well the student was coping with the situation post-incident.

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Speaking Up: A Phenomenological Study of Student Perceptions of Being Silenced in their Higher Education Classrooms

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Abstract: This phenomenological study explored students’ experiences of being silenced in their higher education classroom. Themes emerging from this study include the influence of past experiences, devaluation of students’ previous knowledge and learning, use of communication patterns to silence students, and internalization of conflict and oppression resulting from being silenced.

“Sometimes a simple, almost insignificant gesture on the part of a teacher can have a profound formative effect on the life of a student” (Freire, 1998, p. 46). Regardless of the professor’s intentions or self-awareness, his/ her actions can damage and marginalize a student from the learning process. This happened to me. In a graduate course, a classmate made an offhanded remark about gay men I considered inappropriate. I interrupted the class and stated my concern that the remark was based on stereotypes and false assumptions. When my professor insufficiently addressed my concerns, I became angry with her resistance to using the situation as a learning opportunity and her confrontational stance towards me. I felt silenced similar to the way other people may be silenced, such as being ignored when hands are raised and opinions are ignored or not taken seriously (Johnson-Bailey, 2001). The professor never approached me to talk about what occurred. This negatively impacted my future relationship with her.

There was a disconnect between what my professor said she valued and what her practice demonstrated, which is common of educators professing to value social justice and fairness (Johnson-Bailey & Alfred, 2006). I was disappointed by the shortcoming and this apparent dichotomy between the professor’s espoused theories and theories-in-use (Arzyris & Schön, 1974). Learning is facilitated when students view teachers as having both credibility and authenticity (Brookfield, 2006), which involves consistency between what they say and what they do. When learning is sacrificed, a lose-lose situation is created for both the teacher and the student, as was the outcome in my situation.

Subsequently, as a requirement for a qualitative research course, I decided to find other students who may have had similar experiences. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experience of being silenced in the classroom from the point of view of those who have felt this suppression. This study was designed to address the following question: How do students perceive their experience of being silenced in their higher education classroom?

Method and Design

This phenomenological study explored how students describe and make meaning of a phenomenon experienced by them directly (Patton, 2002), specifically being silenced in their higher education classroom. An email explaining the intent of my study was sent via a listserv to graduate students enrolled in the College of Education at a large, urban public research university in southeast Florida. Three students self-disclosed being silenced and agreed to participate in the study using a pseudonym to provide confidentiality. The three female students in their 30’s were Denise (African American), Turquoise (Cuban American), and Maya (Venezuelan).
Using a semi-structured interview protocol (Rubin & Rubin, 2005), participants were interviewed for approximately one hour each. Additional data were collected in a researcher journal containing reflections throughout the study. Content analysis was conducted to analyze “the core content of interviews and observations to determine what’s significant” (Patton, 2002, p. 463). Integrity measures to promote quality were used in this study included member checks, peer review, and an audit trail. Member checks is a process of sharing data and preliminary interpretations with the participants from which the data was obtained (Merriam, 2002) to verify accuracy and that the analysis strikes a cord with participants. Colleagues from my qualitative class provided peer review on the research method and interview guide and an audit trail in the form of a researcher journal was kept containing detailed information about the methods, procedures, and decisions made during the course of the study (Merriam, 2002).

Research Findings

This section presents themes and concepts emerging from the analysis of the interviews conducted. The themes include the following: (a) silencing is not forgotten; (b) influence of past experiences; (c) devaluation of students’ previous knowledge and learning; (d) use of verbal and nonverbal forms of communication to silence students; and (d) internalization of conflict and oppression.

Silencing is Not Forgotten

The three participants in this study shared with me their own stories on how they felt silenced by a professor in their higher education classroom. Denise, Turquoise, and Maya shared how these experiences influenced their development as teachers. Denise, Turquoise, and Maya feel the need to avoid the same mistakes they perceived their former teachers made.

Denise. After dropping out of college and working in corporate America, Denise returned as a nontraditional student to pursue her undergraduate study at a historically Black college in Georgia. There she experienced a conflict with a professor she perceived was condescending and racially discriminatory. For example, Denise shared how the professor stated the course requirements were too high for “you people.” The professor was a White female in a predominantly African American classroom. Also, the professor displayed inappropriate behaviors, such as placing her hand in front of Denise’s face as a means to silence her. When Denise attempted to do something about her professor’s conduct, her advisor and the Dean protected the professor and once again she felt silenced.

Turquoise. Turquoise’s experience was a bit different and unexpected for me. She shared how she felt silenced and marginalized in her classroom as a result of her weight. Turquoise was enrolled in an undergraduate geology course. She shared how the professor would not acknowledge her in class no matter how many times she raised her hand. Turquoise noticed how the same professor did not ignore the thinner girls whom she perceived to be attractive. The experiences in that classroom built on her negative self-perceptions about her weight.

Maya. Maya shared her story about an English course where she felt targeted by her teacher due to ethnic and epistemological differences. Maya felt her professor was overly critical and held her to different standards than the rest of her classmates. She did not feel there was room for her to express herself and was frequently ignored or dismissed.

Influence of Past Experiences

All three participants shared how past experiences were influential in the way they perceived and dealt with being silenced in their classroom. For example, past experiences related to family upbringing were discussed in my conversations with each of the participants. However, the way their family upbringing influenced them was slightly different.
Both Maya and Denise shared how their parents instilled in them the idea that they needed to stand up for themselves, even in the classroom. Maya shared how her mother was influential in how she dealt with the conflict with her teacher:

My mom was always a very feisty person, and the kind of person who said you better stand up for whatever it is you believe, and you better stand up if somebody's pushing you around. And so she's the one that incited me to go and do something about it, because at first I was just going to let it be, and I was going to wallow…in my sadness.

In a similar way, Denise shared about her parents:

My father was the equal opportunity officer at the Pentagon…So I grew up watching people fight injustice, and like I said, he would always tell us what you don't fight for, your children will have to. So he always instilled this in his children; you have to stand up for what's right. Nobody else is responsible for that, but you.

With both Maya and Denise, the way they handled their respective situations in the classroom correspond to what their parents taught them. Both confronted their teachers and sought ways to manage the conflict. However, Turquoise was taught to perceive teachers as authority figures she should respect and follow. “In my culture I was brought up that the teacher's always right.” Turquoise did not confront her teacher because of the important social status ascribed to teachers in her culture.

Denise and Maya both shared stories about how their study and travel shaped influenced them. Maya attended high school outside of the United States and shared how her teachers were all “hippies” and they always conveyed the message “you better fight for your rights.” Denise had also traveled a bit prior to her undergraduate studies and felt that her student peers who had lived in small or rural settings were used to living in ways that maintained a divided society along racial lines. Denise also shared: “I think because of my experiences, I was more sensitive, to silencing than some of them may have been….So their experiences are a little bit different. They're used to a certain type of treatment from authority figures.” According to the stories participants shared, a wider scope of experiences and perspectives helped them deal with another person who was marginalizing and silencing them.

One related story Turquoise shared with me occurred when she was in the third grade. One time, Turquoise needed to go to the restroom and asked her teacher for permission and the teacher replied she may if Turquoise promised to go on a diet. Early childhood memories such as this one created what Turquoise coined “a wound that I had in there.” So when her geology professor only entertained the girls in class Turquoise perceived as pretty, she was easily hurt because of the negative self-image she had developed over the years.

Devaluation of Students’ Previous Knowledge and Learning

Participants in this study felt silenced when teachers undervalued their knowledge and prior learning. “He doesn’t want to hear what I have to say,” Turquoise stated. She developed this perception as the teacher repeatedly failed to acknowledge her in the classroom every time she raised her hand to answer a question or provide her input. When teachers decide which students to acknowledge, they are deciding whose voices will be heard.

Teachers silence and marginalize their students when they express intellectual superiority over their students and do not value the knowledge and experiences students bring to the classroom. Denise shared how she struggled with having an academic dialogue with her professor: “And whenever I would try to have these discussions with her in class, she would shut me down, she would put her hand up, or she would turn her back to me, or she would just ignore my hand altogether.” Since the teacher was never open to having a discussion on alternate points
of view relating to the course content, Denise struggled with exams in deciding whether to indulge the teacher by providing the answer Denise thought the teacher was looking for or the answer Denise thought was the correct answer. Denise felt silenced because there was no room for her views in the classroom.

Maya also believed her teacher did not value her contributions to the classroom: “He somehow was always making remarks about the fact that I just wasn’t reading it [the literature] right.” Rather than engaging Maya by having a dialogue about how she interpreted the course readings, he just dismissed her interpretations of the course readings entirely.

Teachers also undervalue students when they do not believe in their students’ capacity to learn. More troubling is when the undervaluing is a result of discriminatory beliefs. Denise felt this was the case with her professor: “So the woman came in...she introduced herself to us, and the very first thing she said when she was reviewing the syllabus was ‘I just feel like this is too much work for you people.’” And this is a predominantly African American class and she was White. Denise was upset that the professor was lowering her standards for the course based on the racial characteristics of the students and discriminatory ideas of what quantity and quality of work African American students are able to handle.

Use of Verbal and Non-Verbal Forms of Communication to Silence Students

Patterns of verbal communication were important factors in the participants’ experiences. Maya and Denise shared patterns of verbal communication their teachers used to silence them. One form of verbal communication was the use of verbal confrontations. Maya’s teacher asked her to step outside of the classroom to speak to her about her paper. This request was made in front of students during class and made her feel she was being put on the spot. Denise’s teacher was a bit more flagrant with her verbal communication by referring to students as “you people.” Denise felt this was discriminatory because the teacher was White and addressed the predominantly African American classroom in that way.

Participants were also aware of nonverbal forms of communication that their teachers used to silence them. Both Maya and Turquoise pointed out how their teachers avoided eye contact with them so as not to recognize them in class when each of them raised their hand to speak and share something with the class.

Denise experienced many more confrontational forms of nonverbal communication. Denise shared, “So she [the teacher] was standing right in front of my desk, and put her hand literally inches from my face, and I turned my face, I didn't say anything to her.” According to Denise, the professor put her hand in Denise’s face a few times during the course of the semester. Denise thought this was inappropriate and disrespectful behavior from the teacher and recognized how this was a way for the teacher to silence her.

Internalization of Conflict and Oppression

Turquoise and Maya experienced some form of internalization as a reaction to being silenced. They shared how they doubted and blamed themselves in the situation to some extent when they felt silenced of marginalized.

Turquoise stated, “I'm a kind of like a people pleaser, so my natural reaction then, was to try even harder. You know, to try to speak more, to try to get myself noticed more.” She also said, “I've had very intimidating professors, and I've just learned to not speak.” The fact that Turquoise tried harder may be a sign that she has internalized some negative self-perceptions of herself as a student and as a person.

Maya showed some signs that she might have internalized some of the conflict as well: “I guess at first you go through different emotions... at first it was a little confusion as to why
would this person have anything against you, if they don't even know you.” Maya then said, “I was completely devastated, I mean, I was…I went home, and I was crying.” After a talk with her mother who encouraged her to take action and stand up for herself, Maya handled the conflict differently.

Denise, on the other hand, when speaking about her classmates, showed some indication of internalization of oppression in her classmates. Denise said that the other students in her class, who were much younger than she, would tell her to “stop rocking the boat” and “ruining what could be a good thing, them not having to do any work” when she challenged her professor. She felt as if the other students in the class also tried to silence her and bought into the idea that the class needed to be “dumbed down” as the teacher had expressed. However, when Denise turned to her advisor for assistance, she did not find a different response:

It hurt; it really hurt.... especially the advisor. The advisor and I had a personal relationship. She was very African-centered. She had an African name. She wore African clothes….So I was thinking she would understand some of the things that I was going through, and her whole thing was, just don't rock the boat; be quiet and get out of the class.

Denise talked about how maybe in the case of her advisor it was a “generational thing” with the way she was raised and the period she grew up in.

Conclusions

The stories shared by participants in this study shows disconnect between teachers and students. The disconnect reinforced the teachers’ position of authority and power in the classroom to the point that it negated learners’ abilities and beliefs, and ultimately marginalized and silenced them (Sheared & Sissel, 2001). By negating students’ abilities and beliefs, the teachers are left to be the sole source of knowledge in the classroom and a banking system of education is maintained (Freire, 2003).

A banking system of education leads to internalization of the oppressor (Freire, 2003), as was evident in the stories of the participants in this study. “The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being…. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized” (Freire, 2003, p. 48). Internalization of the oppressor may have led to a major research constraint in this study: gaining access to participants. Students may have been reluctant to share stories that involved their professors out of fear of retaliation or other consequences. Or students may not have had the opportunity to reflect on their educational experiences, which is necessary to understand how they may have been marginalized in the classroom. When students do not reflect on their educational experiences, the power structures embedded in higher education remain uncontested. Students then become agents of their oppression and their voices are silenced.

To encourage student voices to emerge and provide a place for those voices in the higher education classroom, educators should engage in critical reflection and critical teaching. Being critically reflective involves honestly thinking about the ways power influences educational transactions and how one’s assumptions may work the interest of both students and the teachers themselves (Brookfield, 1995). Critical reflection also involves contemplating how to promote the inclusion and participation of all students so that students’ needs are mutually met (Bell, 1997). Critical teaching focuses on empowerment of individuals, particularly individuals whose power and resources are shortchanged by existing social, political, and economic structures (Griffiths, 1998). Critical teaching is possible when the authority of knowledge vested in the teacher’s role shifts to include students as equally legitimate sources of knowledge (Tisdell,
Hanley & Taylor, 2000). Teaching principles that empower students include student-centered learning, attention to social relations in the classroom, and valuing personal growth, awareness, and change (Adams, 1997). The unique perspectives contributed by individual participants and as a group enriches educators’ understanding of the diversity of perspectives on learning and teaching (Tennant, 2000).

References


American Teachers in Anti-American Environments: How to Incorporate “Culture” in the EFL Classroom

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Abstract: This paper explores the facets and the importance of culture as a necessary context for language competency, acknowledges the relevance of an antipathy towards Americanization, and investigates the characteristics of successful pedagogy for American teachers in a global setting of turbulent geopolitical circumstances influencing the EFL environment.

By 2015 about half of the world’s population will be speaking or learning English language (“Christmas”, 2001). Now, unlike any other time in history, one language is approaching universality (Canagarajah, 1993, 1999; “Christmas,” 2001; Hecker, 2000; Marginson, 2006; Smith, 2000; Watson, 2007). Countless researchers are in agreement that English creates a global advantage in an era where only one language dominates the fields of economics, politics, science, technology, and higher education (Hecker, 2000; Marginson, 2006). English, the “globalizing force in academia” (Handsfield, 2002, p. 556) has become the international language of instruction in higher education as well as dominating conferences, journals, websites, and databases (“Christmas,” 2001; Smith, 2000; Watson, 2007). However, many feel that today’s unidirectional globalization is “leading to greater educational and language uniformity rather than diversity” (Watson, 2007, p. 252). This “global standard” (Marginson, 2006, p. 35) and one-way influence exported from America should yield a more accurate definition of globalization: Americanization (Smith, 2000; Watson, 2007).

Teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) are comforted to hear that two billion people will start to learn English within the next decade (Watson, 2007). However, with today’s fluctuating attitudes towards globalization and Americanization, a pedagogy of cross-cultural sensitivity is essential to incorporate the teaching of culture in the EFL curriculum. The EFL teacher needs to juggle interdependent and interactive factors such as addressing the importance of culture as a necessary context for language competency while acknowledging the interplay between the home culture and the target language culture as well as exploring the antipathy towards Americanization. This paper will investigate the relation between American-style EFL education and the anti-American influence and investigate the characteristics of successful pedagogy for American teachers of English in a global setting.

EFL Pedagogy of American Teachers

EFL students all over the world are exposing themselves to not only a new language but a new culture and a new version of practical American pedagogy (Fowler, 2005; Smith, 2000). An example of the export of English language and American culture includes the huge increase in the expanding business of education. Many countries are importing American teachers (Hecker, 2000; Richardson, 2004; Smith, 2000) and in addition to several established “American” Universities in Paris, London, Cairo, and Beirut, new satellite campuses are expanding in China, South Africa, and on the Persian Gulf (Marginson, 2006; Smith, 2000). The “magnetic attraction of American higher education” (Marginson, 2006, p.18) and the American-style pedagogy that has become more and more available globally is quite different from the traditional, classical version of higher education that focused on philosophy and theory-laden approaches (Smith,
The Americanized version of education pragmatically emphasizes technical know-how for careers, such as engineering, science, and business, and exudes a sense of real-world preparation (Smith, 2000). In a study done in the United Arab Emirates, Richardson (2004) provides examples of the “western notions of knowledge and educational practices” (p. 430) that were brought by the Anglophone developers of a new collegiate program. More specifically, in EFL classrooms, the new and different collaborative teaching styles focusing on the learner often contrast with local pedagogy. Many examples from Sri Lanka, (Canagarajah, 1993), Morocco (Hecker, 2000), United Arab Emirates (Clarke & Otaky, 2006; Richardson, 2004), and Japan, Laos, and Vietnam (Fowler, 2005) demonstrate the prevalence of traditional methods that include lectures, rote learning, and drill exercises that students were familiar with prior to the arrival of American EFL instructors. The American methods may be “difficult, even frightening pedagogy” and these cultural differences may be “formidable obstacles” (Fowler, 2005, p. 156) for EFL instructors.

**Importance of “Culture” in EFL**

In response to the increasing global dominance of the English language and the inseparable relation that language and culture hold (Atkinson, 1999; Durocher, 2007; Siskin, 2007), American EFL instructors today are faced with additional challenges. Teachers must not only acknowledge but address the intricate ramifications of teaching culture - notably, American culture - in the EFL classroom in a world that has become more anti-American. As the English language spreads, so spreads the conjoined partner, culture, and more specifically, a controversial American culture (Canagarajah, 1999; Fowler, 2005; Handsfield, 2002; Smith, 2000). Culture is one of the “most complex words in the English language” to define (Clarke, 2006, p. 112). The scope of addressing culture issues is limitless; however, EFL educators have to at least concentrate on the dual components of culture: the culture of the target language (L2), in this case, English, and American culture, and the local home culture of the student. They also need to recognize that culture is not a stable “capsule” (Ingold, 1994, as cited in Atkinson, 1999, p. 632) of specific elements but rather a nebulous concept of fluctuating variables (Atkinson, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Knutson, 2006). Culture is “a never-finished site of competing historical and social discourses” (Clarke, 2006, p. 120) and an “evolution” (Siskin, 2007, p. 36). Deciphering cultural variables helps understanding the many dichotomies influenced by Anti-American sentiment and enables the teacher to intervene and overcome these variables so that the sentiment does not inhibit or interfere with the language acquisition.

A successful EFL teacher is cognizant that teaching/learning the culture of the L2 language is an integral component in language learning (Durocher, 2007; Hecker, 2000; Johnson, 2005; Knutson, 2006; Schulz, 2007). “Knowledge of a language - including, centrally, how to use it - cannot be developed without at the same time developing knowledge of the socio-cultural contexts in which that language occurs” (Atkinson, 1999, p. 647). Furthermore, because knowledge or understanding of the target culture is not automatically learned by language study, it needs to be consciously introduced by the teacher (Knutson, 2006). “Speech events have their own culture-specific structures and routines” (Schulz, 2007, p. 9). This cultural knowledge of the target language is essential to understand the nuances of speech acts, such as requesting and apologizing, as evidenced in similar research by Cohen and Shively (2007) who claim, “Language and culture are inextricably intertwined in pragmatic behavior” (p. 193). The relation between culture and understanding a language is so inarguably fundamental that the Defense Language Institute Foreign Language Center contracted the development of a language and cultural familiarization course to help soldiers who would be interacting with Iraqis (Sims,
2007). This program of simulated interactive digital characters emphasizes the cultural elements of “gestures that may be misinterpreted...[and] proper and improper ways to interact with Iraqi women,” and other communication lessons on cultural norms (Sims, 2007, p. 88). In other words, the American EFL teacher needs to be aware that it is the cultural understanding of communication that gives speech acts functional value and this cultural understanding needs to be incorporated into the EFL class. Likewise, the EFL teacher needs to be aware that positive or negative attitudes and preconceptions of students towards various target languages influence the success or failure of the students’ language acquisition (Durocher, 2007; Fukunaga, 2006; Husseinali, 2006; Johnson, 2005; Siskin, 2007; Watson, 2007). For example, in Puerto Rico, the struggle with historical ties to the English language and cultural identity affects students’ English language acquisition. Puerto Rican nationalism has been cited as the major reason for resistance to English learning and unsuccessful bilingualization (Clachar, 1998). In a study of American anime (Japanese animation) fans that studied Japanese, the positive link between the exposure to Japanese culture through watching anime films and reading anime books created a successful, intrinsically motivated learner (Fukunaga, 2006). As an example of positive attitudes towards English acquisition, Canagarajah’s study (1993) introduced a student expressing, “English is...to converse with the world at large - and not just the world of technology and machines, but also of dreams, aspirations and ideals” (p. 604). Other students in the study had similar positive ideas about English such as “progress”, “civilization”, and “culture and social respect”, which reveals possible motivations to learn English (p. 612).

**Exploring Antipathy towards Americanization**

In a post- September 11th era, many negative associations with English stem from anti-American sentiment. Recently, many expressions of American language and culture tend towards “imperialistic, expansionist, out of control threat to world order” (Meunier, 2005, p. 128), “uninformed and misinformed about the world” (McGray, 2006, p. 42), “colonization, power, and domination” (Skutnabb-Kangas, as cited in Handsfield, 2002, p. 544), “displacement of other languages” (Marginson, 2006, p. 25), and “hegemonic” (Johnson, 2005, p. 1). The existence of these anti-American notions amplifies the importance of acknowledging the inevitable influence of the learner’s environment. The unfavorable views of the United States (Meunier, 2005) directly affect the EFL classroom, teacher, and pedagogy. Much of the animosity is due to the perceived imperialistic attitudes of an unchallenged American hyperpower (Meunier, 2005) and the feeling that the spread of American ideas and customs was bad for Muslim countries (Nisbet, Nisbet, Schuufle, & Shanahan, 2004). Therefore, the very idea of expanding the English language and culture is at the crux of this negative attitude. The dichotomous acceptance of the importance of English and the reluctance to neglect or ignore the indigenous language and culture is felt by many (Atkinson, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; “Christmas,” 2001; Clarke, 2006; Handsfield, 2002; Watson, 2006). When Americans teach English, and invariably, American culture, it is essential to examine the issue of anti-American sentiment.

According to Smith (2000), Americanization proliferates through the use of “U.S. teachers and teaching methods and material [that] probably do advance American political culture, norms, and even policy at the expense of local ways” (p. 71). With the evidence of EFL teachers traversing boarders and encountering negative sentiments that develop in response to the rise of a singular power, issues of cultural sensitivity have recently been researched (Canagarajah, 1999; Dolby, 2004; Fowler, 2005; Handsfield, 2002; Johnson, 2005; Knutson, 2006; Marginson, 2006; Smith, 2000; Sowden, 2007; Watson, 2007). This “linguistic
imperialism" should be considered for the purpose of avoiding "hegemonic" or ethnocentric pedagogies ("Christmas," 2001; Durocher, 2007; Handsfield, 2002; Johnson, 2007; Smith, 2000; Watson, 2006). While Canagarajah (1999) argues that too much emphasis is given to the idea of linguistic imperialism, he concedes that even though English will remain a global language, it is still important to recognize and protect endangered languages and acknowledge the culture of minority communities. The exploration of attitudes of antipathy towards Americanization is necessary to understand how we can create a better pedagogy in the EFL classroom. The EFL teacher can promote the benefits of English as a lingua franca while still respecting the "fundamental linguistic human right" of the mother tongue (Watson, 2007, p. 252). With the understanding of the various factors that inhibit a positive and motivating learning environment, the cognizant EFL teacher can promote cross-cultural sensitivity to bridge the cultural gap.

Successful Pedagogy for American Teachers of EFL

According to Durocher (2007) the classroom is the logical arena to teach sensitivity to cultural differences. The challenge for the American EFL teacher in the role of cultural ambassador in an area with anti-American sentiment is to be cognizant of how cultural differences affect the classroom (Fowler, 2005) while still allowing for unexpected opportunities to reveal themselves and provide fodder for cultural comparisons (Hecker, 2000; Johnson, 2005).

EFL teachers should look at the home culture of the learner to recognize the "socio-political forces outside the walls of the classroom" (Canagarajah, 1993, p. 605). For example, despite the agreement that anti-American sentiment is pervasive in Muslim countries (Nisbet et al., 2004), more new Muslims are studying English rather than Arabic (Watson, 2007). To minimize anti-American sentiment, it is important to respect the local culture and realize the influence of the American teacher and the potential of interacting with certain EFL students who tend to benefit from American teachers of EFL (Richardson, 2004). In many parts of the world, the students who benefit from the EFL programs are from wealthy families who invest in high value education in order to maintain their status (Marginson, 2006). Hecker (2000) describes his students as "future managers and wealthy heirs to Moroccan government and industry" (p. 118). In other words, influential people are being influenced by Americans and American culture. This abundance of these students creates an even greater responsibility to address the conscious or unconscious soft power, or influence, that teachers and academic institutions as purveyors of cultural norms unavoidably possess (Atkinson, 1999; Johnson, 2005; Smith, 2000; Watson, 2007).

The EFL teacher should acknowledge that teachers and schools as "agents of change" represent "critical" and "transformative" roles in the classroom (Handsfield, 2000, p. 552). Dolby (2004) expresses that in a global context, national identity shifts from passive to active. This creates a new role for the teacher as a representative or cultural ambassador of the United States. Knutson (2006) proposes that teachers should reveal their personal histories and cross-cultural experiences as examples of cultural understanding and demonstrate the subjectivity of culture. Ethical questions have been raised about the cultural and contextual appropriateness of both subject matter and teacher roles presenting the culture that students need and seek (Clarke, 2006; Hecker, 2000; Johnson, 2005; Richardson, 2004). However, this obstacle can be eliminated or diminished if American teachers understand how to relate to the student as both an individual and as a product of culture. Atkinson (1999) highlights this issue and recognizes that a culture is made up of individuals just as an individual’s context is his or her culture. The teacher should accept that the goal of teaching (American) culture is to promote an understanding of the culture and to make connections when possible. Knutson (2006) reveals the possibility of
perpetuating negative stereotypes if the student feels pushed to accept or adopt the new cultural ideas. When the instruction of the target culture minimizes the polarizing “us” and “them” viewpoint and is instead taught in relation to the home culture, then the students can gain a better understanding of culture as an evolving crossroads of ideas, values, and traditions and not as a threat to their identity or traditions (Durocher, 2007; Hecker, 2000; Knutson, 2006; Siskin, 2007; Sowden, 2007).

The EFL teacher should introduce and accommodate multiple viewpoints and reflections that reveal an understanding of cultural comparisons that allow flexibility and change. One way to accomplish this is through the use of ongoing inquiry-based projects or portfolios that address cultural comparisons and critical reflection over time (McGinnis, 2007; Schultz, 2007). In traditional hierarchic classroom environments, the teacher is usually looked at as the authority and sole source of information. It is up to the teacher to elicit different ideas and opinions (Fowler, 2005; Hecker, 2000). Fowler (2005) reveals the merits of active learning in EFL, such as role-playing, as an approach to overcome the hierarchic classrooms and even suggests that it might be necessary to plant a student in the class who is prepared to ask questions and open the door to a less lecture-like, teacher-driven discussion. Of course, to know how to best adapt the EFL pedagogy, the EFL teachers need to develop a familiarity with the culture that they are teaching in and accept the role of learner as well as teacher. In the expatriate teaching situation, Sowden (2007) advises, “Instead of trying to impose cultures of their own, they must work with the cultures that they encounter” (p. 305). Taking steps to learn the language, customs, values, and pedagogy of the local culture will help the American teacher immensely in ameliorating the negative stereotypes that they may encounter while teaching in the EFL classroom.

References


Early Childhood Mathematics: How does It Add Up to Teachers?

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Abstract: Teachers play an important role in helping children become math literate. This study explored teachers’ beliefs about early childhood mathematics. Twelve teachers were interviewed. Three themes emerged: (a) the importance of a child’s environment, (b) the importance of education in society, and (c) the role of math in early childhood.

Children are born with the natural tendency to make sense of their world and construct meaning (Geist, 2004; Macnamera, 1972; NAEYC & NCTM, 2002). From birth, a newborn is surrounded with mathematical opportunities (Geist, 2004; Macnamera, 1972). As infants become toddlers and enter school, they are engaged in free play. In free play, children sort, count, classify, add, and subtract throughout the day. Math is everywhere and integrated into the child’s daily context. Whether children are standing in line (ordinal numbers) or buying lunch (counting money), they are continually surrounded by mathematical opportunities. Reports to date have supported that a curriculum based on hands-on experiences yield higher retention (NAEYC & NCTM, 2002; NRC, 1989; NRC, 2001; NRC, 2005).

In 1989, the National Research Council (NRC) examined the necessity of having quality mathematical programs and concluded that every student should have access to worthy mathematical programs, since “mathematics is the key to opportunity” (p. 3). In 2001, the NRC, once again, examined the math curriculum; findings supported the importance of becoming mathematically literate to function in society. Math literacy is defined as being able to perform basic mathematical problem solving tasks needed to function competently in society. Math is needed for people to fully participate in society (NRC, 2001). Research-based instructional practices focused on mathematical literacy should guide curriculum and play a central role in deciding what is taught and how it is taught.

Conceptual Framework

Teacher observation and interactions are key to finding these teachable moments that develop math concepts in the context in which they occur. High quality early childhood programs possess teachers who are interacting with their students (Kontos, 1999). To mathematize is to find everyday opportunities to infuse math into the daily context (Clement & Sarama, 2004).

Mathematical concept building does not occur just because students and teachers are interacting (Clement, 1997; deKruif, McWilliam, Ridley, & Wakely, 2000). Interactions stem from the child’s natural curiosity and lead to reflective thinking (deKruif et al., 2000; Haroutunian-Gordon, 1996). Successful interpretive discussions result from teachers who validate the child’s thinking (Schwartz & Brown, 1995) and elaborate on the child’s responses. Teachers should find teachable moments to introduce or elaborate on a new concept. The teachers’ role is to know their students and help maximize their potential.

Purpose of the Study

With teachers playing a critical role in fostering quality math education, it becomes necessary to explore how they define early childhood math. This study will explore preschool teachers’ view of early childhood mathematics.


http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/
Research Design

Twelve Head Start teachers were selected to participate in the study. A sample size of twelve is the average sample needed to reach the point of saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Saturation is the point where no new information is obtained. Head Start programs were created in 1965 as part of former president Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty to help economically disadvantaged preschool children succeed in society and to help narrow the achievement gap. The teaching experience of the twelve Head Start teachers, ranged from 3-30 years, with an average of 14 years of classroom experience. The twelve teachers had attained varied levels of degrees, ranging from minimum certification to a Master’s degree. Two teachers had their Child Development Associate (CDA), four had an Associate in Arts, five had earned a Bachelor’s in Arts and one teacher had a Master’s degree. All twelve teachers were female. Eleven of the teachers were Black and one teacher was Hispanic. When asked which subject was the teachers’ favorite and least favorite, only two teachers favored math. In contrast, five teachers claimed math was their least favorite subject in school. One teacher took the sentiment one step further. “I hated math” (Teacher 3, line 68).

An interview guide was used to get the teacher’s view of the role of language in the development of early childhood mathematics (see Appendix A). The interview guide contained 34 questions about (a) the participant; (b) the participant’s teaching and learning beliefs; and (c) the role of language in math.

Using the interview guide, the twelve participants were interviewed individually for about an hour. Interviews were face-to-face and digitally recorded. The teachers were asked for permission to be recorded. The digital recorder was placed in front of the teacher to best capture responses. Interviews were transcribed verbatim by a transcriptionist within a month of the data collection. Transcriptions were checked for accuracy by listening to the digital recording while following along in the transcript. A thematic analysis of the data was conducted.

Findings

After analyzing the interviews, three major themes emerged: (a) the importance of a child’s environment, (b) the importance of an education in society, and (c) the role of math in early childhood.

The Importance of a Child’s Environment

The first theme that emerged was the importance of a child’s environment. Teachers expressed how children are learning through everyday experiences. Children are picking up information while interacting in their environment. A major part of children’s environment is their home life.

Learning through everyday experiences. Children learning through everyday experiences resonated with every teacher. Opportunities to learn surround a child.

To me, language is everywhere. Language could be spoken. It could be visual. It could be printed. It could even be when at home. I tell the kids when you go home [and] mommy is cooking, help mom cook. You know, then if she’s gonna put an egg into something then [ask] what is it? So they learn things by name and then they learn things from a functional point of view. So everything is like a learning experience. So, everything is a learning process (Teacher 8, lines 187-198).

Teachers stressed that language and math are taught “everyday in everyway” (Teacher 5, line 64). In taking attendance, setting the table, and sharing a cookie, teachers agreed that children are learning language and math skills.
**Picking up information.** Through everyday experiences in the environment, children pick up information. “I got some 3-year-olds that can do fine ‘cause it depends on what that child is exposed to. What that parent that works with the child at home on. The more they’re exposed the better off they are” (Teacher 10, lines 381-384).

By listening, observing, and interacting, children are picking up information without being explicitly taught. “We’re not forcing them to, but they’re just learning by being in that learning environment, exposed to the other children that are a little more advanced” (Teacher 7, lines 123-125).

**Home environment.** Most teachers agreed that the child’s home environment plays a role in development. From birth, the child’s environment plays a role in the child’s cognitive growth. “A person is born, how the person is born. I believe that is a part of your genetics. You know, however you come. Whatever you come with when you are born. But sometimes environment, cultures affects development” (Teacher 10, lines 153-157).

Parents play a crucial role in a child’s education. Teachers felt parents who work with their children, read to their children, and talk with their children help the child acquire language and math.

I believe that environment has a very important part in the way a child learns. Is that child being talked to? Is that child getting in mathematics? Is someone reading to that child...All that plays a tremendous part of the way a child would develop. It’s much easier to work with children that are all ready; the parents are already working with them at home (Teacher 5, lines 71-77).

Head Start offers several workshops throughout the year addressing parent involvement. Many of the Head Start teachers mentioned attending these trainings. In these trainings, teachers have acquired strategies to assist in working with parents and in working with the community.

**The Importance of Education in Society**

A second theme that emerged was the importance of education in society. An education is not only a matter of learning to some teachers, but a matter of survival. Literacy and math are important skills to survive in society. A few teachers also expressed that the importance of education in society is to give children a voice to express themselves; in short, words have power.

**Learning as survival.** One teacher decided to become a teacher after working at a lawyer’s office and being alarmed to see so many African Americans males repeatedly going through the court system. She decided to become an early childhood teacher to set the foundation young children need to survive in the community.

[An education] is the beginning of all, of everything, of learning, of uh, seeing a human being and the way I saw for me, I saw my black community going. I hear school is hard… If they have a strong foundation, if they have that, schools, a breeze. Everything else is just add-on. Everything is just a pile of information piled on top of each other. But a lot of times because they don’t have a strong foundation and that’s why they have problems later on (Teacher 6, lines 2-11).

Some teachers viewed school as a way to give children the tools they need to survive in society. “Language and math are something that we need in life” (Teacher 5, lines 119). Schools prepare children to live in a community. “It teaches them how to work with other children, other people. How to communicate, how to… get what they want and be better citizens” (Teacher 1, lines 208-210).
Language and math help children communicate and become active members of society. Communication is an important tool to help children survive in society. Through communication, children have the power to express themselves.

*Words have power.* Many teachers also have attended classroom management trainings. A major theme of these trainings is to encourage children to use their words to express their wants and needs. Every teacher defined language as a way to communicate and express themselves. “Language, I think language is what we use to communicate to one another and express our thoughts and ideas” (Teacher 8, lines 188-189). Teacher 2 provided an even stronger purpose for language. “It [language] helps them communicate. To let them know that words have power” (Teacher 2, lines 240-241). Language goes beyond reading and writing. Language is empowering. It allows children to use their words to express their needs, instead of finding inappropriate alternatives, such as hitting or throwing a tantrum. Instead of hitting a child who took away a cookie, a child can use his/her words to express his thoughts. In the previous example, the child’s cookie was taken away (subtraction). Being able to articulate the math concept of subtraction is quite empowering to a child who feels taken advantage of.

### The Role of Mathematics in Early Childhood

A third theme that emerged was the role of mathematics in early childhood. Teachers saw the role of math as helping children count, and helping children prepare for school.

**Math as counting.** Many teachers defined math as counting. For example, Teacher 5 commented, “Math has to with numbers, counting” (line 187). Teacher 6 also defined math in terms of counting.

Math is something you know on a regular basis. I have them count the students when we get in line. I have them count if it’s something they’re like, well, um, how many cameras do you have? I said well count and find out. You know everything’s count, count (Teacher 6, lines 223-236).

Many teachers viewed math as a daily activity including many opportunities to count. Students are counting how many children are absent, how many children are in line, and the like.

**Math for school readiness.** School readiness is a priority expressed by almost every teacher. Teachers felt pressured by parents, administrators and state policies to get their students ready to compete in the public school system and many felt the role of math in preschool is to get them ready for math in elementary school.

The role of math in a preschool, that’s getting them basically, like ready for kindergarten. [Helping] them recognize numbers when they see numbers. They’re gonna be able to count one to ten when they reach kindergarten. So it’s very, very important for kindergarten that they learn [a] little basic in math. And counting and stuff (Teacher 1, line 228-232).

One teacher indicated that she had just spent the morning wondering if her children were ready to move on to kindergarten. With school ending in two weeks, she was curious if they were ready for school. After asking the children to count the number of windows in the class and the number of chairs, she felt her students were ready. “I said, hell yes, I’m all right, all right. And then I know they are ready. I know they are ready” (Teacher 11, lines 322-325).

### Implications Based on Findings

Teachers play an important role in changing the ways math is taught in school. Equally important in providing high quality math instruction is sustained support given to teachers. (NCTM, 1991). Teachers are aware of the necessity of providing children a quality math education. Teachers are also aware that children acquire math throughout the day. With the
pressures to prepare children for school, teachers need professional development to help bridge their beliefs into practice. Many early childhood teachers enter the classroom without sufficient preparation to teach math. Most universities only require one math method course (Nolan, 2007). Without a content base and a pedagogical base, teachers are unaware of what to teach in early childhood mathematics, nor how to teach it.

Head Start protocol requires teachers to attend professional development on a regular basis. All 12 teachers have participated in professional development in the areas of behavior management, parent involvement, health and literacy. Not one teacher mentioned having attended a workshop on math. Lack of attendance may be due to the scarcity of early childhood math workshops. In the 2007-2008 school year, Head Start is not offering any workshops dedicated to early childhood math (personal communication, C. Brogan, October 19, 2007).

Teacher 6 expressed a desire to attend professional development to address the needs of her students and was motivated to learn new ways to teach.

I always try to figure out new and better ways of bringing interest to having the kids, you know, 3, 4, 5 year olds, a little more interested. So I always go to the seminars to see if they have something going on. Or something new that I can learn from. Of course, again, share with the kids. (Teacher 6, lines 162-169).

The teachers interviewed all came across as caring, committed and knowledgeable teachers. They saw the importance of a high quality education. It appears that if given the opportunity, they would implement practices that lead to math success.

Conclusion

Most teachers interviewed were concerned with their students and wanted to see them succeed in school and in society. To do this, teachers need to become reflective and aware of how everyday experiences can be used to teach mathematical concepts. Teachers are aware of the importance of the child’s environment and are concerned with preparing children for elementary school. Teachers share a common destination (i.e., school readiness); what is missing is the blueprint on how to reach the goal. Professional development can provide teachers with the tools needed to promote children’s mathematical concepts. Professional development should focus on how teachers can use children’s daily context to foster mathematical understandings. Using everyday experiences as a bridge to promote mathematical concepts will result in math literacy. Math literacy is imperative to succeed in society.

References


**Appendix A**

**Math Mediated Language Interview Questions**

**Questions about You:**

1. What motivated you to become a teacher?
2. What did you do prior to becoming an early childhood teacher?
3. What was your initial training in early childhood?
4. What degree(s) do you hold?
5. How many years have you worked as an early childhood teacher?
6. How long have you worked in your current job at this center?
7. What professional development have you attended?
8. What was your favorite subject in school? Why?
9. What subject was your least favorite in school? Why?

**Questions about Teaching/Learning**

10. How often do you teach language?
11. How often do you teach math?
12. In what ways do children vary in learning styles?
13. In what ways do children vary in learning style by age?
15. What other factors influence learning styles?

Questions about the Role of Language in Math

Language and Math
16. How do you define language?
17. How do you define math?
18. In what ways do you think children acquire language?
19. In what ways do you think children acquire math?
20. How do preschoolers use language?
21. How do preschoolers use math?
22. What do you think is the role of language in a preschool classroom?
23. What do you think is the role of math in a preschool classroom?
24. What do you think is the role of language in learning in a preschool classroom?
25. What do you think is the role of math in learning in a preschool classroom?

Relationship of Language and Math
26. Do you think of yourself as thinking mathematically? Why? If yes, how do you think mathematically?
27. When and how do you use math daily?
28. How do you use language in your mathematical thinking?
29. How do you use language in your teaching of math?
30. How do your students use language to express mathematical concepts?
31. How does a child use everyday words to express mathematical concepts?
32. How does a child’s use of everyday words help us to understand his/her mathematical thinking?
33. Is there any question you think I should have asked you and didn’t?
34. Is there anything else you think I need to understand?
Examination and Critique of Codebook for Textual Analysis

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Abstract: The researcher presents the details, findings, and critique of a pre-pilot study conducted on a codebook created for a textbook comparison. She used Cohen’s alpha and percent agreement to determine inter-rater reliabilities for coding categories. These values revealed changes needed in the coding scheme and in the coder training process for the future comparison study.

International comparison tests have placed students from Singapore at the top and students from the United States as average on these tests (Zhu & Fan, 2004). Studies of the mathematical systems from nations participating in these tests suggest that differences in textbooks may help explain this disparity in achievement (Ginsburg, Leinwand, Anstrom, & Pollock, 2005). To find the differences between mathematics textbooks from the two countries a textbook comparison can be used. The theoretical background for the textual comparison is from Vygotsky’s concept of symbolic mediation, the idea that symbolic tools, including algebraic symbols, organize and control mental processes (Lantolf, 1994). A textual analysis will allow us to examine the use of symbolic tools in a text.

In preparation for a comparison of mathematics textbooks from Singapore and the United States, a pre-pilot study was conducted to determine the feasibility of a coding instrument (Appendix A) created by the author. The coding scheme was designed to examine 23 features of the text (See Appendix B for researchers who have influenced these features). According to Neuendorf (2002), one of the purposes of a pilot study is to address four main threats to reliability of a content, or textual, analysis. These four threats are “1. a poorly executed coding scheme, 2. inadequate coder training, 3. coder fatigue, and 4. the presence of a rogue coder” (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 145). The pre-pilot study addressed these threats by identifying problems in the coding scheme and within the coder training process. The goal was to find ways to improve the codebook before using it in the textbook comparison study. The purpose of this manuscript is to present the details, findings, and critique of this pre-pilot study.

Addressing Threats to Reliability

In a coding scheme, the categories need to be clear, unambiguous, and must consist of mutually exclusive sets (Neuendorf, 2002). Neuendorf recommended that the codebook and coding forms should be so well-defined as to virtually eliminate any differences in the coding by different individuals. One way the pre-pilot study will address the threats to reliability is by identifying problems in the coding scheme. The inter-rater reliabilities of two coders will be assessed using percent agreement and Cohen’s alpha. From these values, the researcher will be able to determine any definitions or coding categories that need to be changed in the codebook.

The coder training process is also an issue that the pre-pilot study will examine. Neuendorf (2002) presented a 15-step process when creating a coding scheme. This process involves (a) creating the codebook, (b) three iterations of coder training, coder practice, coder discussion, and codebook revision, (c) the final coding, and (d) analysis of the experience (Neuendorf, 2002). Due to time restrictions, the coder training was truncated to one iteration of Neuendorf’s proposed guidelines for coder training. This affected the results of the inter-rater reliability values. However, the study was beneficial in pinpointing things that need to be done.
changed in the codebook and the coder training process and in revealing sources of potential problems in the future textbook comparison study.

**Methodology**

Two coders independently coded a randomly chosen sample of text pertaining to linear functions in a mathematics textbook from the US with respect to 23 features. Inter-rater reliability values were assessed using Cohen’s *kappa* and percent agreement. The two reliability values represent the differences in Cohen’s kappa’s conservative value (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2005; Neuendorf, 2002) and percent agreement’s more liberal index for estimating inter-rater reliability. The desired value for the inter-rater reliability coefficient was chosen to be between .9 for percent agreement and .75+ for Cohen’s kappa as this is the level acceptable in most situations (Lombard et al., 2005; Neuendorf, 2002). General features were also compared.

**Implementation of the Study**

After the creation of the coding scheme and codebook, the researcher held an informal training session with the second coder. First, the second coder was given the codebook and coding scheme and asked if there were any questions about the definitions. Next, the two coders discussed the relationship and differences between linear functions and linear equations. They then looked at a sample text, McGraw-Hill’s Teacher Wraparound edition of *Algebra 1* (Holliday et al., 2004) and covered a few examples of linear functions as compared to linear equations. They discussed the classification of object-analytic images and object-illustrative images using examples from the text. A teacher text was chosen for this training session so that the available student text, *Algebra: Structure and Method: Book 1* (Brown, Dolciani, Sorgenfrey, & Cole, 2000) by Houghton Mifflin, could possibly be used in a second iteration of the coder-training process in the future. Neither text will be used in the comparison study. Preliminary revisions to the codebook included a less ambiguous definition of linear functions and the replacement of the word lessons with the word sections with a short explanation for the term.

After the codebook was revised, two sections pertaining to linear functions from the textbook, *Algebra: Structure and Method Book I* (Brown et al., 2000), were randomly chosen to be the sample text in the pre-pilot study. The textbook was a text that had previously been used in a U.S. classroom and represented a typical traditional U.S. mathematics textbook. The coders independently coded the two sections. An Excel program was used to facilitate the recording of the coded categories while a coding form was used to record the numbers within the general-feature categories. A rubric listing all the problems in each section by category heading (i.e. Oral Exercises or Mixed Review Exercises) was created. However, the category Self-Test 1 was inadvertently omitted from the first section, so these eight problems were not included in the study. Also, one coder coded all problems in the first section and the problems pertaining only to linear functions in the second section. The other coder coded problems only pertaining to linear functions in both sections. This discrepancy in the total number of problems coded would have given an inaccurate measure of the level of agreement for the coding instrument. For that reason, only the problems pertaining to linear functions that both coders had examined were used in the calculations for the inter-rater reliability values. The total number of problems examined was 54.

**Results**

The pre-pilot study was designed to determine the extent to which two coders agreed on rating 23 features within the text. The amount of inter-rater agreement on the codes for these items will determine the usefulness of the definitions and categories within the coding scheme and codebook to be used in the textbook comparison. This section will consist of two segments: a discussion of the inter-rater agreement results and a discussion of what the levels of agreement...
reveal about the coding instrument. The results will be delineated by characteristic examined.  

*General Features of the Text*

The general features of the text did not require a choice of code categories except for the images, which required a count for each type of image. Thus, Cohen’s kappa and percent agreement were not found for these characteristics. The results consisted of a comparison of the two coders’ assessments of the features as listed on their coding forms. These values are listed in Table 1. None of the coders’ assessments were a perfect match. One category, number of pages for each lesson, was not included in Table 1. This was done because of the differences in interpretation of the characteristic and the fact that reporting the average number of pages per linear function section was a better approach than listing the number of pages for the 100+ sections. The values were different for the coders due to the numbers for pages and sections being different. The coders were most in agreement about the average number of pages per section pertaining to linear functions with values of 5.43 and 5.22.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Coder 1</th>
<th>Coder 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pages in Text</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Chapters</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Sections</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear Function Pages</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages for Development</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pages for Exercises</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Pages/Linear Function</td>
<td>5.43</td>
<td>5.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object-Illustrative Images</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object-Analytic Images</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signposts/Attention-Getters</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*General Classifications of the Problems*

Cohen’s kappa and percent agreement were the inter-rater reliability coefficients calculated for the six problem characteristics pertaining to linear functions. As seen in Table 2, the two inter-coder reliability coefficients differed drastically when agreement by chance was taken into account using Cohen’s kappa and when chance was not taken into account using percent agreement. The percent agreements for the contextual feature and response-type were found to be 87% (0.87) and 69% (0.69), respectively. However, Cohen’s kappa agreement coefficients were 0.46 and 0.12, respectively, for the two features. This demonstrated a criticism overlooked initially by the researcher but documented by Lombard et al. (2005) and Neuendorf (2002) that Cohen’s kappa gives an estimate of agreement that is too conservative. However, Neuendorf (2002) presented a value of .4 to .75 as being a fair to good agreement when using Cohen’s kappa. The fact that no value for Cohen’s kappa was found for the given-information category presented a limitation of Cohen’s kappa. If the coders do not use one of the coding categories but have complete agreement, Cohen’s kappa cannot be calculated due to the fact that zero is obtained in the denominator. Thus, the coders agreed on every problem’s classification and coded every problem with the same category. Similarly, both agreement coefficients were 1.0 for the characteristic application type, but not all problems were classified with only one code category. The inter-rater reliability coefficients varied widely with respect to problem characteristics and had little agreement between the two indices.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Cohen’s kappa</th>
<th>Percent Agreement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems (n = 54)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computational</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response-Type</td>
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<td>.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive Requirement</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given Information</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Type</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Practices</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Cohen’s kappa does not yield a value due to only one characterization (i.e., code), being chosen for all problems. All problems were coded with the same code, so the coders agreed on the characterization of every problem in this category.

Characterization of Problem Practices in the Text

The inter-rater reliability results (See Table 2) show the lack of agreement in the characterization of problem practices between the coders on both indices. Cohen’s kappa value, -.04, signifies an agreement that is less than chance. The percent agreement is a scant .26. Thus, the coders did not agree on their labels of the practices in problems pertaining to linear functions.

Cultural Indicators

Both coders had difficulty using the coding scheme to classify cultural indicators. Due to the experimental nature of these characteristics, the author included a category similar to unable to determine within the choices. Inclusion of such a category is recommended for any content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002). Both coders selected this category for all four cultural indicator features. Thus, the coders were unable to determine the presence of cultural indicators in the text.

Changes Recommended for Coding Scheme

This section discusses recommended changes concerning (a) general features of the text, (b) general classifications of the problems, (c) characterization of problem practices, and (d) cultural indicators.

General Features of the Text

From the results of the pre-pilot study, the researcher successfully determined changes that need to be made in the coding scheme. First, the fact that every general feature of the text was classified differently by the coders indicated that the definitions of these characteristics should be changed. Indeed, there were issues that could not have been foreseen unless one had experience in coding textbooks or had extensive knowledge of textbooks. There was a portion of text at the end of the textbook called Looking Ahead. This portion of text looked like a chapter but was not labeled as a chapter. This pseudo-chapter even contained pseudo-sections (i.e., sections that were not labeled as sections). Contingencies like this need to be considered as the codebook is revised. Other things that need to be addressed in the definitions and directions in the codebook are as follows: (a) Does one count the introductory pages before the chapters begin? (b) Can one have partial pages in the count? (c) Do extra teaching lessons within a section count as a new section? (d) Are all problems; oral, written, mixed review, computer, and self-test; counted as problems? (e) Do graphs count as images to be classified? (f) What are more explicit examples of signposts? (g) Does the number of pages for every lesson, even ones without linear functions, need to be determined? and (h) To what extent are linear equations part of the linear functions topic? These suggestions represent some of the deficiencies that need to
be addressed in the codebook within the general features section. Another factor to consider is whether the comparison study should focus only on linear functions in view of the fact that the study’s main purpose is to reveal information about the problems within the text.

**General Classifications of the Problems**

For general classifications of problems, three problem features received acceptable inter-rater reliability levels using percent agreement. The other three received close to .7, which is an acceptable level for some exploratory studies (Lombard et al., 2005). However, using Cohen’s kappa, only two problem features had acceptable inter-rater reliability levels. This included the given-information feature that received an invalid answer for Cohen’s kappa. This implies that careful thought needs to be given in setting acceptable inter-rater reliability levels. A look at Krippendorff’s alpha may be warranted. However, with clarification of the category codes using examples and caveats for the coder, the inter-rater reliability coefficients are expected to change.

Issues pertaining to general problem characteristics need to be resolved in the codebook. For example, the coder needs to know how the directions given in a problem affect the coding of contextual features. Also, the difference between conceptual understanding and problem solving must be clarified through examples or wording of the definitions. An example is the case where a computation is simple, but the student is asked to do the computation multiple times in one problem. This case needs to be highlighted in the codebook for classification as a single computation. More training for the coders with a concerted effort to discuss each characteristic of the problem will also affect the inter-rater reliability coefficients.

Within the general problem features, there was perfect agreement pertaining to the given-information feature. There were no problems that contained insufficient or extraneous data. While the U.S. text showed no variation in the data given in the problem, an examination of the Singapore text may not yield the same result. Thus, some of the benefits of the comparison study may not be ascertained from the results of this pre-pilot study.

**Characterization of Problem Practices**

While the results for the problem practices feature had very low levels of inter-rater reliability, the initial examination of this feature was encouraging. The prospect of determining differences in texts based upon the practices within the problems seemed feasible as there were several categories within the text. The differences in coding seemed to be due to inadequate understanding of the categories. Thus, further clarification of the type of problem that each category represents needs to be in the codebook. This can be done by listing examples for each category. Also, the training for coders should include some background of how and why the categories were created by Mesa (2004). Once all coders understand the code categories, suitable inter-rater reliability coefficients should follow.

**Cultural Indicators**

The results revealed that the definitions for the cultural indicators should be revised. Some concerted thought needs to go into determining if these categories can be found and classified in a textbook. Perhaps these features are not passed on solely through the content of the textbook but through its connection to the process i.e., how the book is used (Haggarty & Pepin, 2002). More information on culture and how it is passed on needs to be examined to create unambiguous definitions for determining how cultural indicators are seen in the text.

**Critique of Pre-Pilot Study**

The pre-pilot study was very successful in revealing ways to revise the coding instrument to more accurately reflect the characteristics within the text. The revisions suggested above will allow for more concrete definitions and examples within the codebook. The study also uncovered
deficiencies in coder training and differences in using Cohen’s kappa and percent agreement to
determine inter-rater reliability. Krippendorff’s alpha may be looked at in a future study to obtain
acceptable inter-rater reliability coefficients. The researcher will also consider leaving some of
the general features of the text, such as number of pages for each section, out of the final
comparison study. She will also ponder carefully how to view cultural indicators within the text.

Even though this pre-pilot study has informed the future revision of the codebook, there
were weaknesses in the study. First, due to time constraints, Neuendorf’s (2002) 15-step coder
training/codebook development process was truncated to only the first iteration of coder training.
This abbreviated process affected the inter-rater reliability values obtained. This was the first
time for both coders to use a coding instrument. A second iteration would have taken care of
some of the discrepancies in the inter-rater reliabilities. The proposed inclusion of examples and
changes to the definitions demonstrate how the coder training process can inform the creation of
a codebook. Another weakness was the researcher’s inexperience with coder training. This was
obvious as the trainee misread some of the directions and definitions, which should have been
covered in the training session.

A limitation of the pre-pilot study was the fact that the coding is biased due to human
error and misinterpreting the definitions. For example, one of the coders used other as a category
for one feature in almost all of the problems. This consistent incorrect coding was due to the
misinterpretation of the definitions. Some of these misinterpretations may be prevented by
changes made to the codebook based on this pre-pilot study.

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%20content%20analysis%20researchers%20properly%20assess%20and%20report%20inter
coder%20reliability.

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Appendix A

Coding Instrument

Part I Background features

1. Number of pages in text
2. Number of chapters
3. Number of sections
4. Number of pages for each section
5. Number of pages pertaining to linear functions
6. Number of pages for development
7. Number of pages for exercises
8. Number of other pages
9. Number of problems pertaining to linear functions
10. Average number of pages per section
11. Average number of pages per section pertaining to linear functions
12. Type of images
   (OA) object-analytic images   (OI) object-illustrative images
13. Number of signposts or attention-getters

Part II General classification of problem

1. Computational feature
   (S) single computation procedure   (M) multiple computation procedures
2. Contextual feature
   (nu) numerical (vi) visual (ve) verbal (co) combined form
3. Response-type feature
   (A) numeric answer only (E) numeric expression only
   (ES) explanation or solution required   (OP) other response
4. Cognitive requirement feature
   (PP) procedural practice   (CU) conceptual understanding
   (PS) problem solving   (SR) special requirement
5. Given-information feature
   (SF) sufficient   (EX) extraneous   (ISF) insufficient
6. Application type
   (AP) applied   (NA) nonapplied
Part III Classification of problem practices

1. Characterization of problem practices
   (sr) symbolic rule  (op) ordered pair  (sd) social data
   (ph) physical phenomena  (ci) controlling image  (ot) other

Part IV Cultural indicator feature

1. Group dynamic
   (soc) social orientation (ind) individual orientation  (utd) unable to determine

2. Level of importance of memorization
   (imp) important  (nim) not important  (utd) unable to determine

3. Responsibility for achievement and failure
   (srp) student responsible  (orp) others responsible  (utd) unable to determine

4. Attitudes toward study
   (hnf) hard work not fun  (hfn) hard work fun  (ota) other attitude

Appendix B

Influences on the Coding Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, Reder, &amp; Simon</td>
<td>Applications and misapplications of cognitive psychology to mathematics education</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginsburg, Leinwand, Anstrom, &amp; Pollock</td>
<td>What the United States can learn from Singapore’s world-class mathematics system</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harries &amp; Sutherland</td>
<td>The representation of mathematical concepts in primary mathematics textbooks: A focus on multiplication</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leung</td>
<td>The mathematics classroom in Beijing, Hong Kong, and London</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li</td>
<td>A comparison of problems that follow selected content presentations in American and Chinese mathematics textbooks</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayer, Sims, &amp; Tajika</td>
<td>A comparison of how textbooks teach mathematical problem solving in Japan and the United States</td>
<td>1995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesa</td>
<td>Characterizing practices associated with function in middle school textbooks: An empirical approach</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tieso</td>
<td>The effects of grouping practices and curricular adjustments on achievement</td>
<td>2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zhu &amp; Fan</td>
<td>An Analysis of the representation of problem types in Chinese and US mathematics textbooks</td>
<td>2004</td>
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Urban Education Research: A Paradigm Shift

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Abstract: Significantly due to the institutional separation of theory and practice, the gap between academia and society continues to broaden, arguably pointing towards the failure of traditional educational research and, to an extent, the university’s neglect to authenticate alternate epistemologies and methodologies that seek to elicit mobilization, activism, and reform.

The present state of public education within the context of equal access to all poses a great sociological challenge to research. How can alternate epistemologies in urban educational research elicit mobilization and change?

Theoretical Framework

We recognize that mainstream research, based on the integrationist perspective which emphasized consensus, assimilation, and the legitimacy of societal institutions, has obscured and distorted the significant historical role which class conflict and group interests have taken in shaping our existence as a people to the present moment.

Teresa Córdova (as cited in Mora and Diaz, 2003, p. 25)

Epistemologically research seeks to answer questions that are intertwined with societal concerns. Stemming from historical philosophical foundations, research poses questions that concern mankind and are somehow designed to improve the quality of his existence. Given that laws and government have historically been essential components of civilized society, and as such of concern to men, research has and continues to reflect political and economic societal trends. This poses an extremely intricate pattern when discussing the history of research in colony-based civilizations such as America, where the conquering class established their Euro-centered ideals and created a research agenda largely based on their culture and designed to perpetuate these ideals. Stemming from these contentions, it can be argued that societies produced by the colonial system tend to create and follow research protocols that are generally detached from social elements that do not reflect the dominant culture’s interests.

Questions of cultural capital become complicated in colony-based societies because cultural value is dictated and propagated by the conquering or dominant class. Historically, Europeans settled in the Americas and sought to force their religion and traditions on the natives. This pattern of cultural homogenization is still alive hundreds of years later and epitomized by the ethnic and cultural make-up of the heads of government, university presidents, and CEO’s of major corporations. In essence, our laws, economic capital, and body of knowledge guided by research generally reflect the traditions and interests of the dominant ethni-class.

Being that theory is designed to guide epistemologies and shape processes, one can argue that theorizing in America is highly culturally biased and thus narrow in scope. Specifically, it places value on the ideology and precedents set by the dominant majority. Similarly, theorizing within the context of research is mostly void of the cultural and socio-economic perspectives of minorities, or as Park, Miller, Mary, Budd, and Jackson (1993) explained, specific groups have been traditionally and purposely excluded from becoming active participants in the evaluation of...
systems and institutions. On this notion, it is important to recognize that research does address the struggles of the minorities, but generally from a place of assumed superiority and unrecognized privilege. Specifically, research addresses minority issues from a detached quantified perspective that seldom gives a voice to the oppressed but rather pigeon-holds them to the role of “subject”, generally fails to address their position in the context of society (Córdova, 2003) and, thus, fails to address the root of the problem.

Educational research has historically placed value on highly mechanical, contrived studies that arguably oversimplify the human experience into cause and effect variable relationships. These are:

…born out of methodological fundamentalism that returns to a much discredited model of empirical enquiry in which only randomized experiments produce truth (House, 2006, pp. 100-101), such regulatory activities raise fundamental, philosophical epistemological, political and pedagogical issues for scholarship and freedom of speech in academy. (Denzin, Lincoln, & Giradina, 2006, p. 770)

Complicating matters, universities have traditionally recognized this type of research as having value, as evidenced by the fact service (defined as the area where theory and practice unite within the context of community), which is the least important criterion for eventual tenure (Baez, 2000; Blackburn & Lawrence 1995; Centra, 1993; Jarvis, 1991).

The Need for Changing Research Paradigms: Current Issues

With the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) signed into law by President Bush in 2002, many studies have been conducted to determine learning gains or narrowing of the achievement gaps between disadvantaged and minority students and their peers. The National Center for Education Statistics (2007) conducted a study to determine if there were any changes in the achievement gap for math and reading. According to study findings in reading, the achievement gaps between White and Black and White and Hispanic fourth-graders in 2005 were not significantly different from those in 1992. In 2005 at the fourth-grade level, Blacks scored on average 29 points lower than Whites (on a 0–500 scale); and Hispanics scored on average 26 points lower than Whites. At eighth grade, there were no significant changes in the White-Black achievement gap between 1992 and 2005 and little change in the White-Hispanic gap, even though the gap in 2005 was slightly lower than that in 2003 (25 points compared with 27 points).

In mathematics, the achievement gap between White and Black fourth graders decreased between 1990 and 2005 (from 32 to 26 points). The White-Hispanic fourth-grade gap increased in the 1990s before decreasing in the first half of the 2000s, but the gap in 2005 (20 points) was not significantly different from findings in 1990. Among eighth graders, a similar trend existed in both the White-Black and White-Hispanic score gaps. In 2005, the White-Black gap was 34 points, and the White-Hispanic gap was 27 points.

According to the National Education Association (2006), the U.S. Department of Commerce data shows that more than one-third of students in today’s public schools are minorities and that by the year 2025, at least half will be. However, only 13% of their teachers are minorities, and more than 40% of schools across America have no teachers of color on staff. White women continue to dominate the teaching profession. As evidence, three out of four public school teachers are female, and 89% are White, whereas only 7% are Black, and 2% are Hispanic.

A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Education (2007) reported on the changes that occurred in the racial and ethnic distribution of public school students in kindergarten through 12th grade between 1972 and 2005. In 2005, 42% of children attending public schools
were reported to be part of a racial or ethnic minority group, which is an increase from 22% in 1972. Additionally, the number of school-age children (ages 5-17) who spoke a language other than English at home has increased from 3.8 million to 10.6 million between 1979 and 2005.

Within the context of urban education, school attrition continues to plague urban communities. The “dropout rates in urban areas range from 40% to 60% and in certain cities dropout rates for some minority groups are as high as 75% to 80%” (McIntyre, 1992, p. 7).

Another issue is that urban schools are having difficulty recruiting and maintaining qualified teachers than other schools (Obiakor & Algozzine, 1993; Rousseau & Davenport, 1993).

Alternate Research Epistemologies

Challenging the stronghold of “the lab coat” approach to educational research, where results obtained in contrived scenarios are presumably generalized to the real world, emerging schools of thought seek to authenticate the prestige found in practice and more importantly the role of societal constructs in education, as exemplified by the critical race theory (CRT; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Along with alternate epistemologies, methodology has also evolved and more socially conscious research methods have developed, amongst this participatory action research (Park, Miller, Hall, & Jackson, 1993). Several scholars have also contributed towards the humanization of educational research, among the classics Jungen Habermass (1998) and Paulo Freire (1970) and the more contemporary leaders include Lisa Delpit (1995), Lilia I. Bartolomé (1994), and Laurence Parker (2007), to name a few.

As a powerful alternate epistemology, CRT gives a voice to minorities on pertinent issues such as public policy, racism, and sexism (Parker, 1998; Moran & Whitford, 1996). CRT offers guiding principles that facilitate navigating through the “centrality of racism in school and university settings” (Parker, 1998, p. 49). Similarly, from a methodological perspective, participatory action research seeks to provide people with a forum in which to become self-advocates and take an active role in determining the quality of their future.

Revolutionary epistemologies and methodology function from a perspective inherently designed to empower as opposed to pacify or enable. More importantly, they validate the individuality of human experience and take an honest approach towards identifying societal constructs that contribute to the marginalization of groups of people.

Guiding Principles for Urban Research

Among the many complexities of conducting research is urban settings is the notion that generally research falls short of resulting in action due to its failure to clearly identify and thus expose where the problem lies. Too often urban settings are viewed as places to conduct research from a deficit-based perspective, meaning places where children are typically associated with learning deficits, schools are viewed as crime-ridden institutions, teachers as inept, and parents as generally not invested in their children’s education. “The newest iterations of this argument are the well publicized books No Excuses by the Thernstroms at Harvard (Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003) and the international version Culture Matters (Harrison & Huntington, 2000)” (Dowdy & Wynn, 2005, p. xix).

Contradicting these suggested deficits and operating from the principles of participatory action research, the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA), as part of The Indicators Project on Education Organizing, provides residents in urban communities with a forum in which to become advocates and decision makers in their neighborhood schools (Mediratta, 2007). As one of five case studies conducted by The Indicators Project designed to depict the impact of community organizing on school reform, the LSNA goes beyond theorizing and actually establishes a system of accountability based on performance indicators. The specific indicators
chosen typify a collaborative approach to decision-making with tenets such as leadership
development, community power, and public accountability. “The theory of change” model
employed by the LSNA, establishes the neighborhood school as a resource center that operates
based on the needs of the community and follows principles set forth by its very own members.
The reciprocity that occurs between the school’s and the neighborhood’s culture successfully
addresses concerns that are of vital importance to both.

Bob Moses’ Algebra Project is another example of effective, grass-roots mobilization
designed to promote and highlight the aptitude of minority students in urban areas and the
expertise of the teachers that work with them (Checkley, 2001). From a political angle, this type
of conscious action towards change from the masses reflects the type of powerful results that can
be obtained when marginalized groups are given the opportunity to become autonomous and
mobilize towards emancipation.

These real-life examples of effective, empowering alternatives to traditional research and
methodologies, lead to questioning why research on other successful urban-based initiatives is so
limited when compared to the extensive data base promoting a deficits-based approach. Albeit
unintentionally oftentimes urban researchers have supplied more substance to the already
negative pre-conceived notions of how urban schools operate and what urban youth represents
(Nygreen, 2006). Highlighting this point, Dowdy’s and Wynn’s (2005) *Racism, Research, and
Educational Reform: Voices from the City*, denounces the institutional racism that perpetuates
the typically deficient status minorities are given in research.

The complexity of conducting research in urban settings does not originate from the
socio-economic constructs traditionally associated with such settings, but rather from the
researchers’ limited perspective. As evidence, the general point of reference is that of the
traditional scientific method as opposed to a more experiential and practical approach (Gooden,
2002; Oakes, 1986).

Researchers in urban settings must make a conscious and mobilized effort to decrease the
number of studies that exclusively expose the results of the socio-political hegemony affecting
urban youth and institutions without offering viable action-based solutions to underachievement
due to doctrinal disenfranchisement, school attrition, over-representation in special education
programs, amongst a myriad of others. Instead researchers must denounce the policies, social
institutions, and political agendas that precipitate these factors (Nygreen, 2006).

In order to honor the proposed call towards a practical, active, and solutions based-
approach, research in urban settings must effectively point towards the root of the problem,
which is not the community, the children, or the schools, but the political constructs affecting
them. Accepting this contention implies that education is a political process and any associated
change in its practice becomes a political challenge (Apple 1990; Giroux, 1983; Kretovics &
Nussel, 1994; Nygreen, 2006), as such activism must be the key towards mobilization and
change.

As suggested earlier, perhaps the greatest challenge to the urban research agenda is
identifying the causes of the problems urban schools and students face, not exclusively the
problems themselves. For instance, although it is important to inform the public about
delinquency and school violence (not exclusive to urban settings), it is inherently more important
to expose the processes within the educational system that precipitate and exacerbate these
problems. As proposed by Smith (2000), more pertinent topics designed to confront and target
existing problematic issues include: the marginalization of minority students in education, the
lack of cultural relevancy reflecting the interests and experiences of minority students, and the
type of socio-cultural capital promoted by the educational system.

Research must advocate for social justice via acknowledging that specific political
elements actively promote social and economic disparity, and arguably researchers have a moral
responsibility to expose these agendas. Choosing to remain neutral to the existing situation is
also a political stand. Recognizing and accepting societal struggles from a universal perspective
generally creates culturally-relevant researchers that effectively promote learning milieus that
value and celebrate cultural diversity (Murrell, 2006).

Contributing towards a potential paradigm shift in special education research also
includes understanding and evaluating the results past and current research has precipitated.
Although undoubtedly great contributions to the field of education have been made possible by
research, it is still imperative to elicit action and change. The current and future emphasis of
studies should shift from the evaluation of institutions, programs, and pedagogy and focus on
examining the socio-political constructs from which these operate.

Education is not linear, but rather a reciprocal process or relationship where the students
and teachers make sense of their environment from within the framework of their own socio-
cultural capital. With this in mind, the relationship between education, power, and politics must
be scrutinized from the perspective that the bases for healthy interactions or relationships are
honesty, trust, equity, and thus justice. Once these prevail, the ultimate goal of education and
research will shift from acculturation and indoctrination to empowerment and emancipation.

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The Theory of Planned Behavior and Ethnically Diverse Community College Students and Their Intentions to Exercise: A Preliminary Analysis

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Abstract: Although regular exercise is the key to a healthy lifestyle, college students are insufficiently active to maintain good health. Motivations to exercise may vary among different ethnic groups. The results of a pilot study using the Theory of Planned Behavior (Gordon, 2008) showed that ethnically diverse college students can rate their beliefs (behavioral, social, and cognitive) pertaining to physical activity.

There is a nationwide obesity epidemic in America. According to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007), two-thirds of U.S. adults are either overweight or obese. Data obtained from the 2005 National Health Interview Survey showed that 62% of U.S. adults aged 18 years and older are not engaging in the recommended amount of leisure time physical activity as reported by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 2007). Negative effects of lack of exercise and fitness have been documented for college students (e.g., high cholesterol, a major determinant for future cardiovascular disease). For example, Spencer (2002) found that 29% of college students had undesirably high total cholesterol levels, 10% had unfavorably low high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, 10% had high systolic blood pressure, and 11% had high diastolic blood pressure. College students are at increased risk of morbidity and mortality due to the detrimental effects of a sedentary lifestyle. Researchers (e.g., Buckworth & Nigg, 2004) show that the majority of college students are inactive and that lifetime habits are established in the college years. Wellness courses can be designed to address identified attitudes, motivations, and actions toward a physically active lifestyle among a culturally diverse student population, which will lead to a higher quality of life.

Although many researchers have studied factors that motivate college students to participate in physical activities, research related to the possible influence of ethnic diversity of college students and their motivation to engage in fitness activities is limited. The two-fold purpose of the study is to identify beliefs that contribute to and promote physical activity for college students, such as how culture and ethnicity affect attitude towards physical activity participation, and to determine if intention to exercise varies among different ethnic groups of college students. In this paper, only the results of a preliminary analysis will be reported. The purpose is to describe (a) questionnaire development through a written beliefs elicitation survey and (b) cognitive response analysis through a group interview to confirm that the college students from ethnically diverse backgrounds understand the terminology and questions.

Theoretical Framework

The central hypothesis that will be used to investigate these factors is the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) developed by Ajzen (1991). Ajzen’s theory suggests that the TPB can predict intention to exercise and possibly identify differences in behavioral, normative, and control beliefs. These differences can be useful to educators when designing successful wellness programs and exercise interventions. According to the theory, an individual’s intention to exercise is influenced by beliefs about the behaviors, normative beliefs, and control beliefs.
perform a particular behavior is the major determinant of actual behavior (Ajzen, 1998).
Intentions are an indicator of an individual’s effort to try to accomplish a goal. As individuals
form their intentions, three factors are considered. The first is a favorable or unfavorable attitude
towards the behavior; the second is the perceived social pressure to perform the behavior; and
lastly is the individuals’ perception of control over the behavior. In general, a more favorable
attitude, higher social pressure, and higher perception of control will result in the greater
intention to perform the identified behavior (Ajzen, 1998). Many researchers, such as Rhodes,
Jones, Courneya (2002) and others, concur that Ajzen’s TPB has emerged as one of the foremost
social cognitive frameworks for understanding exercise motivation and behavior.

Review of Literature

The literature review focuses on the areas of physical activity and exercise among college
students, the differences that have been identified among ethnic groups, and the TPB (Ajzen,
1991). The researcher conducted a search for articles published in the years 2000-2007 in peer-
reviewed journals and indexed in the following databases: Omni file Full Text Mega-Wilson
Web, Pro Quest, Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, Educational Resources Information
Clearinghouse, Psych Info, Physical Education Index, Medline, and Journal Storage. Keywords
included Theory of Planned Behavior, exercise, physical activity, ethnicity, culture, and college
student. In the first section, the researcher critiqued quantitative studies related to physical
activity and the college student (e.g., Buckworth & Nigg, 2004), which revealed that students are
not sufficiently physically active to maintain good health. The interventions designed to increase
the physical activity of college students included one qualitative study (Clemmens, Engler, &
Chinn, 2004) and five quantitative studies (e.g., DeVahl, King, & Williamson, 2005). The
researcher critiqued this body of evidence, finding that students can be influenced by purposeful
physical activity interventions. In the next section, the researcher critiqued studies related to
ethnicity and physical activity, finding only one study that focused on ethnicity, physical activity
and pertained to college students (Suminski & Petosa, 2002). Thus, studies were included related
to high school female students (Fahlman, Hall, & Lock, 2006) and older female adults (Heesch,
Brown, & Blanton, 2000; Henderson & Ainsworth, 2000). This body of research showed
differences among various ethnic groups in perceptions about physical activity as well as
participation. In the last section, the researcher critiqued studies where the TPB was applied to
exercise activities (e.g., Rhodes et al., 2002). Identifying and subsequently targeting salient
beliefs can increase measures of the intention to exercise. TPB research has revealed that attitude
and intention are statistically significant contributors to exercise behavior. The research also
showed that differences do exist among the various ethnic groups.

Research Design

In the full study, a quantitative, correlation design was used. The dependent variables
were the constructs of the TPB (Ajzen, 1998), which combine to form a measure of the intention
to exercise. TPB constructs include behavioral beliefs, normative beliefs, and cognitive beliefs.
Sources of data included the TPB questionnaire (TPBQ) and the Godin Leisure Time
Questionnaire (GLTQ). The TPBQ (a beliefs elicitation survey) was developed according to the
process described by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), Ajzen (2004), and (Francis et al., 2004). The
development of a TPBQ required both quantitative and qualitative research methods. This study
received exempt status and approval from the Institutional Review Board at Florida International
University and approval for data collection by the Vice President for Academia Affairs at the
community college.
Development of the Instrument and Affirmation of Clarity of Items

The draft questionnaire was developed in the fall of 2006 when students who were enrolled in wellness courses were asked to complete a nine item open-ended questionnaire (Appendix) to determine beliefs about intention to be physically active for at least 30 minutes per day in the coming month. The questionnaire was modeled after a similar one given as an example by Ajzen (2002). Completion of the draft questionnaire was voluntary. The response rate was 100%. From the questionnaire, common beliefs were categorized and counted for frequency by the researcher and checked for accuracy by another researcher. From this list of salient beliefs concerning intention, social norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitudes about exercise, a rough draft of the TPBQ was developed.

To establish content validity, Ajzen (2004) recommends an interview process to further uncover beliefs, attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control towards physical activity and cultural expectations or differences that may not have surfaced with the earlier elicitation of beliefs (e.g., from the review of the literature). This interview process is also used to affirm the clarity and phraseology of the survey instrument. Students who completed wellness courses within the previous two semesters were recruited to be interviewed in a group (Appendix). The group included five students that represented various cultures. Participants were solicited via an email sent to their college email addresses.

To develop the TPBQ items related to behavioral beliefs, the researcher selected the most frequently named advantages and disadvantages of being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month from the belief elicitation surveys and group interviews. Thirty minutes of physical activity or exercise per day was chosen for four reasons: simplicity, data from prior studies, the 2005 U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and the American College of Sports Medicine and American Heart Association’s guidelines (Haskell et al., 2007). To develop the questionnaire items related to normative beliefs, the researcher selected the most frequently named people or groups of people who would approve or disapprove of the students being physically active at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month. To develop the questionnaire items related to control beliefs, the researcher selected the most frequently named barriers to or facilitating factors that make it easier or more difficult to be physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month. The final topic for discussion solicited their opinions of the influence of their culture or ethnicity on their attitude, social support, and perceived control over whether they are physically active for at least 30 minutes each day.

The Godin Leisure-Time Exercise Questionnaire (GLTQ) was utilized to assess leisure time physical activity. In contrast to other questionnaires, which were lengthy and difficult for the subject to complete accurately, the GLTQ has been validated and found reliable using community research populations (Godin & Shephard, 1985). In the GLTQ, the respondents considered the frequency of physical activity in which they have engaged during the previous week. In response to the three statements about physical activity intensity, the respondents wrote the number of times per week they exercised at that level for more than 15 minutes. The fourth and final question asked how often the individual engages in regular activity long enough to work up a sweat (often, sometimes, or never/rarely). The researcher later calculated a total leisure activity score.

Pilot Study

The researcher contacted former students from eight sections of wellness classes via campus e-mail (N = 200). They were invited to participate in the focus group interview. The
purpose was of the meeting was (a) to elicit behavioral, normative, and control beliefs and (b) confirm that the definitions and questionnaire items were understood by the participants. The researcher received eight replies from former students who expressed an interest in participating. This focus group convened on the campus of the college in a private room where there would be no interruptions. Five students attended the focus group interview. The session began with the students signing consents to participate in the group interview. The purpose of the meeting was explained as well as the potential benefits of their responses. Students reviewed the written definitions of exercise and physical activity as worded on the questionnaire. The researcher asked the students (a) to add anything to the definitions and (b) to comment on the language and phraseology of the definitions. The researcher then posed each of the open ended interview questions (Appendix) so as to elicit their behavioral, normative, and control beliefs related to exercise and physical activity. The researcher asked students to complete the draft TPBQ which took approximately five minutes. The researcher asked students if they detected any ambiguous or confusing terms. Finally, the researcher asked students how their culture viewed or influenced their physical activity or exercise habits. Prior to completing the interview, the researcher obtained permission to contact them via email if any further questions arose and if they would complete a revised version of the questionnaire. The focus group interview was terminated; the researcher thanked each student and provided a $10.00 gift card to Barnes and Noble Bookstore as a token of appreciation.

The student group interview (N = 5) served as a method to conduct a cognitive response analysis. The volunteer students represented the larger student population at the college. The demographic profile of the pilot group participants included three males and two females. One participant was 18-20 years of age and four ≥ 30 years of age. Two students were in their second year of college and three reported ≥ 2 years of college. Student status included three part time students and two full time students. Three students reported being unemployed, one employed 30-40 hours per week and one employed > 40 hours per week. Race or ethnicity and gender were reported as two White females, one White male, one Black (non-Hispanic) male, and one Hispanic male. Socio-economic status was reported as one participant earning < $19,000/yr, three earning $20-39,000/yr, and one reporting >$60,000/yr as spousal income because this individual was unemployed. All participants reported having access to exercise equipment.

Results

This section outlines the results from the survey group and from the pilot group.

Survey Group

The results from the beliefs elicitation survey (N = 38) revealed that cardiovascular health, fitness level, a healthy weight, and emotional well-being were cited most frequently as advantages to physical activity. The survey also revealed that friends, family members, and the mother are influential in the decision to be physically active. Work, school responsibilities, and lack of time are perceived as effecting control over whether they will be physically active.

Pilot Group

Overall, participants confirmed the previous beliefs elicitation survey in terms of advantages, disadvantages, and barriers to be physically active. They suggested some minor formatting changes but overall confirmed the phraseology. After reviewing the suggestions for revisions offered by the focus group, the researcher slightly revised the questionnaire because the suggested changes were minimal. For example, the students remarked that they were confused about the request to “fill in the blank” next to the item, “How do you identify your race or ethnicity?” They recommended eliminating the blank line. One student felt that the scaling
should be consistent, showing all of the positive responses on the right and the polar opposites on the left. The scaling was not changed because Ajzen (2002) suggests counterbalancing positive and negative endpoints to counteract possible response sets. One student asked that “since their mother was deceased, how they should answer those questions?” Because “mother” had been a popular referent for motivation to exercise reported by previous wellness students, it was not changed in the final questionnaire. None of the participants remarked that the questionnaire was difficult, confusing, or time consuming. None of the participants had difficulty interpreting the GLTQ items correctly.

In response to the question, “How does culture influence your physical activity habits”, responses varied. For example, the Black (non-Hispanic) male student noted, “Exercise is not promoted in my country but soccer is played.” He remarked that schools he had attended focus on “mental fitness.” He remembers a professor who would sweep the roofs on break to relieve mental exhaustion. He called it “vascular.” Comments from the Hispanic male student focused on how he grew up in a “basketball family” and was pushed to exercise. He stated that as a young adult, he later rebelled and stopped all physical activity and gained 50 pounds. He is now exercising and worries if he will ever return to his original shape. The White male student commented that in his culture, there exist the extreme opposites of those who are very fit and those who are unfit. He proudly reported how he got his father to begin exercising and how it has reduced his father’s stress level. He also reports that his mother finds sweating undesirable, but he personally finds it appealing. The White females commented on the inactivity of children, suggesting that schools should take a more active role in promoting physical activity. They also mentioned that efforts to promote physical activity should target couples.

The researcher sent the revised draft TPBQ as an attachment to each focus group participant approximately 2 weeks after the first group meeting to reveal the final product based upon their input and invited to complete it for the second time. Four of the five returned the revised questionnaire.

Conclusions

In summary, the researcher conducted a preliminary analysis of the TPBQ, which incorporated items from the GLTQ as well as demographic information. The pilot study participants confirmed that the definitions and questionnaire items were understandable. Only minor changes were made in the preparation of the final questionnaire. The results of the preliminary analysis are significant for two reasons. First, the participants reflected the ethnic diversity of the student population on college campuses and much of the prior research has been conducted on samples dominated by White students. Second, the pilot study process (a beliefs elicitation survey and cognitive response analysis) verified that college students do understand the value of increased exercise. The health benefits of a physically active lifestyle in decreasing future risk of obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and stroke has been well-established in the literature.

References


Appendix

Nine item open-ended questions used to draft TPBQ: A beliefs elicitation survey

1. What do you believe are the advantages of being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?
2. Are there any individuals or groups who would approve of you being physically active at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?
3. What factors or circumstances would enable you to be physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?
4. What do you believe are the disadvantages of being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?
5. Are there any individuals or groups who would disapprove of you being physically active at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?
6. What factors or circumstances would make it difficult or impossible for you to be physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?
7. Is there anything else you associate with your being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?
8. Are there any other individuals or groups who come to mind when you think about walking on a treadmill for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?
9. Are there any other issues that come to mind when you think about the difficulty of being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?

Focus Group Interview Protocol: A Cognitive Response Analysis of the TPBQ Survey

Logistics

1. Solicit former wellness students via college email system.
2. Coordinate convenient date, time, and location to meet.
3. Obtain signed consents to participate in group interview.
5. Assure participants of confidentiality prior to beginning interview and explain that they may decline participation at any time.
6. Introduce participants to each other (to obtain a voice recognition check for the transcriber) and explain the purpose of the meeting.
7. Explain potential benefits of their responses.
8. Distribute written definitions of exercise and physical activity as they will be used interchangeably in the discussion.

Interview Questions

1. Questions to determine behavioral beliefs:

(a) What do you believe are the advantages of being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?
(b) What do you believe are the disadvantages of being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?

(c) Is there anything else you associate with your being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?

2. Questions to determine normative beliefs:

(a) Are there any individuals or groups who would approve of you being physically active at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?

(b) Are there any individuals or groups who would disapprove of you being physically active at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?

(c) Are there any other individuals or groups who come to mind when you think about being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?

3. Questions to generate a list of control beliefs:

(a) What factors or circumstances would enable you to be physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?

(b) What factors or circumstances would make it difficult or impossible for you to be physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?

(c) Are there any other issues that come to mind when you think about the difficulty of being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day in the coming month?

4. After a thorough discussion of the proposed open-ended questions, participants will be asked if they have any further questions, comments, or suggestions for the questionnaire.

*Follow Up Pilot Test of Questionnaire Instrument*

1. Participants will be told that a study instrument will be developed based upon their responses and they will be asked to later complete the questionnaire and return it. The purpose of the pilot study is to confirm clarity and accuracy of the questionnaire.

2. Participants will be reminded of the researcher’s contact information.

3. Thank the participants for their assistance.

4. Stop audio-taping.

5. Say goodbye!
Under the ABC Umbrella: Orphanages, Rights, and Education in Mexico

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Abstract: The National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF) in Mexico assists children in orphanages. This paper provides an overview of its current practices, and advocates a holistic educational/social model for “alternative orphanages,” integrating Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and the rights-based approach. The model complements DIF’s social efforts.

Mexico’s National Commission for Human Rights-(CNDH) in its 2006 agenda proposes to reevaluate and reconsider existing programs, such as the Mexican National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF), for protecting underprivileged groups of children (neglected, abandoned, street children and/or orphans). They challenge human rights’ advocates and government officials to move “from mere campaigns of awareness to real actions” (CNDH, 2006, p. 20) to defend their rights. The “alternative orphanages” proposed herein seeks to complement the Commission’s goal to improve their services in orphanages and link them effectively to children’s rights. DIF is a public institution devoted to articulating, advocating and implementing public policies that pertain to social welfare. Through these policies, DIF attempts to promote family values, community development, while simultaneously combating causes that lead children into orphanages, and addressing the effects once they enter the orphanage system (DIF, 2007). The institution also serves as an important voice within the federal government, as it assures that the State provides what is needed to foster the respect for and dignity of children (DIF, 2007). In essence, DIF monitors the State’s role as an enforcer, protector, and facilitator of children’s rights. It also acts as its implementing arm.

Although DIF is adjusting to a changing world, the ABC principles propose an expansion on their current objectives. The acronym ABC stands for the following: A = Apples and Advocacy, which suggests educational action based on which needs of Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs; B = Being and Building Communities, which advocates establishing sustainable communities based on psychological and self-actualization needs; and C = Caring and Connecting, which promotes the creation of interconnected networks of agents and agencies to assist children in the following: finding rich intellectual development opportunities; becoming self-sufficient and self-empowered; developing spirituality and leadership-building capacities; becoming agents of purpose-driven outreach, advocacy efforts, and social change; and establishing interconnected local, national, and international partnerships. Taking action on these holistic approaches to orphanages will truly be advantageous physically, intellectually, and spiritually for the children in DIF institutions. This paper provides an overview of the government-based orphanages of the Mexican National System for the Integral Development of the Family (DIF) using the Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs and the rights-based approach. The main purpose was to establish a holistic bridge between social justice practices and orphanages, and provide a supplementary vision of and for “alternative orphanages,” known as the ABC Umbrella.
Theoretical Framework

Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs encompasses five areas as they relate to humans and their lifetime growth/development. In sequence, these include physiological, safety, love, esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow also conceptualizes these needs. The physiological, for instance, indicates homeostatic needs that enable a person to function physically, such as food, air, and sleep. Safety needs entail having security in terms of family, health, economics (i.e., have a job), and others. Love needs, socio-psychologically speaking, consist of having a sense of belongingness, which includes (albeit not exclusively) friendships and family. Within the theoretical framework proposed by Maslow (1943), it is important to distinguish the needs-based and the rights-based approaches. The latter theoretical lens characterizes the holistic niche for the views expressed herein.

The Needs-based vs. Rights-based Approaches

The needs-based approach represents the lower ranks of the hierarchy in Maslow’s pyramid, which would include meeting the following “needs” of individuals (albeit not limited to): food, shelter, clothes, health services, psychological counseling, and legal protection. The rights-based approach, on the other hand, takes the needs-based approach into consideration, but has a rather different end goal in mind. Whereas the DIF approach considers the lower three of five needs from Maslow’s hierarchy, which include basic, safety, and psychological needs, the DIF plus the ABC principles would include these and the higher two needs, which deal with self-actualization and peak experiences.

The main distinction between the needs approach and the rights-based approach lies in the power relations between the agents. The needs-based approach suggests acts of charity and satisfaction of the needs of others, with little or no sense of duty, while the rights-based approach re-directs power by enabling self-determination and choice. In other words, the rights-based approach suggests “the ‘act of mercy,’ considered as being a factor of inequality for which the donor expects tokens of submissiveness or political flexibility on the part of the receiving State” (Steiner & Alston, 2000, p. 1323).

The rights-based approach provides a human rights lens to pursue policy changes and program design and implementation. It creates a bridge between human development and human rights: “Human rights and development both aim to promote well-being and freedom, based on the inherent dignity and equality of all people” (OHCHR, 2006, p. 14). If DIF considers that “integral development” includes well-being and freedom, and they seek a life of dignity for their children, implementing this approach might be enriching, especially in DIF’s role as an advocate of children’s rights (within the government itself). The rights-based approach represents a viable option for programs (like DIF orphanages) dealing with disadvantaged children. It’s comprehensive in that it fits the developmentally-appropriate practices that educators are always striving to achieve. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (2006) explains with regards to the rights-based approach that “Human rights and human development share a preoccupation with necessary outcomes for improving people’s lives, but also with better processes” (p. 14). Since dealing with children goes hand in hand with human development, the rights-based approach to DIF programs/orphanages is very likely to enrich them.

By utilizing a rights-based approach, the alternative orphanages shift priorities in power structures and systems, and meet some of the basic needs in the process. Adopting the rights-based approach reduces the dynamic of dependency and increases sustainability (Uvin, 2004, p. 129). Theoretically then, the alternative orphanages address the concepts of “needs” within the
rights-based approach that must be fulfilled by anybody, and in this case the children, to achieve well-being and self-actualization.

**Method**

Since the paper’s aim is to develop a better understanding of the DIF services and practices, a qualitative method is employed, which includes document analysis, and more specifically, external communication. This mode of inquiry enables the researchers to establish perspectives on the general infrastructure of DIF, as well as its implementation processes and accountability measures. The official website of DIF was examined. An analysis of online documentation is undertaken, which includes their mission statement, mode of operation, accountability processes, research publications, public statements, regional information, and policies. Personal communications (emails) with staff members of DIF also provides background information on the organization. Statistical data is obtained from the UNICEF and the National Commission on Human Rights (Mexico), to develop a comprehensive outlook of the Mexican case. For the purpose of this paper, examples of the ABC principles are briefly outlined to illustrate practices that embody the authors’ holistic approach.

**Results**

The analysis so far indicates that DIF does indeed expend tireless efforts toward this vulnerable section of the population. They have ventured into holistic practices, and attempt the same: having a human rights-based approach and meeting some of Maslow’s hierarchical needs.

They have considered (to some degree) the program’s sustainability (a key aspect of holism) regarding the child’s life after the orphanage experience. As stated earlier, the vision of DIF’s orphanages (“Tlalpan” and “Coyoacán”) is to serve this underserved population by meeting their basic needs and to become an active “social welfare institution that promotes actions of training and research that would generate replicable public policies” (DIF, 2007). Furthermore, the general program description of the DIF orphanages suggests that they foster wholeness in the child’s development—including his/her physical, emotional and spiritual development (DIF, 2007). DIF staff place significant value in the child’s overall formation: his/her moral and ethical character, intellectual and personal development, and the acquisitions of skills/capabilities for a productive life once he/she integrates into society (DIF, 2007). For these aspects and skills to develop, the institution must consider long term visions as part of the whole orphanage experience. The notion of holism, as sustainability, is far more complex than a child’s preparation for social reintegration and workforce adaptation. The “alternative orphanages” would, therefore, expand thoroughly on the areas of self-empowerment, leadership skills, critical thinking skills and other long term skills necessary to become active members of their community.

*Casas hogar* (DIF’s orphanages for children over 6 years of age) reflects aspects of the human rights-based approach. One such example is *casa hogar* for girls, “Graciela Zubirán Villareal.” This institution seeks to provide care with quality and warmth (DIF, 2007) to assist the girls in mainstreaming into society once they are 19 years old. They strive to protect their girls and to provide them with lifetime skills, which include educational, vocational and cultural activities, as well as individual well-being (health and basic needs). In the case of the boys’ *casas hogar*, the children receive similar services, including activities such as tae-kwon-do, yoga, and soccer classes and workshops in bakery and crafts (DIF, 2007).

*Calidad y calidez* is pivotal for children of *casas hogar*. When children enter their institutions, they are received warmly. Staff members are fully aware of the possibility that children view the entry into an orphanage as yet another loss or trauma—since many already
come from neglect, traumatic experiences, and abuse (DIF, 2007). Once inside, the children are given chores and responsibilities in the house they are in, and the opportunity to socialize with the other children. This in-house community seeks ways to embrace children, who participate in daily routines, follow the internal rules, and live up to expectations as community members (DIF, 2007).

Evident in the mission of the DIF programs is a sense of open mindedness and willingness to address the needs of their children. Casas hogar and casas cuna in Mexico exemplify institutions that do attempt to meet Maslow’s hierarchical needs of their children. Because they also carry out some rights-based practices, these orphanages can be considered holistic in their intent, resolution, and advocacy efforts toward their children.

The challenge and concern of the orphanage programs and projects is interconnectivity and sustainability: the life-long impacts/experiences that enable children to become healthy, productive, independent citizens and the social, emotional, and educational interconnections needed to do so. Many aspects of the casas cuna and casas hogar suggest practices that include Maslow’s theory and a human rights-based approach to orphanages. To establish the “integral development” of the child is the ultimate goal, details on the ABC Approach are provided.

The ABC Approach: Hands-On Suggested Activities

The section consists of an open-ended practical list of ideas that reflect and embrace our A, B, C. The activities overlap in some ways with current practices, but many simply build bridges and fill in gaps in the DIF model. In our personal journey to become holistic educators, we attest that this list of ideas conveys developmentally, pedagogically, and socially sound practices. DIF staff, educators, and children’s rights advocates should find this information useful.

A = Apples and Advocacy

In the orphanages’ routine, staff should have children make the shopping list and go with staff and other children to the markets. This might be somewhat challenging when first implemented, since DIF orphanages have a set budget and systematized operations (L. Mendoza, personal conversation, April 16, 2007). However, transforming the orphanage into the warmest (and natural) home as possible enriches the children’s experience in the institution.

Children should create plays and invite senators and other government officials to their “home” and extend the invitation to their community in general (this overlaps with “B”). In DIF orphanages, volunteering is not encouraged (L. Mendoza, personal communication, April 16, 2007). This could translate into a great opportunity to include non-DIF people in orphans’ lives.

If space permits it, a communal garden should be created within the orphanage; children can sow vegetables and fruits. Children should be encouraged to work as a team to take care of their garden, to conduct research about gardens and growing vegetables, and to cook and eat their vegetables when ready.

Children should create a newsletter from the DIF orphanages to other orphanages of the world and to children in general. Setting up a printing shop inside the institutions is not very expensive and it will be a great experience for children. From an educational point of view, becoming part of the editorial team will be constructivist and will infuse children’s love for literacy, with teamwork, and entrepreneurship. This will also encourage civic participation from an early age. This overlaps with “C”.

National and international programs should invite orphanage children to travel and bring a message to policymakers and society in general. These programs must provide a safe environment for the children to share their advocacy message to the world; their emotions must
be thoroughly protected at all times. Some institutions that cherish listening to children’s voices and perspectives are UNICEF and DIF.

B = Being and Building Communities

Children in DIF orphanages attend public schools (L. Mendoza, personal communication, April 16, 2007). Inviting their classmates to have dinner at their home (the orphanages) and planning as many field trips and other activities as possible would bring the world to them, but also expose them to the world. The social divide and the stigma that society has placed on children living in orphanages must end. Children in orphanages have the right to belong, the right to not be looked down upon, and the right to live a life as normal as possible.

Inviting grandparents living in retirement homes to spend some time with orphanage children, and vice versa would be very enriching for both groups. Once a system is established, this could be extended to Christmas celebrations and regular story-reading afternoons, for example. Children who leave the institution and lead a successful life should be encouraged to come back as often as possible to promote the building of communities.

C = Caring and Connections

Children in orphanages often carry a heavier emotional/psychological burden, especially regarding having self-esteem and a sense of belongingness (Cohen, 1980). DIF is known for its multidisciplinary team of experts working at the orphanages, who appear to meet the needs of their children with positive results. In addition, they should also promote professional careers more actively aside from vocational school. Providing leadership workshops and opportunities, inviting artists (painters, poets, actors) to give workshops, and inviting working professionals in a Career Day would assist in developing higher expectations and encouraging future independence.

Educational or Scientific Importance of the Study

DIF must receive—and receives—kudos for its tireless efforts in support of a vulnerable section of the population. This paper provides educational ideas that DIF and other systems may find enriching and innovative. However, the number of street children increase, and many human rights issues remain uncovered. The researchers call for a more comprehensive approach to orphanages, in which children will operate not only from a basic needs-system, but from a holistic lens and a rights-based approach. The ABC model could operationalize the comprehensive approach we call for.

References


Rap to Read: Employing a Culturally Relevant Curriculum with African American Students

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Abstract: This study examined the effects of using rap music on the reading skills of 2nd Grade African American students. The sample consisted of 105 students within eight classrooms in two Miami-Dade County public schools. Results revealed that rap was helpful for both fluency and comprehension instruction.

Research suggests that African American children are more likely to have reading difficulties than their Caucasian counterparts (Donahue, Voelkl, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999) explainable, in part, by the failure of school settings to recognize and adapt to the students’ readiness to learn. This mismatch between what students have learned at home and what is required of them in school can have a profound effect on student performance and teacher perceptions of that performance (Alvermann & Xu, 2003; Au, 1980). For example, middle-class Anglo mothers focus on didactic naming and pointing (e.g., Look at the red truck) whereas African American mothers focus on affective dimensions (e.g., the red truck is pretty; how does it make you feel; Blake, 1994). These differences affect transfer in the use of oral-verbal styles in mothers’ verbal interactions with their young children. The interactions tend to be topic-associative (i.e., more like a conversation) with African American mothers whereas Anglo mothers’ verbal interaction tends to be linear narrative (i.e., a discussion in which the parent expects a specific answer from the child). When such a mismatch occurs in the interaction of African American students and Anglo teachers (or vice versa), the result is a distorted negative perception of a “deficit” in the performer (student/teacher) or the observer’s (teacher/student) communication skills. Teaching to home cultural contexts in the early grades is a culturally responsive (or culturally compatible) way of accommodating to these differences in readiness thereby making the transition from home to school an easier one (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The purpose of this study was to examine a way of adapting to cultural differences by employing a culturally relevant curriculum with African American students to facilitate reading fluency. Fluency is defined here as involving the ability to decode words quickly, to permit a smooth flow of text. In addition, fluency is accompanied by a rhythmic quality that is believed to play an important part in the acquisition of meaning (Neisser, 1967). Rhythmic quality includes the phrase structure and grouping of words. The underlying assumption is that the use of familiar rhythmic qualities by the reader, that is, culturally relevant or culturally compatible skills, builds on the cognitive backgrounds of the reader in facilitating reading comprehension.

Conceptual Framework

A combination of reading words accurately, automatically, and with proper prose is considered fluent reading (Dowhower, 1991). As a child begins to read words accurately and automatically, he/she spends less time processing unknown words, allowing more time for comprehension. An able prosodic reader uses stress, tempo, and intonation advantageously, thereby reducing cognitive overload (such processes as word decoding, identification, and lexical access limit the capacity of short term memory, preventing sufficient opportunity for the additional process of comprehension). The second grade is a critical period for going from word

calling to fluent reading; the reading growth spurt afforded during this transition period permits
the use of a culturally appropriate method for influencing reading fluency and comprehension. I
shall examine the effects of such a method by employing a variation of the *Fluency Development
Lesson* (FDL) developed by Rasinski, Padak, Linek, and Sturtevant (1994). The adaptation
involves overlaying reading lessons with rap music, which is predominantly characterized by its
rhythmic qualities.

By using the rap music format in place of a poem in the FDL both rhythmic and cultural
components are incorporated, that is, “the words, phrases, and poetic statements are joined in
time to a musical beat” (Yasin, 1997 p. 43). The use of rap music in the curriculum is not without
controversy. Some people believe that only the classics (i.e., Western culture) should be taught
and to use anything else would be substandard (Bloom, 1987; Hirsch, 1987). Yet, both anecdotal
and empirical evidence suggest that rap accompanying school lessons has helped students
increase their sight word vocabularies and overall reading skills (Gilmore, 1983; Morrow-
Pretlow, 1994; Pinkard, 2001). In addition, the cultural link has enhanced student motivation as
inferred by increases in the number of books read, the levels of reading enjoyment, and the
amounts of time spent reading at home (Morrow-Pretlow, 1994). Transfer is facilitated to the
degree the home culture can be matched to the curriculum, instruction, texts, and performance
requirements.

**Hypothesis**

Stated as a hypothesis, the rationale implies that

H1: An instructional procedure that employs a culturally appropriate behavioral
requisite facilitates the reading rate of students within that culture.

H2: An instructional procedure that employs a culturally appropriate behavioral
requisite facilitates the acquisition of decoding skills of students within that
culture.

H3: An instructional procedure that employs a culturally appropriate behavioral
requisite facilitates the acquisition of comprehension skills of students within that
culture.

Briefly, it is concluded from the rationale that text practice within a rap context enhances the use
of the rhythmic qualities, cultural knowledge, and story telling by adapting to the cultural
background of the students. Using such a practice facilitates the acquisition of reading skills of
African American youths by capitalizing on their cultural backgrounds that helps transfer what
they have learned to make the practice easier to follow and comprehend.

**Method**

This section describes research design, sample, intervention, and data collection method.

*Research Design*

The overall design is quasi-experimental (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). Fluency and
decoding scores were separately analyzed in a 2 X 2 X 2 X (2) mixed ANOVA. The between –Ss
variables were type of instruction (rap or traditional), teacher (teacher A or teacher B), and
school (school X and school Y) in which the type of instruction was nested. The within-subjects
variable was the time of testing (pre- and post-tests). The comprehension scores were analyzed in
a 2 X 2 X 2 X (3) mixed ANOVA. The between –Ss variables were type of instruction (rap or
traditional), teacher (teacher A or teacher B), and school (school X and school Y) in which the
type of instruction was nested. The within-subjects variable was the time of testing (beginning, middle, and end tests). The use of the ANOVA removed two sources of variance: school and teacher. T tests were used to further investigate differences. The .05 level of significance was selected for data analysis.

Sample

Eight intact 2nd grade classrooms (hence, quasi-experimental) from two elementary schools (Lentin and Lakeview), serving African American students, were randomly assigned to an experimental and a control group (four classes in each group). There were 105 African American students who participated in the study.

Intervention

The intervention was based on the Fluency Development Lesson as developed by Rasinski et al. (1994) and includes the following six steps: (a) make predictions about the text from the title, (b) read it to the class, (c) discuss the text, (d) read the text chorally, (e) read it with a partner, and (f) perform the text. Students received eight, half-hour sessions (one session per week) covering all seven elements of the FDL. To control for teacher effect, four treatment classrooms using rap and four control classrooms using narrative texts were randomly assigned to two teachers. Each teacher taught an equal number of control and rap classes. The two teachers were trained on how to implement the steps of the FDL and were given tape-recorded versions of the texts (rap and narrative) to be used with the classes.

Treatment group. The treatment group used a rap text during the FDL. Each rap text contained between 80-120 words and had a readability level ranging from primer to 3rd grade.

Control group. The control group used a narrative text during the FDL. Each narrative text contained between 80-120 words and had a readability level ranging from primer to 3rd grade.

The two texts used each week had the same readability level and the same number of words per passage.

Method of Data Collection

All of the students were pre-tested (September) and post-tested (January) on the Oral Reading Fluency (ORF) and the Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF) portions of the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Test (DIBELS; Plake, Impara, & Spies, 2003). A comprehension quiz containing four questions related to the text assigned during the FDL was given at the beginning, middle, and end of the 8-week period.

ORF was measured by the student orally reading three grade level passages, with readabilities between 2.4 to 2.7, for 1 minute each. Only the middle ORF score was used as the valid reflection of the child’s reading fluency.

NWF was measured by the student’s ability to read a series of nonsense words that contain common vowel/consonant and consonant/vowel/consonant patterns. It is to be noted that the NWF performance is not influenced by grammatical context since words are presented in isolation. The score was the number of the correctly pronounced letter sounds/words read in one minute.

The three comprehension quizzes contained the following four questions: factual, inferential, vocabulary, and experiential. The quizzes were a written test, with multiple-choice type answers, administered upon the completion of the lesson.
Results

This section presents the results of the study by each hypothesis and its corresponding variable. The fluency variable, the decoding variable, and the comprehension variable are analyzed.

Test for Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1: An instructional procedure that employs a culturally appropriate behavioral requisite facilitates the reading rate of students within that culture.

Results yielded a significant main effect for fluency, \( F(1,96) = 291.19, p < .05 \), with post-test fluency scores significantly higher than pre-test scores. Other main effects cannot be interpreted because of insignificance. The simple effects showed a significant interaction for fluency x condition x school, \( F(1,96) = 8.64, p < .05 \), and a significant interaction for fluency x school x teacher, \( F(1,96) = 5.02, p < .05 \). The means and standard deviations for each variable are reported in Table 1.

An independent sample t test was used to further explain where the differences lie between the fluency x condition x school interaction. In the t test, fluency pretest to posttest gain scores were used as the fluency measure, thereby condensing the interaction to two variables, condition x school. Results yielded a significantly higher gain score for the rap group at Lentin than the rap group at Lakeview, \( t(45) = 2.69, p < .05 \). Results also showed that the rap group at Lentin had a significantly higher gain score than the text group at that same school, \( t(58) = 2.48, p < .05 \). These results indicate that the rap condition had more influence on fluency gains than the text condition at the Lentin school, supporting hypothesis one, a culturally appropriate behavioral requisite facilitates the reading rate of students within that culture at the Lentin school.

Test for Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2: An instructional procedure that employs a culturally appropriate behavioral requisite facilitates the acquisition of decoding skills of students within that culture.

Results yielded a significant main effect for decoding, \( F(1,96) = 80.29, p < .05 \), with post-test decoding scores significantly higher (\( M=73.87, SD=35.42 \)) than pre-test scores (\( M=50.17, SD=29.41 \)). Students decoding skills improved between the first and second test administration regardless of type of instruction. There was no evidence to support hypothesis two since no significant differences were found between the rap and text condition in relation to decoding skills.

Test for Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3: An instructional procedure that employs a culturally appropriate behavioral requisite facilitates the acquisition of comprehension skills of students within that culture.

Results yielded a significant main effect for comprehension, \( F(2,97) = 8.67, p < .05 \), with post-test comprehension scores being significantly higher than pre-test scores. Other main effects cannot be interpreted because of insignificance. The simple effects showed a significant interaction for comprehension x condition, \( F(2,97) = 25.48, p < .05 \), and a significant interaction for comprehension x condition x teacher, \( F(2,97) = 4.81, p < .05 \). Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations for each variable.

Figure 1 shows further analysis of the comprehension x condition interaction over time. In the Week 1 comprehension test, the rap group scored significantly higher (\( M=3.55, SD=.61 \)) than the text group (\( M=2.45, SD=.76 \)). In the comprehension test at the end of week 4, the text group scored a little higher (\( M=3.38, SD=.75 \)) than the rap group (\( M=3.16, SD=.69 \)). In the final test administration, the rap group scored slightly higher (\( M=3.41, SD=.76 \)) than the text group (\( M=3.36, SD=.86 \)). These results showed that the rap condition began significantly higher but
then the scores evened out as time progressed. The results are disordinal since the scores depend on the week of the test administration. These results support hypothesis three, an instructional procedure that employs a culturally appropriate behavioral requisite initially facilitates the acquisition of comprehension skills of students within that culture, but the effects are not sustained over time.

Results from an independent sample t test used to further explain where the differences occurred between the comprehension x condition x teacher interaction. In the t test, comprehension pretest to posttest gain scores were used as the comprehension measure, thereby condensing the interaction to two variables, condition x teacher. Results yielded a significantly higher gain score for Teacher A’s text group than the rap group, \( t(53) = 3.42, p<.05 \). Results also revealed a significantly higher gain score for Teacher B’s text group than the rap group, \( t(40) = 5.06, p<.05 \). These results indicate that both teachers had higher gain scores with the text condition than the rap condition.

**Conclusions**

The fluency results showed that rap group had higher fluency scores at the Lentin school than at Lakeview. Lentin used an additional biweekly reading program (Voyager Passport, 2004) to improve their students’ reading fluency levels. No additional fluency program was used at Lakeview. This suggests that the length of time of fluency instruction was a factor. My study only lasted 8 weeks with approximately 4 hours of actual implementation time. Lentin students did significantly better with the rap program than Lakeview students because the Lentin students had more than the 4 hours of fluency instruction provided within my study. These results are similar to the results found with the program I based my lesson upon (FDL) since that program lasted for 7 months with a total of 35 hours of instruction (Rasinski et al., 1994).

The fluency results also showed that the rap group did better than the text group at the Lentin school. This can be attributed to the culturally relative curriculum that was implemented. The rap text was more culturally familiar to the African American students and hence they did better with it on fluency measures than when using a traditional text that had no cultural component. Findings are similar to what other researchers have found in regards to using culturally appropriate curriculum in the classroom (Au, 1980; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Yasin, 1997). The closer ones culture is to the material being used the better it is for the students.

There was no significant difference found in decoding scores between the text and the rap group. This implies that repeated reading of a text, whether culturally significant or not, does not help students decode unknown words. This finding contradicts with what Herman (1985) found; repeated readings of a text develop students’ word recognition skills. Herman’s study was done with only 8 students and, therefore, the generalizability is limited, whereas my study was conducted with 105 students. Conversely, these results coincide with other researchers who find that repeated reading of a text only helps with fluency skills (Allington, 1983; Rasinksi, 1994).

The comprehension scores showed significantly higher results at the beginning of the study for students in the rap group but the results were not sustained over time. This result shows that motivation is an important factor in reading instruction. Similarly found by Wigfield and Guthrie (1997), intrinsic motivation can be increased by the material used in instruction. A question remains as to why the results were not sustained over time. An item-analysis of the questions revealed that the inference questions were missed most frequently. This indicates that there is an affect of the material itself on comprehension. Regardless of the instructional format (culturally appropriate or not), inferences take more thinking skills.
In comprehension, both teachers showed higher gain scores with the text group than the rap group. This may be due to the fact that both teachers were more comfortable in teaching a text that was more familiar. Since neither teacher was African American, a question is raised as to what if the study had been taught by African American researchers. This study has confirmed the importance of using culturally appropriate materials with students, yet there still needs to be more research on the interaction between teaching methods, materials, and the students.

References


Table 1

*Means (Standard Deviations) for Fluency Measures*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>44.67 (28.86)</td>
<td>71.38 (35.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rap</td>
<td>52.77 (29.32)</td>
<td>81.72 (34.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeview</td>
<td>51.55 (24.83)</td>
<td>72.50 (30.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lentin</td>
<td>53.67 (32.68)</td>
<td>88.56 (36.71)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>38.00 (26.95)</td>
<td>62.86 (33.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeview</td>
<td>37.38 (29.15)</td>
<td>64.21 (39.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lentin</td>
<td>38.45 (25.68)</td>
<td>61.88 (28.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeview</td>
<td>43.82 (27.89)</td>
<td>67.98 (35.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>29.95 (28.53)</td>
<td>49.68 (33.99)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>57.68 (19.41)</td>
<td>86.27 (27.80)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lentin</td>
<td>45.30 (29.77)</td>
<td>73.88 (34.87)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>51.94 (28.16)</td>
<td>82.76 (33.88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>36.62 (30.12)</td>
<td>62.27 (33.28)</td>
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Table 2
Means (Standard Deviations) for Comprehension Measures

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<td>Overview</td>
<td>2.96 (.89)</td>
<td>3.28 (.73)</td>
<td>3.38 (.81)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rap</td>
<td>3.55 (.61)</td>
<td>3.16 (.69)</td>
<td>3.41 (.76)</td>
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<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>3.71 (.55)</td>
<td>3.17 (.70)</td>
<td>3.54 (.66)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>3.40 (.65)</td>
<td>3.16 (.69)</td>
<td>3.28 (.84)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>2.45 (.76)</td>
<td>3.38 (.75)</td>
<td>3.36 (.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>2.23 (.76)</td>
<td>3.39 (.84)</td>
<td>3.03 (.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>2.72 (.68)</td>
<td>3.36 (.64)</td>
<td>3.76 (.44)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 1. Comprehension Means by Test Administration
Toward Prevention of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Preschoolers’ Knowledge of Genital Body Parts

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Abstract: This study examined preschool children’s knowledge of their genital and non-genital body parts. Results indicated that almost all preschool children knew the correct terms for their non-genital body parts, but few knew the correct terminology for their genitals. The importance of this skill in preventing childhood sexual abuse is discussed.

Childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is a serious public health problem. Although definitions vary state by state and in various research programs, CSA is generally defined as sexual contact between a child (under the age of 18) with a person who is at least 5 years older. According to the American Psychological Association (2001), a central characteristic of any abuse is the dominant position of the adult that allows him or her to force or coerce the child into sexual activity. Child sexual abuse may include fondling a child's genitals, masturbation, oral-genital contact, digital penetration, and vaginal and anal intercourse. However, it is not solely restricted to physical contact; such abuse could include non-contact abuse, such as exposure, voyeurism, and child pornography. With close to 100,000 confirmed cases of CSA in the United States during 2005 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2007), efforts to prevent CSA are needed. One public health approach to the prevention of CSA offers child-focused personal safety education programs, usually implemented in schools and preschools. The primary focus of most school-based personal safety programs is to strengthen a child’s ability to recognize and resist assault (primary prevention), although they often have a secondary prevention focus as well. The secondary prevention objective is to encourage victims to disclose abuse and to improve adults’ responses to these disclosures so that children can receive early intervention and protection to reduce the negative consequences of sexual exploitation (Wurtele, 1998).

Successful disclosure of abusive incidents relies partly on the child’s ability to describe inappropriate activities involving the genitals and to correctly label the genitals. When children disclose CSA using incorrect or idiosyncratic terminology (e.g., “She touched my monkey,” or “He kissed my muffin”), they may not be understood and are thus unlikely to receive a positive, supportive response to their disclosure. In contrast, disclosure using correct terminology is more likely to be understood, resulting in a more positive outcome for a child—e.g., by ending the abusive situation and obtaining therapeutic assistance for the child (Kenny, Thakkar-Kolen, Ryan, Runyon, & Capri, 2008). Furthermore, children who lack sexual knowledge may be more vulnerable to sexual abuse. Some sexual offenders avoid children who know the correct names for their genitals because this suggests these children have been educated about body safety and sexuality (Elliot, Browne, & Kilcoyne, 1995). One convicted offender (who had assaulted 75 children by the time he was stopped) reported that when children knew the correct terms for their different body parts, he would leave them alone (Sprengelmeyer & Vaughan, 2000).

Along with facilitating disclosure, teaching proper names for all body parts helps children develop a healthy, positive body image (Wurtele, 1993; Wurtele, Melzer, & Kast, 1992). As Honig (2000) states, it gives children “naming power” (p. 17) just as they have the power to

name other things in their environment (i.e., toys, books, and characters). This knowledge also provides the necessary foundation for subsequent sex education. Indeed, several experts have recommended that parents teach their young children the correct names for the genitals (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007; Honig, 2000; Krazier, 1996; Wurtele, 2003).

Do parents follow these recommendations? Surveys conducted in the early 1990s found that few young children knew the correct terminology for genitals (Gordon, Schroder, & Abrams, 1990; Wurtele, 1993; Wurtele et al., 1992). In Gordon et al. (1990), 30% of the 4-year-olds interviewed knew penis, 27% knew breast, but only 10% knew vagina. In Wurtele et al. (1992), although almost all the young children (4 and 5-year-olds) knew the correct terminology for non-genital body parts, very few knew the anatomically correct terms for genitals; only 6% knew penis, 8% knew breast, and 3% knew vagina. Similar results were obtained by Wurtele (1993), where 10% of preschoolers knew penis, 6% knew breasts, and 7% knew vagina. The first goal of this study was to determine if today’s children are more knowledgeable about genital terminology. As recent surveys suggest, parents seem willing to talk to their children about CSA, with the majority (63%) reporting that they have taught their children the anatomically correct terms for the genitals (Deblinger, Thakkar-Kolar, Berry, & Schroeder, 2007). Thus, we predicted that more children in the current study would know correct terms for their genitals compared to children in earlier studies. Consistent with previous research (Wurtele, 1993; Wurtele et al., 1992), we also hypothesized that children would know more correct names for their non-genital than genital body parts.

Given the current diversity of the United States, it seems important to expand this research with more diverse samples. The purpose of this study was to determine whether children from English or Spanish speaking families vary in their knowledge of genital terminology. There is little known regarding parent-child discussions about CSA in Hispanic communities. There appears to be a taboo against discussing sex in many Hispanic cultures (Kenny & McEachern, 2000; Russell, 2004).) Hispanics are raised to avoid “talking dirty” (Fontes, 2005, p. 92) and many Hispanic women have not been taught the correct words to describe sexual acts. Further, several gaps exist in Hispanic mothers’ discussions with their children about CSA (Lira, Koss, & Russo, 1999). Hispanic women who reported a history of childhood sexual abuse reported repressed sexual attitudes in their homes, with virtually no discussions of sex (Kenny & McEachern, 2007). Thus, we hypothesized that Spanish-speaking Hispanic children would have less knowledge about genital terminology compared with non-Spanish-speaking children.

Method

Participants

One hundred and twenty-eight three, four, and five-year-old children (M age = 3.8, SD=.7) served as participants (72 boys and 56 girls). Parent-reported ethnicity on the children was as follows: 68% Hispanic, 25% White non-Hispanic, and the remaining 7% were African American, Asian, Haitian, or “other.” All children were enrolled in preschool or daycare centers in Miami, Florida.

All children were participants in a primary prevention program designed to teach children personal safety knowledge. Directors of preschools and daycare centers (i.e. public, private, faith-based, work-sponsored) were approached about participation in the program through phone calls and mailings. These sites were chosen randomly based on lists of preschools obtained from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (NAEYC, 2007). However, there were no other exclusionary criteria. As this is a primary prevention program, any
interested family with children in the age range (including potentially children with disabilities) were granted enrollment.

As part of this program, all participants were administered several measures to obtain a baseline level of knowledge. To determine knowledge of genital terminology, children were asked to provide the names of various body parts on a drawing of a nude boy and girl (there were two drawings per gender; a front side and a back view) (Wurtele et al., 1992). This method of obtaining children’s names for their genital body parts has been used in other research of this nature (Wurtele, 1993; Wurtele, Melzer, & Kast, 1992). A research assistant said to each child: “Now I’m going to point to different parts of their bodies, and I want you to tell me what the body part is called.” The assistant then pointed (in order) to the eyes, feet, head, breasts and vagina, and penis and buttocks (on both the boy and girl). For genital body parts, children’s responses were scored either 0 for incorrect or “don’t know,” 1 for slang, and 2 for either the term “private parts” or correct answers. For English-speaking participants, correct responses included: Eyes (eyes); Breasts (breasts, nipples, or chest); Feet (feet or toes); Vulva (vulva, vagina, gina); Penis (penis); Head (head); Buttocks (buttocks, butt, bottom, or behind) as well as the term “private parts” (for breasts, vagina, penis, or buttocks). For Spanish-speaking participants, correct responses included: Eyes (ojos); Breasts (senos); Feet (pies); Vulva (vagina, vulva); Penis (pene); Head (cabeza); Buttocks (nalgas) and the words “partes privadas” for breasts, vagina, penis, or buttocks. The Spanish genital terms were provided by the Medical Director of a Child Protection Team, a pediatrician who specializes in the assessment and treatment of child maltreatment.

Procedure
After registration had taken place and informed consent was completed by their parents, all children were assessed prior to participation in a CSA educational program. Research assistants assessed each child individually in the preschool or day care center during the day. The children were called from their classrooms and the assessments generally took place in an empty classroom, teachers’ lounge, or in a quiet corner of the classroom. This measure took only a few minutes to complete but was part of a larger assessment of the children that took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Children were allowed to pick a “prize” from a small reward box after completing their assessment, regardless of their performance. Based on the participant’s stated preference, 62% of the children were administered the test in English (55% Hispanic, 33% White, non-Hispanic, 22% included the other ethnic groups), with the remaining 38% in Spanish (all Hispanic).

Results
Inter-rater reliability was conducted for the scoring of correct responses. The responses obtained by one of the research assistants were given to the other assistant to code, and vice versa. For the non-genital body parts (eyes, feet, head), the interrater reliability was 100%. For the genital body parts, the interrater reliability was 91%. It is important to note that one rater coded all responses of “pippi/peepee” as correct, while the other coder rated those same responses as either as “slang” or “incorrect.” This discrepancy in coding accounted for all disagreements between the coders; all other responses were coded in agreement between the two raters.

For the purposes of reporting results, we use the term “instrument language” to refer to the language in which the child was administered the test. There were no significant differences in age or gender by instrument language (English and Spanish).

Analysis of the data showed that 7% of the children knew the correct term for “vagina” (4% males, 9% females) and 10% knew the correct term for “penis” (10% males, 9% females).
Six percent of the sample knew “breasts” (7% males, 5% females) while 20% knew “buttocks” (21% males, 20% females). The majority (89%) of children knew the correct names for non-genital body parts.

There were no significant differences between these two groups on non-genital body parts. Significantly more English-speaking children knew “breasts” (10%) compared to Spanish-speaking children (0%), $X^2 (2, N=128) = 6.92, p = .03$. For “vagina,” significantly more English-speaking children (11%) knew this body part compared to Spanish-speaking children (0%), $X^2 (2, N=128) = 5.88, p = .05$. More English-speaking children reported “penis” as the correct response (16%) compared to the Spanish-speaking children (0%), $X^2 (2, N=128) = 8.76, p = .01$. There were no significant between-group differences for knowledge of “buttocks” or non-genital body parts.

**Discussion**

Very few children (only 10%) in this sample knew the correct terms for penis, breasts, and vagina. Slightly more children (25%) knew the correct term for buttocks. As predicted, many more children knew the correct names for their non-genital body parts. It appears that parents are effectively teaching their children the names for non-genital body parts, but they seem to be leaving out genital terminology in their body education lessons. Contrary to our prediction, children in the current study did no better than children in surveys conducted in the early 1990s. In fact, identical knowledge levels for breasts (6%), vagina (7%), and penis (10%) were obtained by Wurtele (1993), although in that study, many more children knew the correct terms for buttocks (65%). These findings suggest that over a decade later, little progress has been made in parents’ efforts to teach their young children the correct terms for the genitals.

As predicted, there was a significant difference between the percentage of English-speaking children who knew the correct terms, compared to Spanish-speaking children. In fact, none of the Spanish-speaking children knew the correct terms for breasts, penis, or vagina.

Informal discussions with parents of the children involved in the study indicated that Hispanic parents, especially those who spoke Spanish exclusively at home, seemed more resistant to teaching their children proper genital terminology. As use of a new language is one of the most important factors in acculturation (Bemak & Chung, 2003), it is likely that the Hispanic children who spoke Spanish came from homes that are less acculturated and thus more likely to maintain traditional Hispanic norms surrounding the discussion of sexuality. Using these terms seemed especially difficult for older Hispanic parents, and some younger Hispanic parents were concerned about asking grandparents and other caretakers to use these terms in their homes.

Prevention efforts targeting parents must address cultural barriers to sexual discussions. Some prevention experts have begun to offer suggestions for working with culturally diverse populations. “Respecting differences” is important (Tobin & Kessner, 2002, p. 44) when conducting a CSA program, including translating materials, using culturally relevant names in examples and role-plays, and using diverse personnel to teach the program. At least one group facilitator should be of the same cultural group as the target population (Fontes, 2005). Leaders need to effectively communicate to parents about the importance of teaching the correct genital names to their children and address cultural barriers to sexual discussions, including their possible embarrassment over using the incorrect genital terms. Delivering these programs to Hispanic parents should distinguish those acculturated Hispanics who can be treated as if they were Anglos, from those who require a different approach reflecting their adherence to Hispanic culture (Rogler, Malgady, Costantino, & Blumenthal, 1998).
Unfortunately, few CSA educational programs are available for use by culturally diverse parents. The Body Safety Training program (Wurtele, 2007) has been translated into Spanish for use by parents or teachers, and some components of the Talking About Touching program (Committee for Children, 1996, 2001) are available in Spanish. However, the majority of books and other tools are available only in English. CSA prevention programmers are encouraged to translate their materials into other languages and adapt the curricular material for use with diverse populations.

Given that children are especially vulnerable to sexual abuse during the preschool years, providing early education is essential. Incorporating information on the correct names for genital body parts could be easily included into early childhood curriculum that addresses body parts. Preschools are encouraged to add genital names to their lesson plans (Honig, 2000). Teachers should be encouraged to correct children who use incorrect, slang or idiosyncratic terminology for their genital parts. Studies have shown that when children are taught prevention concepts (including genital names) at home and with teachers, they learn more than those who are just taught in one place (Wurtele, Kast & Melzer, 1992). Providing sexual knowledge and teaching children a healthy respect for their bodies is essential to healthy sexual development. School counselors can be instrumental in assisting teachers with addressing this material with young children. They can provide resources including books, videos and other aids that can be used in small group instruction.

Despite the continued threat of CSA in the U.S. and the proliferation of programs and materials available to teach children correct terminology for body parts, these results demonstrate that little has changed in children’s knowledge in this area in the past 15 years. Although many parents take the time to teach their children body parts, few have incorporated genital terminology into these lessons. Spanish-speaking parents of Hispanic backgrounds, perhaps due to the norm of “sexual silence” or hesitation to discuss sex-related topics due to shame or embarrassment (Marin & Gomez, 1997), may require further education about the importance of these lessons, along with materials that are culturally appropriate and available in their language.

Future research should be conducted in focus group settings with parents of various cultural backgrounds to determine their stated barriers to teaching their children the correct names for their genitals. Pre and post testing of parents who have participated in CSA prevention programs could determine if their attitude toward this type of education changes based on knowledge they receive.

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Bilingual Education in the USA: A Transition to Monolingualism?

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Florida International University, USA

Abstract: Although bilingual education has never enjoyed widespread support in the USA, several models can be distinguished for language minority students: transitional bilingual education, dual language (or two-way immersion) programs, and speech community models. In this literature review, these models are examined to determine which is the most effective.

“Bilingual education has never enjoyed widespread support in the USA” (Garcia & Bartlett, 2007, p. 2). There has always been an explicit attack on bilingual education attempts. The bilingual educational practices that had started in the country during the 1840s to respond to the presence of many school children that spoke German, Dutch, French, Spanish, and Swedish were unfortunately (and since then) brought to a halt due to the nativism of World War I and to popular reaction to the large number of non-English speaking immigrants entering the country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

It was only in the 1960s that, due to a renewed interest in language minority rights, Congress passed Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 1968, also known as the Bilingual Education Act. This Act “was extended to meet the needs of all children who spoke a language other than English in the home and who had an economic need” (Torres-Guzmán & Etxeberria, 2005, p. 515).

In 1974, the Supreme Court of the USA in Lau v. Nichols dictated that public schools offer special programs for students who spoke little or no English. The Bilingual Education Act was reduced to English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction, with content instruction in the first language for three years. “By 1974 the Bilingual Education Act had narrowed the goal of bilingual education to the teaching of English to those who were ‘limited English speakers’ and explicitly promoted what was defined as transitional bilingual education” (Garcia & Bartlett, 2007, p. 2).

Although transitional bilingual education was clearly under attack during the 1990s, in 1993, 43 states and the District of Columbia had legislative provisions and appropriated funding for bilingual and ESL programs. This decade seems to be the harshest one for bilingual educational practices, as “many Americans argued that immigrants should drop their first languages and assimilate to the USA through English monolingualism” (Garcia & Bartlett, 2007, p. 3).

In the state of California, for instance, there was the English Only movement. According to Jenkins (2003), in 1998:

The English Language Education for Children in Public Schools Initiative (more commonly known as Proposition 227) was passed, requiring all children for whom English was not their first language (L1) to be placed in immersion programmes for a year and then to be transferred to mainstream education. Given that the language of the environment is English and the aim to subtract rather than add a language (i.e. subtractive rather than additive bilingualism), it would be more appropriate to describe these programmes as ‘submersion’ (Richard Watts, personal communication). (p. 95)
It should be said that these policies are fueled by the fear of bilingualism among the largely monolingual L1 English population, resulting from the dramatic increase in multi-ethnicity due to the large number of immigrants. “By 2001, the white population of California had fallen to below half the state’s total population of 34 million” (Jenkins, 2003, p. 94.). The largest overall increase in the population of immigrants, in California and in the U.S.A. in general, is among people from Hispanic backgrounds (Jenkins, 2003).

In 2002, the Bilingual Education Act was eliminated as part of the authorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Its successor, Title III of NCLB, is called ‘Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students’. Garcia (2005) describes the changes taking place:

Whereas the 1994 version of the Bilingual Education Act included among its goals ‘developing the English skills… and to the extent possible, the native-language skills’ of LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students, the new law stresses skills in English only. The word bilingual has been completely eliminated from the law. (p. 98)

Today, the situation could not be more disheartening. States like California, Massachusetts and Arizona have already declared bilingual education illegal. As a result of federal pressure to demonstrate content-area knowledge in English, “traditional comprehensive high school bilingual programmes have resolved to dedicate less time to instruction in languages other than English” (Garcia & Bartlett, 2007, p. 3). Furthermore, ESL instruction practices in the most popular ‘bilingual’ program (the ESL pull-out model, which we will be looking at in the next section) linguistically segregate learners of English.

**Bilingual Education Models in the USA**

Within a general theoretical framework, we can think of bilingual education models in the USA as being in a continuum with two extremes: compensatory models versus enrichment models (of dual language instruction). “At one extreme we have monolingual/monocultural models that view second language teaching and learning as compensatory education to overcome the “problem” of lack of language proficiency among language minority students” (Kerper & Wink, 2001, p. 439). In this model, the use of students’ L1 is minimal and even restricted, as in the case of California’s Proposition 227, which passed in 1998 and required that instruction in L1 of limited English proficient students be replaced by a one year program of intensive English language instruction labeled ‘structured English immersion’ (SEI). The other extreme includes “approaches to dual language program design that view second language learning as enrichment that provides clear advantages to students in attaining high levels of academic achievement, with eventual benefits in expanded career choices and economic opportunities” (Kerper & Wink, 2001, p. 439). The most popular model of bilingual education in the U.S., that of transitional bilingual education, is somewhere in the middle of the continuum, as it is intended as a compensatory model that also provides the benefits of L1 language and literacy skills. To what extent language and literacy skills in L1 are developed in transitional bilingual education programs is an arguable, delicate matter.

It should be said that the English as a second language (ESL) pull-out model, in which a small number of students are taken out of their regular classroom by a teacher who will get them to work on their English language skills, is NOT considered a bilingual education model “because there is no use of the native language for instruction” (Hornberger, 1990, in Torres-Guzmán et al., 2005, p. 516).

As noted above, the most popular form of bilingual education in the USA is the transitional bilingual education program (TBE) (Torres-Guzmán et al., 2005, p. 516). In this
program, instruction is in both the native language (of minority students) and English for a period of three years. This means that L1 is phased out as proficiency in L2 increases. The criteria to exit students from the program are usually established by a second language proficiency and achievement test. If we are wondering how in this model proficiency in L1 can still be maintained once English has taken over and has become the exclusive medium of instruction (in other words, the goal), there is the maintenance/enrichment model of bilingual education program geared for both language majority and minority students in which both L1 and L2 are used as medium of instruction for a longer period (usually K-6 instead of K-3 in TBE). We can already see an advantage to this form of bilingual program, as “language is acquired best when it is the medium of instruction, not solely as the object of instruction” (Kerper & Wink, 2001, p. 440).

Then, there are the dual language (DL) programs, also called two-way immersion (TWI) programs. These are geared towards both language majority and minority students. Garcia (2005) offers a good account of the goals of dual language programs: basically, teaching content IN BOTH LANGUAGES, with teachers adapting their lessons to convey vocabulary and language structure, language minority students and English-speaking students are given the opportunity to learn a second language. Cross-cultural awareness is also aimed for by having a population of half language minority students and half English-speaking students in each classroom.

There are two basic models of dual language programs: the 90/10 model and the 50/50 model. In the 90/10 model, it is the English speakers who experience full immersion in the minority language while minority language speakers go through a maintenance and heritage enrichment program. In the 50/50 model, also known as ‘partial immersion’ model, at least 50% of the time the instruction is in the minority language. This model is preferred in the East Coast of the U.S.A. Of the 103 partial immersion models identified, 99 are Spanish/English programs, 1 is Chinese, 2 are French, and 1 is Navajo. We have gone a long way, as we can see, from the ESL pull-out model or the transitional bilingual model. No matter if the two-way immersion is in a 90/10 or 50/50 model, children are not linguistically segregated. Through exposure to two different languages, two different language populations work together to overcome their difficulties. This way, they learn that one language is just as valid as the other. This simplest of concepts is somehow at the other end of the compensatory perspective (deeply rooted within the American educational language policy system) with monolingualism in English as its main goal and is, instead, very much in tune with a linguistic human rights perspective. “A linguistic-human rights orientation implies that everyone can identify positively with his or her native language and expect to have that identification accepted and respected by others” (Kerper & Wink, 2001, p. 441). There are approximately 266 documented two-way immersion programs in the USA (Frengel, 2003). The first implemented model was Miami-Dade’s Coral Way Elementary School in Florida, in the 1960s. Other successful examples of such a model include: Cali Calimeca Charter School in Windsor, California; the schools in the San Diego School District in California; and the Alianza Elementary School in Watsonville, California.

There is, still, a model that some might consider anachronistic, which offers great contrast to the ones mentioned before (Garcia & Bartlett, 2007. Gregorio Luperón High School in Washington Heights, New York City, which was founded in 1991, functions as a speech community model of bilingual education. It is a community high school, a community-based organization and thus a community model since it was born “to develop a solution to the high failure rates of newcomer Dominican youth in New York City high schools” (Garcia & Bartlett,
2007, p. 7). It is, therefore, a school that serves the community of Dominicans in New York City, the second largest Latino group and the poorest of all ethnic and racial groups in the city.

Some of the main characteristics of this model are: the absence of students who are native speakers of English; the presence of native Spanish-speaking Latino teachers as models (which contribute to the high status of Spanish); specific English language acquisition targets (mainly preparation for the English Regents Exam); the use of bilingualism as a pedagogical strategy, translation practices, metalinguistic talk and cross-cultural reflections; the use of Spanish for instruction and connection (Garcia & Bartlett, 2007). This model is a hybrid of maintenance and transitional bilingual education programs. The focus on the Spanish-speaking children, and the use of Spanish as a language to educate and to be developed are traits of maintenance bilingual education programs. The attention to the students’ acquisition of English (with the two languages frequently used in some combination) is a transitional bilingual education model characteristic. Learning L2 without necessarily losing L1 should be a simple goal, yet it is a difficult one to achieve in the context of the US. The community of Dominicans that attend Gregorio Luperón High School in Washington Heights will definitely not lose their Spanish. How proficient they will become in their social and academic use of English is the question. Let us, then, examine some of the advantages and disadvantages of the models previously described.

**Advantages and Disadvantages of Bilingual Education Models**

The transitional bilingual education model has proficiency in English as its main goal (Kerper & Wink, 2001). Although L1 (for language minority students) is used as a medium of instruction, a very positive side to it, it is used for a very short period (usually K-3) and phased out as proficiency in L2 increases and, ultimately, L2 becomes the exclusive medium of instruction. In this sense, the maintenance/enrichment bilingual education model offers more time of L1 as a medium of instruction (K-6) and thus fosters positive cross-cultural relations (Kerper & Wink, 2001). However, in any transitional model, the question is how to maintain proficiency in L1. As we have seen, this model is within the compensatory perspective of bilingual education, which views the lack of proficiency in L2 as a problem and thus proficiency in English as the main goal.

Dual language, or two-way immersion (TWI), education programs have proven to be more efficient than the previously mentioned transitional models (Frengel, 2003; Kerper & Wink, 2001). To start with, dual language programs favor integration of ESL learners with English-speaking peers and thus foster positive cross-cultural relations. As Frengel (2003) points out, “one of the key components of a TWI program is that children work side by side with one another and see each other as assets who can help with the unfamiliar language” (p. 56). This setting has little to do with the popular ESL pull-out model. As a result of this simplest of conceptions –children from two different language backgrounds working side by side with one another, “children learn that success comes through cooperation rather than competition” (Cenoz & Genesee, 1998).

In terms of literacy maintenance (of L1) and academic performance (of both language majority and minority students), the review of the literature on these programs shows that TWI programs are among the most successful in achieving the goal of teaching English to language-minority students AND maintaining literacy in their home language. There is also evidence that test scores for students undergoing TWI programs are at or above national averages.

Language minority students who go through this kind of program are also less likely to drop out before graduation. Children in general demonstrate “increased feelings of success, enjoyment of the learning process, and self-esteem” (Love & Love, 1995). According to Kenrick
et al. (1998), the learning atmosphere created in cooperative classrooms can definitely help in the fight against negative prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination.

In spite of addressing the social nature of second language acquisition (SLA), the speech community model “leads to the formation of stereotypes which remain unchallenged” (Garcia & Bartlett, 2007, p. 20) probably due to the social isolation in which these students find themselves. There are, however, some positive aspects and conceptions of the speech community model. It takes into account the concepts of scholars like Canagarajah (1999), Pennycook (1994), Phillipson (1992) and others that point to the sociolinguistic and socio-historical contexts of the teaching and learning of English or to the resistance to linguistic imperialism in English teaching. It is this social focus that gives this model its relevance and importance. According to Garcia (2007), traditional individual models of SLA have ignored three wider, social aspects of L2 learning: the role of communities of practice, social identities issues when learning L2, and the influence of power relations on linguistic interaction. The schooling at Gregorio Luperón High School in Washington Heights, a speech community model of bilingual education, takes into account the communities in which these adolescents live and communicate, their social identities as Spanish-speaking immigrants who are learning English, and the power relations between their poor community and the larger English-speaking New York City. No matter how socially aware the groundings for such a model are, studies have revealed that segregation contributes to some limitations, such as “the limited range of English for these students, the lack of experience with other cultural groups and the potential for the formation of stereotypes” (Garcia & Bartlett, 2007, p. 20).

We could only hope for more socially aware conceptions of dual-language or two way immersion programs in the USA, which seem to be more effective than the transitional bilingual education or speech community models for both language minority and language majority students. The time of globalization is pushing more and more for bilingual and multilingual societies. Schools in those societies should contribute to the formation of positive cross-cultural relations. A linguistic human rights orientation is important, then, in the sense that language minority students can manage to preserve their linguistic identity and can have that identity accepted and respected by others. Two goals are thus accomplished: one- linguistic; the other- social.

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Roadblocks to Teaching English as a Foreign Language in a Climate of Accelerated Curricular Change

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Abstract: This paper examines the global "English craze," in which non-English-speaking countries, especially in Asia, East Asia, and the Middle East, are engaged in a concerted push to get the language taught more widely and at increasingly lower grade levels. The goal of this paper is to document how this phenomenon has impacted teachers of English as a Foreign Language and how they can try to alleviate these problems.

To get ahead in fields such as banking, technology, or diplomacy, English is now considered the sine qua non (Atay & Kurt, 2006; Chang, Wu, & Ku, 2005). English is also the language of choice among young people drawn to the Internet and Western popular culture (Albirini, 2004; Sjoholm, 2006) as well as the lingua franca of academia in such countries as Turkey, Brunei, and Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2003; Dogancay-Aktuna & Kiziltepe, 2005; Pieronek, 2001). For these and other reasons, many countries, especially in Asia and the Middle East, are engaged in a concerted push to get English taught more widely and at ever-lower grade levels. Taiwan’s plan, called Challenge 2008, requires English to be taught starting in Grade 5 (Chang et al., 2005). In Turkey, public-school pupils start studying a foreign language, generally English, in the fourth grade (Atay & Kurt, 2006). South Korea has a plan to place a native-speaking teacher in every junior high school by 2010 (Jeon & Lee, 2006); and, in preparation for this year’s Olympics, China’s English as a foreign language (EFL) teacher education has gone from a few university-based programs in the 1970s to hundreds today (Hu, 2005).

Accompanying the explosive growth of English language teaching (ELT) comes the question: What challenges does this present to the EFL teacher? Although the ELT expansion may be viewed as a welcome development that will create more jobs, those charged with carrying out the mandate will undoubtedly be affected by increased demands.

This researcher set out to identify countries with accelerated EFL programs and to document EFL teachers’ responses to their various challenges. Emphasis was placed on finding literature that included teachers’ perspectives on their success rates vis à vis students’ ability to absorb the ELT material. The purpose of this structured literature review was to serve as a point of discussion for EFL teachers and those considering entering the profession, as well as to add to the literature by providing a snapshot of trends from the past five or so years.

Method

Using ERIC (the online Education Resources Information Center), studies were retrieved from electronic and print journals. The search criteria were EFL teachers, problems, and curricula. Articles were further narrowed to issues of salary, technology, national initiatives, and the relationships between local and native-speaking teachers. Although dozens of studies were harvested, 17 were ultimately cited in this review, which was not designed to be quantitative but qualitative in identifying EFL teaching challenges.

Upon analysis, a number of themes emerged that cut across geographic and cultural categories and among subgroups that included countries with a “competitive imperative” (a more dictatorial style of government, with a presumed motivation of being better able to compete with
Western, English-speaking nations) and those with a “cooperative” imperative (politically more democratic, with a motivation of establishing better commercial and other ties with the English-speaking world).

**Findings**

Immaterial of the groups’ imperatives, five broad categories of EFL job-related challenges were identified: 1) technology issues, 2) inter-group difficulties between native and local English teachers, 3) overly ambitious curricula, 4) cultural impediments, and 5) the need for proper resources. 

**Technology Issues**

While the assumption was that so-called “developing” countries would be lacking in computer access for teachers, the literature seemed to contradict this. In fact, emerging regions often exhibited a more acute awareness of technology as a prerequisite mode of language teaching. Although a positive development, it brings with it, of course, the danger of viewing computers as a panacea at the expense of more established ELT methods.

In a Turkish study, Computer Assisted Language Learning was used to test accent reduction software in a multimedia language laboratory (Seferoglu, 2005). The experimental use of Pronunciation Power software on 20 EFL teachers-in-training at the Middle East Technical University used a pretest and posttest and concluded that technology has a lot to offer this field. The resultant question arises: Will such technology be available? Owing to the great disparity in resources and curricular standards in Turkey, where private institutions teach content areas primarily in English and state-run schools teach primarily in Turkish (Dogancay-Aktuna & Kiziltepe, 2005), the use of computers and pronunciation software seems, unfortunately, destined for only the elite.

A study of teachers’ attitudes toward information and communication technologies in Syria likewise affirms that “governments in most developing countries have (initiated) national programs to introduce computers into education” (Albirini, 2004, p. 374). The researcher administered a questionnaire on computer competence and attitudes to a random sample of 326 subjects selected from a pool of 827 EFL teachers in Hims (the largest Syrian province). He concluded that simply making computers available was not sufficient; teachers need to be equipped to use them. Respondents complained that computers were rushed into classrooms, with a dearth of instruction. Most of the respondents agreed that computers were proliferating too quickly. They also reported having little or no competence in handling most of the computer functions needed by educators.

The use of computers in the form of electronic portfolios to teach English to junior high-school students was documented in a Taiwanese study (Chang et al., 2005). Ironically, although Taiwan has been manufacturing computers for decades, only recently has its populace been able to afford to buy them. Language students there often lacked “a real environment to support speaking opportunities in English” (p. 31). To assess their English-speaking skills, teachers helped 37 students to build personal Web sites. A successful outcome, however, was hampered by the fact that only three computer classrooms were available for 93 classes at the school. The students were only able to work on their portfolios for about 45 minutes a week. Although students’ overall response to the exercise was enthusiastic, they reported problems in setting up home pages and recording their voices. Researchers placed the responsibility for these errors on the teachers. The EFL faculty “should learn more about computers and increase their computer skills,” and “make sure that the computers are set up properly” (p. 34). Going unsaid was whether teachers would be given the additional time and training to effect these changes.
Need for Proper Resources

Along with a deficit in technological training, many EFL teachers also lack the most basic of instructional tools. With a worldwide recession threatening, resources in many countries seem pushed to the limit. In Oaxaca, one of the poorest states in Mexico, the majority of students reach only the fifth grade in elementary school, but formal instruction of English starts in secondary school, thus greatly lessening the need for materials at all (Clemente, 2007). Among English classes, there is a great disparity between resources for middle-class schools and those for the working-class poor.

In the sultanate of Brunei Darussalam, where a bilingual policy was introduced in 1984, children are expected to switch from their native Malay to using English as the medium of instruction in mathematics, geography, and science. Books were not plentiful in the homes, and, not surprisingly, children had difficulty learning to read. As one teacher remarked, “If the children can’t read, they can’t learn” and expressed concern that many were failing their examinations (Pieronek, 2001, p. 524). Although an in-service project to train a group of approximately 20 teachers to utilize such first language reading strategies as guided listening-thinking activities, questioning, and read-aloud, were found to be effective in teaching the second language, making English books available for the children to use should obviously be a priority.

Inter-Group Difficulties: NETs vs. LETs

Whether we call them NESTs (for native English-speaking teachers, as they are referred to in France), NESes (native English speakers, as in Korea), or NETs (native-speaking English teachers, as in Hong Kong, and the term we shall use here), language specialists recruited from America or the rest of the “English Five” (Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada) have reported various problems between them and their local counterparts (referred to here as local English teachers, or LETs).

Jealousy and envy among local peers directed toward the NETs, reported in several locales, apparently stemmed from the elevated status that comes with being, or even hiring, a native speaker (Clapson & Hyatt, 2007). In South Korea, where English is now the paramount language in the job market (Jeon & Lee, 2006), Koreans want to learn about “English ways of thinking and negotiating” from NETs because of their knowledge of vocabulary and “authentic pronunciation” (Han, 2005, p. 200).

Han (2005) examined the views of 12 Korean adult learners toward NETs and documented a perceptual gap between the qualities ascribed to the LETs (good role models, warm and humanistic but having an inferior command of English) and the NETs (authentic pronunciation, native command of the language, but cold and calculating personalities). The conclusion was that both learners and teachers need to remain culturally sensitive in order to navigate this divide.

Discrepancies in salaries and job assignments also often strain relations between the NETs and the LETs. In Hong Kong, an exercise in team-teaching ran into a roadblock of animosity because the two groups’ pedagogical styles were so different. One NET said: “They (LETs) really like to stick with the drilling and testing regimes and don’t welcome more creative influences . . . You will get frustrated if you think you are going to change things too much” (Carless, 2006, p. 333). At the same time, the local teachers complained that it took too much of their time to “communicate and co-plan” with the NETs (p. 334).

In France, NETs are accorded a certain deference due to their “natural authority,” wherein students value their “Anglophone accent” (Clapson & Hyatt, 2007, p. 629). However, it is the LETs there who have the upper hand. Whether because of the “protected status” of the
French language or that country’s ambiguous relationship with all things English, the educational system appears skewed in favor of local teachers (Clapson & Hyatt, 2007, p. 626). To receive a full-time secondary level-or-above teaching post, for example, NETs must be fluent in French.

In many places, pay levels were unequal between the two groups. As a 2006 survey of ELT salaries in East Asia reports, in China, wages for NETs ($365 to $629 U.S. per month) were triple those of the Chinese teachers ($101 to $284) working the same number of hours, while in Hong Kong, the local teachers actually earned more -- $2,077-$5,700 U.S. a month for the NETs vs. $2,300-$5,700 for the LETs (Jeon & Lee, 2006). In Japan, the salary depended on the type of school or program one was affiliated with: The Japan Exchange and Teaching program paid NETs the highest rate, at $2,600 U.S. a month, approximately equivalent to that of locals. Such discrepancies, as well as perpetuated stereotypes, further set the stage for difficulties between the groups.

*Cultural Impediments*

Students’ biases toward the inherent properties of the language itself represent another prevailing problem. Unlike France, where the hegemony of English is regarded with suspicion, or Finland, where teenagers are drawn in by the Western world’s pop culture, in Russia, a nation that reportedly has an educational ethos highly resistant to change (Sudo, 2007), there seems to be a political correctness problem. Julia Sudo, a doctoral candidate at Novosibirsk State University, undertook a survey of 56 Russian students’ attitudes toward gender usage and inclusive language. She noted that many Russian students “hold to traditional mentality, patriarchal stereotypes and sexist attitudes” (Sudo, 2007, p. 15). Therefore, she was not surprised to learn that usage of gender-inclusive language, referred to by some teachers there as “the new tendencies,” was seldom taught in Russian universities, “and even more rarely in secondary schools” (p. 16).

Resistant to another type of change, that of communicative language teaching (CLT), Bangladeshi university students in a comprehensive foundation course in English skills actively presented instructors with a distaste for the new techniques and a preference for the “lockstep, teacher-centered” audio-lingual approach they had become used to during 12 years of compulsory English classes (Chowdhury, 2003, p. 284). Many of the EFL teachers at the University of Dhaka had received training overseas. Chowdhury conducted interviews with and administered questionnaires to six of these, trained both internationally and locally, regarding the perceptions of teachers and students of CLT. Despite their Western training, teachers reported that they, as well as the students, were “culturally bound” (p. 296). The teachers felt they were attempting to transmit alien cultures and techniques, and the students, one said, “feel tempted to discard the new style and complain that the teacher is not ‘teaching’” (p. 285).

In Korea, ancient Confucianism, a religious doctrine that plays an important cultural role in that Asian nation, is particularly entrenched (Han, 2005). Confucianism stresses the qualities of propriety, etiquette, knowledge, and trust. As such, teachers are seen as all-powerful figures that must not be questioned or contradicted. Students are expected to be obedient, humble, and respectful. They, thus, prefer to learn through memorization and rote repetition, and Westerners’ attempts to teach communicatively frequently end in frustrated failure.

Han (2005) surveyed 12 adults about their attitudes toward learning English. Because Western teachers do not follow the Korean protocol of first establishing the students’ trust (called uye-ri), students felt they came across as cold and calculating. They said they liked learning from Korean-born teachers, despite the latter’s preference for rote memorization. Students nevertheless admitted their communication skills were lacking and wanted activities
where they actively use English. This contradiction seemed to place both student and teacher in a bind.

**Overly Ambitious Curricula**

In Finland, where (British) English is prized as the *lingua franca* of the scientific community, a large implementation gap was remarked upon between the curriculum envisioned by the country’s educational planners and the one that was actually experienced by learners (Sjoholm, 2004). Sjoholm examined the English proficiency and attitudes toward language learning among secondary-school students in both Swedish-language and Finnish-language settings (Finland has two official languages). Positive language attitudes stemmed mainly from English usage outside rather than inside the classroom. The “British English” that was prescribed by the curricular reform of 1994 was spurned by many students in favor of the “American English” they heard on television, computers, and music recordings.

In Argentina, where an ambitious new federal education law was enacted following financial and political upheaval, EFL teachers have complained that the reformed curriculum has made their jobs “extremely challenging” and that their training “didn’t take into account Argentina’s (harsh socio-economic) reality and context” (Zappa-Hollman, 2007, p. 624). According to a survey conducted among 32 EFL teachers (K-12) from six provinces and the autonomous Capital Federal district of Argentina, participants “identified a clear mismatch between their preservice preparation and their subsequent experience in school” (p. 622) and also expressed deep concern over violence in the classroom and lack of such basic resources as textbooks.

In China, where large educational reforms have been taking place over the past 20 years, “increased demands” in the form of new curricula, syllabuses, methodologies, and other teaching materials have brought the need for a formal in-service training program, carried out by teaching colleges overseen by a vast Ministry of Education (Hu, 2005, p. 686). The new curriculum “seems too ambitious to be feasible,” the 2005 study reported (p. 693). “There are 25 separate courses and one major research project to be completed within a single academic year” (p. 693). Despite all of that academic study (or perhaps because of it), the teacher-in-training had less than 11 contact hours with students, leaving a researcher to conclude, “The curriculum is a product of external experts’ work, and it is not clear how closely it matches the participants’ needs” (Hu, 2005, p. 693).

**Conclusion**

While a results-oriented environment seems to be a worldwide constant, the literature ultimately presented two sets of protagonists: the NET, negotiating an alien culture, and the LET, negotiating an alien tongue. Challenges for the NET seem to be cultural biases, salary and hiring discrepancies, and limited resources. For the LET, egregious governmental benchmarks combined with a lack of updated training and materials hinder success rates. Both groups, however, have one thing in common: their chosen field of bringing mastery of the English language and literacy to students across the globe.

The teachers should be prepared for the challenges that the literature has described. NETs should research the cultural characteristics they will be immersed in and learn to negotiate them. LETs should work with (and perhaps learn from) the native-speaking teachers in their midst. They should also be proactive in pushing for change. A worldwide standard of teaching practices and pay scales will help to solve many of these problems. But in order for governments and universities to coordinate and implement such reforms, it will no doubt be necessary for the teachers themselves to agitate for them.
References


Professors’ Perspectives on Educational Cohorts

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Abstract: Cohort educational models (CEM) are used to support students in graduate degree completion. Studies around CEMs focus mainly on student benefits. Voices of professors who organize and ultimately teach educational cohorts have been missing from this dialog. This study seeks to uncover professors’ perspectives on CEMs.

The study examines professors’ perspectives on the cohort educational model (CEM). A cohort is a group of students bound together by a program of study that takes the majority of coursework together (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; Miller & Irby, 1999; Potthoff, Fredrickson, Batenhorst, & Tracy, 2001). To increase degree completion success rates, CEMs in higher education are placing students in groups, moving them through coursework together (Barnett & Cafarella, 1992).

Rubin and Rubin (2005) state that “finding a topic means paying attention to ordinary events and then asking which of these interests you the most” (p. 43). This is exactly what I did with my topic. I thought of an ordinary event, taking classes within a cohort, and then began asking myself what about that topic interested me the most. This occurred as a result my two years of being in a doctoral cohort. I was fortunate to meet another student outside of the cohort pursuing the same degree. Based on our discussions, I realized that my doctoral experience and hers were very different in many ways. It seemed like she was floating and drifting in academia more than I was. This experience made me curious about the CEM; I wondered if students outside of the model had different experiences.

The past summer, I took a class with a cohort in which I was not a part. I remember feeling somewhat envious and left out of the intimate relationships that they seemed to share. I wondered if this was what my friend on the outside of our cohort felt. Looking at the different perspectives of students within and outside of the cohort would have to include other students. I decided to call my friend who was not in our cohort and find out if she would like to study the CEM from these multiple perspectives. She liked the idea and agreed to participate if we could get the approval.

Later on that same evening, with the guidance and probing questions of my professor, I asked myself the question, what do the professors think of the CEM? As a result of enthusiasm from my student colleagues to participate in the study of the CEM and the generous support of our professor, we were able to create a mini-study on this model from multiple perspectives using grounded theory. According to Rubin & Rubin (2005) grounded theory consists of themes and concepts emerging “from the data without the use of the literature” (p. 222). The purpose of my part of the mini-study was to uncover professors’ perspectives on the CEM. The main research question addressed was, “What are professors’ perspectives on the CEM for graduate programs?”

Method

The participants in this mini-study included three professors from the College of Education at a large urban university. All of the professors taught at the graduate or undergraduate levels and had experiences in the K-12 public school system at some time in their careers. The setting of the study was mostly in the College of Education offices, and one...
participant agreed to do an interview in their home. All of the professors had both participated in CEMs as students and taught CEMs as professors.

The data was gathered via IRB pre-approved interview protocol guide. The interviews were conducted one-on-one and recorded with an audio-cassette recording device (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). “The one-on-one interview is a data collection process in which the researcher asks questions and records the answers from only one participant in the study at a time” (Creswell, 2005, p. 215). After taping the interview, I transcribed the interviews and then coded them for themes. “Transcripts are the main data of many interview studies” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 129).

The coding style I used to analyze the transcripts followed the grounded theory approach that involves looking for emerging themes and concepts without using literature (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I used open coding, which requires “coding as you go along” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 222). This type of coding consists of creating a category list in order to sort through the data, which is a critical step in the analysis of the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I devised two category coding system for the transcripts: (a) benefits of CEMs and (b) challenges of CEMs. To increase validity member checking was used. Member checking requires researchers to ask their participants to provide feedback on the interpretation of the data (Merriam, 2002). In addition to member checking, peer review was used. Peer review employs other student colleagues to read and review the research to ensure validity and reliability (Merriam, 2002). In my case, I requested two other doctoral students to peer review my work. To preserve confidentiality, the name of the university is omitted and each faculty is given a pseudonym.

Findings

Data analysis revealed two major themes: benefits and challenges.

Benefits

The benefit theme included the following sub-themes: (a) the cohort as an entity, (b) relationships in cohorts, (c) supports for culturally and linguistically diverse students and non-traditional learners, and (d) professor reflections on students and faculty dealing with a CEM. Cohorts often tend to function as one entity that develops “its own personality” (Wesson, Holman, Holman, & Cox, 1996, p. 16). Contributing to the cohort operating in this capacity is the idea of group cohesion (Festinger, 1950), which is the culmination of all elements causing members to maintain group membership (as cited in Toseland & Rivas, 1998). Radin and Feld (1985) define a group as a collective of individuals that exhibit these four characteristics:

(a) The individuals engage in face to face interaction; (b) there are few enough of them to notice an absence; (c) they are interdependent, that is, they need one another to attain their own goals; and (d) they perceive themselves as a group. (p. 50)

The final two characteristics of interdependence and group perception convey the concept that the group exists as one unit (Radin & Feld, 1985). This reflects the first sub-theme of the cohort as an entity. Dr. S speaks of her personal experience of unity and being in a cohort in her undergraduate degree:

I was with a very tightly knit group of dedicated faculty and students who wanted to prove that successfully passing all the classes … You learned to work and take classes with and from literally intensive study groups where we studied in the library together….

Often times, because of the social dynamics at work in a cohort, “the cohort will develop a ‘collective voice’ that is significantly more powerful than a classroom made up of individual voices” (Potthoff et al., 2001, p. 40). Dr. S spoke about this phenomenon in regard to an instructor that her cohort felt was inappropriate on racial issues in the classroom. Her cohort was
able to effect changes with regard to the professor who said inappropriate racial statements by using their collective voice.

The second sub-theme of relationship building and group development are non-linear processes that evolve over time (Toseland & Rivas, 1998). Each professor alluded to the development of a personality unique to each CEM they encountered. Dr F comments:

…you just feel that each cohort kinda has a different personality. I’ve had groups that just seem to be better cohorts than others. I don’t know if it’s the quality of the students of the group, or the way that they form their thoughts, or just ya know left it to not, it’s almost like each produces a different personality. Each cohort takes on its own personality, well then of course within each cohort you have students that are stronger than others.

Describing the same experience, Dr. P states:

Because the cohort is so strong, it’s like they feed off each other; it’s like sometimes if you’re not even there it would probably be okay because they would just go. Like they have a rhythm about them and you would have to just jump in and see where you fit.

Like the collective voice, abilities of students to develop relationships in cohorts may be influenced by their cultural identity and ability to negotiate cultures that may vary from their own. The third sub-theme of supports for culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students and non-traditional learners is illustrated by two of the professors interviewed. They indicated that they believed that CEMs afforded non-traditional and CLD students supports that traditional educational models did not offer. Dr. X said that non-traditional students are “people who are going back to school after a few years you know….The typical college student is not what it was twenty years ago, and that’s why I think we need different approaches.” Typical college students are recent high school graduates, whereas the non-traditional student is characterized as a student who may be working full time with a family. CLD students differ from the “predominant European American, middle-class, ‘mainstream’ culture” (Omrod, 2006, p. 105) in that they may originate from a different country, speak a language other than English, or be in a different socio-economic class (Omrod, 2006). Dr. F discussed how the CEM provides emotional and physical supports by stating:

Ya know, saying, “Stay in there, it’s gonna be okay.” I know some of our people will watch each others’ children when they work on assignments. Or they’ll get together and help each other, ya know give them a ride, if their car is broken down. Ya know, all of these things, when you have students that are at risk for not being a typical college student who could more easily stay in the program.

Although educational prospects for CLD students have broadened over the years (Kelly & Prescott, 2007) and more undergraduate degrees have been awarded to minority students, graduate programs have not seen the same upswing in numbers for these students (Ulloa & Herrera, 2006). There exists no one reason for this disproportionality. Some believe that the lack of social integration into academia itself may be partially to blame for this discrepancy (Nettles, 1990; Ulloa & Herrera, 2006). The small percentage of CLD students who overcome the challenges of gaining access to graduate school has to be supported. Research has shown that these students, and most others in graduate education programs, benefit from the CEM in professional collaboration, academic supports, and developing personal relationships with peers (Potthoff et al., 2001; Slater & Trowbridge, 2000; Teitel, 1997).

The fourth sub-theme is professor reflections on students and faculty dealing with a CEM. Professors discussed administrative advantages and the need for team building in CEMs. Dr F states, “I think because they are in a cohort, we might meet them more in groups, in
comparison to someone who’s not part of the cohort, that come in one by one to take care of them.” Programming and course scheduling are positively affected by the CEM (Barnett et al., 2000). Dr. F states,

And also I think, from a kind of you know, administrative perspective, I think when you have cohorts, people come into your programs, it is easier to manage advising. It’s easier to manage getting them services and resources because there all at the same place at the same time, so you can pretty much offer up all kinds of resources.

Dr. S advised professors involved with CEMs to prepare cohorts in advance of starting a CEM with team building exercises. She states:

I think that um if they could prepare cohorts in advance, like before you even take a class like on the first day the emphasis is on getting to know each other um team building activities, which we typically don’t do on the first day. We do ice breakers and what’s your neighbors that kind of superficial stuff.

Challenges

The two main challenge themes emerged: (a) complexities for students and professors and (b) cohort-within-a-cohort. The first sub-theme includes the difficulties students and faculty have with course scheduling and administrative duties related to the running of a CEM. Dr P describes how hard it was if a student got out of course sequence stating:

One thing that I found in my undergrad program and my doctoral program with a cohort is that there is not a lot of flexibility for people who kind of want to do their own thing. Not if you want to, like, take a different course. For example in my doctoral program, there were courses that I had already taken in my specialist program. I would have had to take them again. I wanted to kind of do an independent study.

Students may be restricted by inflexible course structures which can inhibit program completion (Barnett et al., 2000). The outlook on this type of inflexibility varied on whether it was perceived to affect the student or the professor. Barnett et al. (2000) reported that the CEM may amplify a professor’s advisement load and create discord among those who are not involved in the cohort program. Dr. F was the only professor in the study who mentioned the concerns of workload but merely referred to them as a challenge.

Another challenge Dr. P described was the daunting task of teaching a cohort who have already established group norms and relationships. She states,

It’s really been difficult dealing with cohorts, especially coming in as an instructor and they’re already in established groups. It’s that they’ve already established norms; they’ve already established a rapport among each other. And you’re coming in as the outsider. And so again, um it takes time for them to feel you out and for them to accept you as a visitor into their cohort.

While this is seen as a positive for the students in the cohort, those on the outside, like non-cohort students and faculty, may feel somewhat uncomfortable encountering this initially. Barnett and Muse (1993) and Hill (1995) found that students who were not in the cohort felt like they had a lower status than those within the cohort (as cited in Barnett et al., 2000). Issues of race and culture, if not addressed adequately, eat into the heart of a cohort contributing to the development of a cohort-within-a-cohort design. Two of the professors interviewed discussed this challenge. Cohorts generally spend a few years together going through coursework. When the group is diverse, there tends to be a longer time taken to develop a group culture (Toseland & Rivas, 1998). Therefore, the CEM is ideal for diverse student population. However, if the issues of diversity are not addressed, hostilities can simmer below the surface creating larger problems.
later on. Wesson et al. (1996) recommends professors to include creating life maps, the use of personal reflections, and exploration of social class via use of autobiography or biography and other methods.

One of the professors expressed concern that many faculty are not aware that they may lack knowledge or experience in addressing cultural diversity. Another faculty member felt that in general, not by any mal-intent but by sheer ignorance, faculty might perpetuate institutional racism due to their ignorance on the matter. Dr. P and Dr. Z shared concerns about the need to develop cultural competence with faculty in higher education. Dr. P offered this perspective:

So, I think it’s just something that we don’t really address in terms of faculty development because it’s so touchy. I think people are just not there yet. And I think it will have to come from administration, we are all starting an examination of where we are in terms of cultural competence whether you’re an expert, or whether you’re a novice; we are all going to go through this as a faculty because it’s important.

Dr. Z spoke about the self-segregation of colleges in the university and the attitudes towards cultural competence, when expressing this perspective:

It’s almost like if you don’t know that you are not inter-culturally competent, you aren’t going to try to become culturally competent. If you don’t know what you don’t know, you have to have somebody tell you; you have to have a confrontation; you have to have, kind of, even a transformational experience.

**Results**

Professors discussed the cohort as an entity, recognizing a collective voice. They also noted a powerful presence when they had a cohort in their classes. Recognition of the strength of relationships that are built in cohorts mirrors what has been revealed in the research. Interviewees revealed that they too had experienced some of the same closeness and strong relationships both in and outside of class with the cohorts in which they studied.

Complexities of the CEM for students and professors were characterized by Dr. P who stated that she and students outside of the cohort often initially felt like an outsider in the presence of the cohort. She qualified her statement saying that in the case of the professor, there was a power differential since the professor gave the final grade. Additionally, she stated that the professor can set a tone in the classroom and encourage discussions that enhance relationship building. However, in the case of the student, they are at the mercy of the professor and the cohort to make them feel welcome in the class.

Diversity issues were mentioned by two of the three professors. Both of these professors commented that many faculty may not be aware of their limitations in accepting and facilitating tolerance among students because they themselves may inadvertently perpetuate cultural intolerance. Continued exclusion of certain groups in graduate schools increases student and faculty isolation and disillusionment with academia. This dynamic in the end contributes to the creation of a cohort-within-a-cohort based on race, class, culture, and socio-economic factors.

**Conclusions**

CEMs are strong mechanisms for supporting all types of students. These models make the lives of professors both easier and more difficult at times. Easier when it comes to tasks such as advising and course planning; harder when it comes to finding dissertation committees and servicing dichotomous groups of students.

Based on the literature review done for this mini-study, there appear to be sparse data on the perceptions of professors regarding the CEM. Additionally, there was very little mention of challenges facing both students and professors when it comes to addressing cultural diversity.
This study has helped shed a new light to CEM, one that has not received much attention but has a direct link to the success of CEM. It is important to continue this research by asking “What do professors perceive can be done to increase the success rate of CLD students in CEMs in graduate programs across the country?”

References


School Segregation, Educational Disparities, and Impacts on Haitian Youth in South Florida

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Abstract: This paper examines the ways in which the legacy of school segregation in South Florida has affected the education of Haitian students and continues to limit their prospects. The high schools that serve neighborhoods with concentrated Haitian populations achieve shockingly poor academic results, which negatively affect Haitian student academic achievement.

Haitian immigrants have high hopes for their children who grow up in the U.S. where public schools are available to all. They have a strong faith in education as the key to success in America. However, despite putting a high value on education, many Haitian students in South Florida are finding academic success to be an unattainable dream. Throughout its history education in Florida has been characterized by racial disparities, and this history of inequality affects the way Haitian immigrants and their children are being incorporated into American society today. The South Florida schools that serve the neighborhoods where most Haitians live are not providing the educational foundations necessary to make these dreams come true. In this paper, we demonstrate the effects of de facto school segregation and academic inequality on the children of Haitian immigrants.

The Academic Achievement of Haitian Students

In the widely-cited Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study (CILS) more than 5,000 students with immigrant parents in South Florida and southern California were surveyed at several points from eighth or ninth grade to early adulthood, in order to analyze the impact of various factors on academic success (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Portes and Rumbaut (2001) found a clear correlation between ethnic origin and academic achievement that persisted even when other variables were controlled. Among the groups studied, Haitian students were found to have some of the lowest GPAs and test scores. However, Haitian students and their parents share high aspirations and expectations for academic achievement, qualities that are generally associated with high-achieving groups. This presents a paradox that has not been well explained by existing theories.

Why do the children of Haitian immigrants demonstrate this ethnic disadvantage in academic achievement? Portes and Rumbaut (2001) have argued that these poor academic results are a result of “segmented assimilation” (p. 61). They suggest that the academic outcomes of Haitian students reflect adversarial attitudes toward education that develop as a consequence of assimilation into a black urban underclass. However, they do not resolve the conflict between this hypothesis and the very positive attitudes toward education evinced by Haitians in the CILS study.

Incorporating their many years of previous research among Miami Haitians, Stepick, Stepick, Eugene, Teed, and Labissiere (2001) undertook a further analysis of the CILS data. They concluded that the most important factor in the paradox of high aspirations and low academic performance of Haitian students was the negative “context of reception” experienced by Haitian immigrants (Stepick et al., 2001, p. 231). This refers to the unwelcoming environment.
faced by Haitian immigrants to the U.S. who suffered hostile government policies and a high level of racial and ethnic prejudice in the U.S. In addition, Haitians were disadvantaged by their low levels of parental education, and by speaking a language shared by no other group. These disadvantageous beginnings created an environment that contributed to intergenerational conflict and poor academic performance among the children of Haitian immigrants. Although many aspects of social disadvantage were noted in this analysis, none were linked directly to disparities in the schools. In this paper, we argue that school segregation in South Florida and its history of tolerating educational inequality are important characteristics of the context of reception that have not been adequately considered.

**School Segregation in South Florida**

Segregation has been a fundamental mechanism for inequality in the United States, particularly within the public school system. However, the 1954 Brown v Board of Education Supreme Court decision declared school segregation unconstitutional asserting that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (*Brown v. Board of Education Topeka*, 1954, p. 495). The decision of the Court made clear that the separation of students by race was in and of itself detrimental. Although we think of this as a part of American history, *de facto* school segregation continues to persist more than 50 years later (Borman et al., 2004; Orfield & Lee, 2005).

Following the *Brown* decision, many states vigorously resisted its requirements, especially in the American South. In Florida, politicians asserted segregation as part of Florida Law and continued to support the operation of a dual or racially segregated school system throughout the state. It was not until the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, that the southern region of United States began to experience significant rates of desegregation (Borman et al., 2004; Dunn, 1997; Moore, 2004). This act allowed the federal government to place schools under court-mandated order to desegregate and punish those that refused. In 1969, Miami-Dade was charged with operating a dual school system and was placed under court order to desegregate. Broward County Schools were similarly charged the following year.

When Haitian immigrants arrived in South Florida in the late 1970s, both Broward and Dade counties were struggling with the requirements of the Brown decision. Broward made progress under a desegregation plan and in 1979 was declared a unitary system and removed from court supervision. However, despite this progress toward integration, two decades after being declared desegregated, Broward County has the dubious distinction of making Florida one of the states with the largest increase in reverse desegregation. The county went from having nearly 90% of its high schools integrated in 1973 to less than 50% in 1994 (Boursiquot, 2003, p. 60-63). The desegregation efforts in Dade County have been largely ineffective (Moore, 2004).

Despite minimal progress in desegregating the schools, in 2001 Miami-Dade County schools were declared to be a unitary system, one that is not segregated. The court found that the district had complied with the court orders in the case and although the district was still highly segregated, it could not be held responsible for the residential segregation at the root of school segregation. This decision reflects current policy trends that seek to eliminate race-based remedies in favor of “race-neutral” voluntary projects to achieve equity in schools. As a result of this ruling, the county is no longer permitted to use race-conscious methods to resist re-segregation and continue its efforts to integrate its schools (Moore, 2004).

Haitian immigrants began to settle in South Florida in substantial numbers in the late 1970s. With scarce economic means, most settled in low-income areas near other Haitian immigrants or in African American neighborhoods. The largest Haitian populations in Florida
are found in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties where more than 150,000 persons of Haitian ancestry reside. Nearly 20,000 students of Haitian ancestry attend Miami-Dade and Broward high schools (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Haitian children began to enroll in local schools as they were still struggling to deal with racial segregation and desegregation policies. The impacts of the flood of immigrant students combined with the continued underperformance of the majority black schools in these counties created a very negative environment for the educational aspirations of Haitian immigrants and their children.

So how are the children of Haitian immigrants affected by segregation and inequality in South Florida public schools? In this study, we examine the racial composition and academic results of Miami-Dade and Broward high schools. We assess whether Haitian students are affected by de facto segregation in South Florida schools and if there is an academic disadvantage associated with the schools they attend.

**Methods**

To determine the relationship between racial mix and academic results in Miami-Dade and Broward County high schools, we first categorized them according to the percentage of Black students enrolled in each school. Charter schools and specialty or technical schools were excluded from the analysis, capturing 91% of the high school population. Each county was analyzed separately. Schools were divided into four categories adapted from those used by Orfield and Lee (2005), representing degrees of racial segregation. These categories included: intensely segregated non-Black schools (0-10% Black students), integrated schools (11-50% Black students), majority Black schools (51-90% Black students), and intensely segregated Black schools (91-100% Black students). We evaluated the standardized test scores and graduation rates for all schools in each category using math and reading FCAT scores and graduation rates obtained from the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE, 2005).

We then evaluated how these schools affect Haitian students. However, determining exactly how Haitian students are performing academically is not easy. School statistics are sorted by several racial and ethnic categories, such as White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American, making it difficult to get information for any particular nationality. In order to determine which South Florida high schools serve substantial populations of Haitian students, we employed a two-step process. First, families of Haitian ancestry were identified by census tract, using Census 2000 data. Next, we determined within which school boundaries the census tracts fell according to Miami-Dade and Broward county school boundary maps (Miami-Dade County Public Schools, 2007; Broward County Public Schools, 2004). Although this method cannot precisely indicate the population of Haitian students in any given high school, it does establish a reasonable proxy for schools that serve neighborhoods with high numbers of Haitian residents.

Academic achievement in these schools was assessed according to published results of math and reading scores on the 2005 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) and 2005 graduation rates (FLDOE, 2005). The FCAT is a standardized test of reading, writing, mathematics, and science. Each component is scored on a scale from 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest possible score and 1 being the lowest. A score of 3 or above is considered proficient at grade level and, since 2005, students must achieve this level on the 10th grade exam in order to attain a high school diploma. Level 1 is the lowest score a student can receive and it indicates gross deficiencies in math and reading. Our analysis focused on the percentages of students passing the FCAT (scoring level 3 and above) and those who achieved the very lowest scores (level 1).
A final component of our research, still in progress, includes interviews with students, parents, and school personnel associated with South Florida high schools that served concentrated Haitian neighborhoods from the 1980s until present. These interviews are intended to provide explanatory detail and to assess the human impact of our findings.

**Findings**

Patterns of school segregation differed between the two counties studied. Although in Broward 38% of the high schools were majority Black schools, none were intensely segregated (exceeding 90% Black). Four schools (15%) were intensely segregated non-Black schools, with Black students comprising 10% or less of the population. Miami-Dade demonstrated higher levels of extreme segregation. While a smaller percentage of schools were majority Black (29%), almost half of these schools were intensely segregated Black schools in which more than 90% of the students were Black. At the other extreme, one third of Miami-Dade high schools were intensely segregated non-Black (33%).

These patterns of racial segregation corresponded to disparate academic results (see Table 1). A marked decline in passing scores for both the math and reading FCAT is evident as the proportion of Black students increases in both counties. Similarly, majority Black schools have much higher percentages of students earning level 1, the lowest possible score, on the math and reading FCAT. Graduation rates also follow this pattern, declining as the percentage of Black students increases.

**Table 1**

*2004 – 2005 Academic Results by Degrees of Racial Segregation in South Florida High Schools*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Racial Segregation</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>%3+ Math</th>
<th>%3+ Read</th>
<th>%1 Math</th>
<th>%1 Read</th>
<th>Grad Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broward County</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-10% Black Schools (n = 4)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-50% Black Schools (n = 12)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-90% Black Schools (n = 10)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami-Dade County</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-10% Black Schools (n = 8)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-50% Black Schools (n = 9)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-90% Black Schools (n = 4)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91-100% Black Schools (n = 3)</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly two thirds of all Broward County residents of Haitian ancestry are clustered in just 52 of Broward’s 278 census tracts. In Miami-Dade County, the census tracts with residents of Haitian ancestry are even more highly concentrated. Two thirds of Miami’s Haitian population is clustered in just 48 of the county’s 343 census tracts. Many of these neighborhoods lie along the I-95 corridor, which comprises largely Black neighborhoods throughout South Florida. The majority of these census tracts are served by four high schools in Broward and by five Miami high schools (see Table 2). All of these are majority black schools, and include the most highly segregated Black high schools in each county.
The academic achievement variables for these schools demonstrate the expected poor results, with one exception (see Table 2). Most of the schools fall far below the county averages for FCAT scores and graduation rates. However, North Miami Beach High School falls only a few percentage points below the county averages for FCAT results, and its graduation rate is equal to the county average. Interestingly, it has the most integrated student body (68% Black) of the high schools in Miami-Dade County that serve concentrated Haitian neighborhoods. In Broward County, Deerfield Beach High School is much more highly integrated (54% Black) than the other schools that serve most Haitian students, but in this case there is no corresponding academic advantage. Of special concern are the many students who score a 1 on the FCAT math and reading in the Broward and Miami-Dade county high schools serving concentrated Haitian neighborhoods (see Table 2).

Table 2  
South Florida High Schools Serving Concentrated Haitian Neighborhoods – 2004-2005  
Academic Results by School and County Averages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>Graduation Rate</th>
<th>FCAT 2005 Math 3 &amp; Above</th>
<th>FCAT 2005 Read 3 &amp; Above</th>
<th>FCAT 2005 Math Level 1</th>
<th>FCAT 2005 Read Level 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broward County</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyd Anderson</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deerfield Beach</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillard</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ely</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami-Dade County</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edison</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norland</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Miami Beach</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Miami</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion

Haitian students are subject to a great degree to the academic disadvantages of racially segregated schools. These negative effects are evident in the poor standardized test scores and graduation rates for these schools. These scores portend very poor outcomes for these students. Most striking are the high percentages of students scoring 1 on reading. Between the two counties, all of these schools have more than half of their students scoring the lowest possible score on the reading portion of the FCAT. This is particularly indicative of the limitations that a great majority of these students must face in all their courses. A student who cannot read well can never be comfortable or successful in the school environment. Although the math scores are not as low as the reading, in each of these schools close to 50% or more of the students fail to achieve acceptable scores in math.

Most striking of all these results are those from Miami Edison High School, which serves the area of Miami known as “Little Haiti.” This school represents the intersection of intense
Black segregation and high levels of poverty. The expected level of math proficiency was not achieved by 84% of students, with 48% of students scoring the lowest possible score on the FCAT math. Even more stunning, only 1% of the students achieved the expected level of reading proficiency, with 82% of students scoring a level 1 on the reading, illustrating the inability of this school to educate its students with the most basic knowledge of reading and math.

Students must receive a level 3 or higher on the FCAT to graduate. However, with so many students scoring a level 1 in reading, it is no surprise that all of these schools have close to 40% or more of their students not receiving a high school diploma. And once again Miami Edison, which serves Little Haiti, has the poorest results, graduating only 28% of its students. These low graduation rates suggest that a high number of students are completing 12 years of schooling without receiving a high school diploma, ultimately leaving them with few options after high school.

**Consequences of Attending Underachieving Schools**

The findings presented above demonstrate a relationship between the racial composition of South Florida high schools and academic results that affects many Haitian students. However, these statistics cannot explain why this relationship exists. In an on-going phase of our research, several themes have emerged in interviews with students, parents, and school personnel that reflect on the learning environments of these schools. Areas of concern include school violence, restricted access to textbooks, and low teacher expectations. But most compelling are the stories of the students whose dreams for a good education have slipped away.

Unfortunately, there are many cases of students who achieve passing grades but who do not receive a diploma because they are unable to pass the FCAT. One such student is Sherley (a pseudonym used to maintain confidentiality). Her parents are from Haiti, but she was born in Florida. She attended Deerfield Beach High School and had a 3.5 grade point average at the end of her senior year. She was polite to her teachers and always did her homework assignments. However, her vocabulary was quite limited; her grammar was poor, and consequently she struggled with reading comprehension and written responses. Upon graduation, she received only a Certificate of Completion instead of a high school diploma. She was unable to continue on to college as she had planned to do. Worse yet, she will likely struggle throughout her life because her 12 years of education did not provide her with the level of reading comprehension she will need.

The astonishingly poor academic results represented by the test scores of the schools that serve South Florida’s concentrated Haitian neighborhoods demonstrate serious educational deficiencies in these schools. Although some argue that these poor academic results reflect a lack of interest in education of individual students and their parents, this is just not plausible. While some students do develop a negative attitude toward school, it is often simply a defense mechanism to hide their sense of failure (Nicholas, 2008). The results of the FCAT exams demonstrate that far too many students cannot read as well as they should, not only in majority black schools, but throughout the Miami-Dade and Broward school systems with the majority black schools performing much worse.

Our analysis, like a similar study by Borman and her coauthors (2004) of Florida public schools, has shown that the racial composition of a school and the school’s segregation status are closely associated with the percentage of students passing the FCAT (2004). Race does still matter. These poor test results indicate that African Americans and Black immigrants are disproportionately affected by high stakes testing in Florida. Lacking the skills to meet the
testing standards required for a high school diploma, many students are completing the 12 years of schooling and entering the job market without this essential certification.

Current policy both within the state of Florida and nationally has shifted away from the intent of the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. The focus no longer is to create racially balanced schools so that all children can learn but to increase the accountability within U.S. schools as they are. Instead of continuing the battle initiated by the *Brown* decision, national education policy seems to accept that separate can be equal.

Haitian immigrants and their American-born children are concentrated to a large extent in some of the schools with the lowest levels of achievement in South Florida. Although they have high aspirations and expectations for education in the U.S., the high schools they attend leave many students unprepared to fulfill their dreams.

**References**


“Half Bricks and Half Clicks”: Is Blended Onsite and Online Teaching and Learning the Best of Both Worlds?

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Abstract: Blended learning, or combined onsite and online learning, is increasingly popular in higher education. This literature review investigated its effectiveness compared to traditional teaching and learning, concluding that with retention and achievement, blended learning is similar or slightly better; with interaction and satisfaction, blended teaching and learning are more effective.

The allure of online learning is understandable given the realities of life in the new millennium. Students are packed into classrooms and on campuses meant to accommodate far fewer. Over 19 million students are expected in 2015 in degree-granting U.S. institutions of higher education, an increase of 2 million over current levels (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Of the top 30 degree-granting postsecondary institutions with the highest enrollments, 6 are in Florida (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Mid-career adults are returning to school; in 2014, over 3 million students age 35 and over are projected (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). Online learning is particularly attractive to these students, burdened with competing priorities of work, family, and school. For the 87% of students who commute to their schools (National Clearinghouse of Commuter Programs, 1999), the time in cars on crowded roads, the escalating cost of gas, and the burden of cars on the environment become a disincentive to drive to class. Even younger students, “digital natives” (Prensky, 2001, p. 1), make natural online learners; undergraduates average 15 hours weekly on the Internet; 90% access the Internet daily and have had over 8 years of experience with computers (Educause, 2003).

Aside from demand for postsecondary education, online learning has grown in size and scope due to the convenience of learning on demand—needing little more than an Internet connection—along with more effective delivery methods (Gallagher & Newman, 2002). Online education transcends constraints of time, location, and travel, allowing for flexibility and control among instructors and learners. Businesses, corporate trainers, and the military have hitched themselves onto the online bandwagon. In a survey of adults, 74% confirmed interest in online courses due primarily to their reputation for convenience of self-paced learning (Epstein, 2006). Over half of the leaders in higher education rate online learning as essential in their long-term strategies; quality of online programs is perceived as equal to or better than onsite programs (Allen & Seaman, 2004). About 56% of postsecondary institutions offer online education to over 3 million students (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). An expected 40% per year increase in fully online students will result in billions in tuition revenues (Gallagher & Newman, 2002).

But learning exclusively online has its drawbacks. The dropout rate of online learners exceeds the already high dropout rate of onsite learners. Of students who begin online courses, 50% do not finish due to lack of support and problems inherent in online learning (Jones, 2006). Successful online learners must exhibit elevated levels of independence and accountability; less successful online learners feel overwhelmed and isolated in self-directed courses (Howland & Moore, 2002). Credibility and legitimacy of online degrees are a concern (Epstein, 2006), as acceptance in the workplace of degrees earned online remains a goal. For-profit institutions work openly to separate themselves from the tag “digital diploma mills” (Noble, 1997, p. 1). A Nielsen, S. M. (2008). “Half bricks and half clicks”: Is blended onsite and online teaching and learning the best of both worlds? In M. S. Plakhotnik & S. M. Nielsen (Eds.), Proceedings of the Seventh Annual College of Education Research Conference: Urban and International Education Section (pp. 105-110). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/
National Education Association (2000) faculty survey found that online teaching was perceived as less effective in developing problem-solving skills, student interactivity, oral presentations, and verbal skills than onsite teaching. Very problematic is the lack of class interaction inherent in online instruction (Picciano, 2006) for instructors who never meet their students. The relationship between faculty as mentors and students as scholars can be compromised (Young, 2002).

Between traditional onsite and online learning is *hybrid* or *blended* learning. Blended *learning* is defined as teaching and learning that “combine face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction” (Graham, 2006, p. 5). Blended is emphasized over hybrid because it conveys the balance and harmony associated with blended (Osguthorpe & Graham, 2003). Online learning may be synchronous, with learning occurring in real time, as with Web seminars, or asynchronous, with self-paced learning, as with discussion forums. Learning online involves more than one instructional method, such as group instruction, self-paced instruction, simulations, lecturing, and coaching (Reynolds & Greiner, 2006).

Course management systems including WebCT and Blackboard are used. The “half bricks and half clicks” (Bleed, 2001, p. 18) label for time spent in brick-and-mortar buildings compared to time spent clicking on the computer may not refer to an equal split. The following breakdown of terms and online time has been developed: *traditional* courses, 0% of course time; *Web facilitated* courses, with Web-based technology assisting an onsite class, 1—29% of course time; *blended/hybrid* courses, merging onsite meetings with online content, 30—79% of course time; and *online* courses, with little or no onsite meetings, 80% or more of course time (Allen & Seaman, 2004).

The purpose of this research was to investigate blended learning in higher education. Specifically, two questions guided this research: (a) How effective is blended learning in higher education? (b) How does it compare to traditional onsite courses?

### Method

A search of relevant literature in ProQuest, including ERIC, and CQ Researcher based on keywords hybrid learning, blended learning, and higher education was performed in November 2007. Citations and document texts were scanned. Abstracts were reviewed and chosen if articles contained authors’ empirical research, either qualitative, quantitative, or both. Articles were discarded if they contained merely descriptive or anecdotal information, centered on workplace rather than educational settings, or claimed to contain information on blended courses yet were simply Web-facilitated. A manual search of Bonk and Graham (2006) resulted in five relevant chapters. Four major areas emerged from this review of research.

### Results

This section consists of the results of the review regarding the two research questions. Four areas of research emerged: (a) retention, or students’ ability to persist in courses; (b) interaction, or the active communication and engagement between and among faculty and students; (c) satisfaction, or the degree to which courses met students’ and instructors’ needs and expectations; and (d) achievement, or learning outcomes related to grades, scores, or skills.

#### Retention

Retention of traditional students in higher education depends on the type of institution and the definitions applied, with dropouts averaging 40-45%; for online students, the dropout rate is estimated to be 10-20% higher (Tyler-Smith, 2006). Blended courses thus far have enjoyed greater success in this area, with better or similar dropout rates to comparable onsite courses. At one university, the withdrawal rate was 4.3% for blended courses and 4% for comparable on-site courses depending on the discipline; students who withdrew reported problems with technology, a gap between their low expectations of course workload and the
realities, and personal challenges (Dziuban, Hartman, Juge, Moskal, & Song, 2006). Withdrawal was 6% for students taking a blended course; the ability to complete work at their own pace, peer and instructor interaction, and mentoring were reasons cited for the low dropout rate (Singh & Reed, 2001). Withdrawal rates were slightly lower for a blended course (4%) compared to a traditional one (6%); the low dropout rate was speculated to result from high levels of engagement between students and the instructor, who assisted with technical problems and communicated informally online (Hensley, 2005). At another university, students dropping the blended courses feared technology or course workload (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002).

**Interaction**

Essential to the learning process is the student/student and student/teacher interaction, and building this community of learners is more challenging in online courses (Vesely, Bloom, & Sherlock, 2007). But students in blended courses felt interaction was better than in traditional courses (Riffell & Sibley, 2003). Students who feel silenced in onsite class discussions are more apt to contribute online (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002). Seeking help can be a determining factor in successful learning; help is available virtually around the clock from the instructor and classmates (Kumrow, 2007). Furthermore, through their experiences in the blended course, students better understand the significance of managing their time, cultivating their study environment, regulating their effort, seeking appropriate support, and learning from classmates (Kumrow, 2007). Students reported that their online interaction with classmates greatly assisted in comprehension of course materials; central to how they felt about blended learning was the quality and quantity of student and faculty interaction (Owston, Garrison, & Cook, 2006). In blended courses, students are often required to engage actively by reading and responding to discussion forum postings that become a permanent record of their participation and learning, rather than passively attending classes. Perceptions of interaction from faculty are also positive for blended courses. Faculty renovate their teaching methods by placing onsite lectures online and adding supplementary activities to aid student learning (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002). Blended teaching and learning transforms education from “a command and control structure to a connect and collaborate environment” (Moskal, Dziuban, Upchurch, Hartman, & Truman, 2006, ¶12) that is more student-centered than faculty-controlled. For faculty, the quality and quantity of interaction is better in blended courses (Dziuban et al., 2006; Owston et al., 2006).

**Satisfaction**

Support for blended learning is overwhelming. Just one study noted no difference in the overall learning experience for those taking courses online, onsite, or in a blended format (Banks, 2004). In all other studies, students are satisfied or more satisfied with blended courses, citing convenience and flexibility as reasons for their popularity. Of their blended learning experience, 86% of students in one study were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” (Dziuban et al., 2006, p. 203). Only 13% of students would consider an exclusively online course after their blended learning experience; over two-thirds reported it was more effective than a comparative onsite class (Hall, 2006). Over two-thirds of students in blended learning courses appreciated the ability to control their learning pace and time; 80% would recommend a similar course (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002). Satisfaction is higher due to better learning support, suggesting the importance of emotional engagement in student satisfaction (Lim, Morris, & Kupritz, 2006).

Both students and faculty report that online activities encourage critical thinking and foster flexibility and freedom (Owston et al., 2006). Faculty report great satisfaction—80% in one study—particularly regarding increased convenience, improved connection to students, better course management, and enhanced knowledge of technologies (Dziuban et al., 2006). As
courses become more learner-centered, faculty are empowered to use new methods, increase efficiency and organization, and encourage student participation (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002). Though planning and technical preparation is more time-intensive for blended courses, faculty expand their teaching repertoire with new activities and methods (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002).

Achievement

Student achievement in two studies is reported to be equal: acquisition of knowledge and pre- and post-test learning of course material were the same for working adults in online, onsite, and blended formats (Banks, 2004), and overall learning and applying learning was identical for students in blended and online courses; however, online learners left less supported and engaged and experienced more roadblocks to learning (Lim et al., 2006). Equal grades were earned in another study: 93.3% of students earned grades of “C” or higher in blended classes, equal to the 93.3% in traditional courses though higher than the 92% earned in online courses (Dziuban et al., 2006). With all other studies, achievement was higher. With Web technology and small onsite learning groups, students scored higher on a final exam than their onsite counterparts, along with a positive attitude about their experience (Taradi, Taradi, Radic, & Pokrajac, 2005). Students using online discussions and studying onsite performed as well or better at several measures of learning (Webb, Gill, & Poe, 2005). Compared to a traditional onsite course, students in blended learning courses earn higher (Tuckman, 2002) or significantly higher (Kumrow, 2007) course grades. Students and faculty felt that learning increased in a blended compared to a traditional course (Owston et al., 2006), as they “wrote better papers, performed better on exams, produced higher quality projects, and were capable of more meaningful discussions” (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002, ¶ 8). Students in a blended learning class scored 10-12% higher in projects than students in an onsite class, as determined in a blind review process (Martyn, 2003). Students improve their ability to apply theory to practice in blended learning courses (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002) and had higher attendance rates compared to those in traditional classes (Riffell & Sibley, 2004). Courses also become more writing-intensive due to required online assignments (Sands, 2002).

Discussion

This literature review supports the statement that regarding retention and achievement, blended learning is similar or slightly better than traditional onsite learning. With interaction and satisfaction, blended teaching and learning are more effective.

Retention and achievement of students in courses benefits everyone; dropping out or doing poorly negatively affects institutions and society aside from students. So it is noteworthy that retention and achievement are the same or slightly better in blended courses. All cited studies on retention are about four-year universities with competitive entrance requirements; research is lacking for community colleges and for-profit institutions with open-enrollment entrance requirements other than high school diplomas and basic skills. This academically underprepared population is substantial: remedial courses in reading, writing, or mathematics are offered at 76% of postsecondary institutions and serve 28% of incoming freshmen, 13% of them through online education (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). These students typically have lower retention and achievement rates; they may fare differently in blended environments.

The finding that interaction is better in blended environments is remarkable: considering that onsite time is reduced, it follows that interaction would be negatively affected. If knowledge is socially constructed and learning occurs optimally with assistance from peers and more knowledgeable others (Vygotsky, 1978), then online learning appears to limit knowledge construction. Importantly, individual assistance from experts is needed for novice learners to function unassisted (Vygotsky, 1978); online, this assistance is physically absent. With blended
instruction, however, students engage with faculty and peers in physical and virtual modes using written and verbal functions; assistance in class onsite could extend for days online. Blended learning combines the onsite opportunity for presentations and in-depth discussions with the online possibility of the same, in written or verbal format. The combination also benefits shy students or second language learners who feel inhibited in expressing ideas in class; online, without a face or voice that others can scrutinize or dismiss, the playing field becomes leveled. The popularity of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace underscores the notion that sustained interaction can occur without the benefit of bricks and mortar.

The finding that satisfaction among students and faculty is better in a blended format is not so striking: with far greater convenience and control than in traditional courses, many students and faculty would be satisfied, especially when learning outcomes are comparable. Both Wisconsin (Garnham & Kaleta, 2002) and Central Florida (Dziuban et al., 2006) have broad support systems for technical issues and encouragement from peers and administrators, so it is no surprise that faculty have been sold; both schools point to support infrastructure as critical in their success. Research on faculty working in isolation may show otherwise.

Conclusions and Implications

The future of online education is blended learning (Bonk, Kim, & Zeng, 2006). Most companies use some form of blended learning, but most postsecondary institutions do not; however, both are predicted to double their offerings (Bonk et al., 2006). This is significant, as institutions must better prepare students to learn using pedagogical methods such as active learning, problem solving, and collaboration that parallel their future workplaces (Bonk et al., 2006). Given research concluding that blended learning is equal to or better than traditional learning in four areas, educators should take steps to support this learning at their schools; otherwise, students may seek their education elsewhere.

References


Moving to the Front of the Classroom: English Graduate Students as Composition Instructors

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Abstract: This phenomenological study explores how graduate students in an English department perceive their new roles as writing teachers. The findings show that even though the participants went through the same professional development program, they constructed different teacher identities based on their other identities and their experiences as students and writers.

In university English departments, teaching assistantships are very common among students in MA, MFA, and Ph.D. programs who teach the required freshmen composition courses as part of their graduate program or fellowship requirements. Since most teaching assistants (TAs) have little or no classroom teaching experience, English departments provide some kind of professional development in the form of workshops, a course, or a practicum. These new teachers develop their teacher identities relying heavily on their experiences as students and members of the discourse community of their majors.

The goal of this study was to understand how TAs construct their new identities as composition instructors. My interest in this subject comes from my experiences as an English TA and eventual faculty member, during which time I struggled with the construction of my multiple identities within academia. Therefore, my primary research question was: “What are new TAs’ perceptions about their roles as composition instructors?”

Theoretical Framework

As humans, we continuously construct and re-construct our identities to fit our different social contexts. Gee (1989, 1996) names these identities Discourses (with a capital D) and defines them as identity kits that are equipped with ways of speaking, acting, dressing, and writing, as well as with a set of values and beliefs associated with the social context. Our first or primary Discourse is the one constructed in the home during our first years of life. As we move in and out of different social contexts, we construct other identities or secondary Discourses from our primary Discourses and our other secondary Discourses. Therefore, these multiple identities are tied to each other and scaffold the identity construction experience with each new social context. Composition TAs develop a secondary Discourse grounded in their disciplines within the field of English, and later construct another secondary Discourse or identity kit tied to composition instruction with certain ways of acting, speaking, and dressing as well as with certain values and beliefs.

Method

This phenomenological study “focuses on the essence or structure of an experience” (Merriam, 2002, p. 7). I used an interpretative constructionist approach with a focus on “how people view an object or event and the meaning that they attribute to it” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 27). I interviewed each participant for 60-95 minutes using a semi-structured interview approach with main questions to allow for comparable data across all four participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This format allowed my participants to become conversational partners with more active roles in our discussions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).


http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/
The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded by (a) doing open coding to find emerging themes and (b) developing a coding map with themes and codes for all the data. The transcripts were shared with my participants for feedback. The transcripts and coding map were shared with colleagues who compared their analysis to my own during the peer review process.

The participants for this study were graduate students in the English department of a large four-year university and classified as TAs. The university was selected because it was convenient and accessible for the timeframe of the study; convenience sampling was used for obtaining the four participants because their contact information was available on the department’s website. I emailed an official recruitment letter to all of the TAs in the graduate English program. Four of them agreed to participate and were interviewed at the end of the fall 2006 semester.

Jeffrey, an older second-year graduate student, retired from advertising and went back to school for a bachelor’s and then a master’s degree in English literature to teach writing part-time. The second participant, PC, was 30 years old and in his first year of graduate studies. Having previously dropped out of college, he later returned to the university because he wanted to get a Ph.D in literature. Elizabeth, the third participant, was a writer from the north who relocated to attend the MFA program. She is the daughter of immigrant parents and got her bachelor’s degree in French. Johana, the fourth participant, was a second-year graduate student in the MFA poetry program, and, at 24, the youngest participant in the study. After majoring in psychology, she ended up completing her undergraduate degree in English at a large university in the northeast.

Findings: Constructing a New Identity

Even though all four participants came from completely different backgrounds, several themes emerged out of the interview data centered on the construction of their new identities as composition instructors. These themes revealed English TAs could not move up to the front of the classroom without constructing a new identity. In this section, the findings are organized around these themes of teacher identity construction in the composition classroom.

TAs as Undergraduate Students

Our teacher identities are connected to our other identities and our experiences as students. PC already had decided what type of teacher identity he wanted to construct for himself based on his experiences with certain literature professors when he was an undergraduate student. However, PC did not see all his learning experiences as positive, and perhaps some of those negative experiences helped him decide what type of teacher he wanted and did not want to be. He explained that he had some horrible English teachers, but the texts that were used in those classes were his motivation in school. Therefore, even when literature was not part of the curriculum, as an instructor, he brought a lot of poetry to his classes for discussion.

Elizabeth drew upon her experiences as a writing student when describing the type of teacher she was trying to become or the teacher identity she was still constructing. She stated:

I’ve had many excellent teachers. If anything I just try to remember how they handle a classroom. I had one writing teacher who would kind of start a discussion, get a discussion going, and then he would always pull back and circulate around the periphery of the room. And he would always want us to talk to each other. So eventually it would be like students just talking to each other and he would interject sporadically... So I like to do a lot of discussions.

She relied on these student experiences when making decisions about classroom management, instructional strategies (discussion), and identity projection (excitement about writing).

Johana looked back at her undergraduate years as a psychology major, drawing on her experiences with those writing instructors who inspired her to go into creative writing.
My goal is to become what my graduate student teachers were in undergraduate…. I had these really impassioned writers who were so excited about what they were teaching us….I was very surprised when I was like, "Wow. I love this stuff." And that they could do that….I want to be able to do that. I want to be that person jumping up and down about a poem and getting other people to just know what's out there. So that was definitely a big inspiration for me.

Like Johana, all the participants drew upon their experiences as students from either the student perspective or the teacher perspective to inform their practices and their teacher identities.

_TAs as Writers_

All four participants touched upon their experiences as writers during the interview and made connections to their teacher identities. Jeffrey recognized how his experiences as a writer in the advertising agency developed his notions of writing and how he brought those notions into the classroom. He explained that, "It's in my language and I'm protective….I have my own standards that I look for, which is one of my major problems in teaching composition." Jeffrey was very protective of his formal, standardized language, which was part of his teacherly persona and a source of conflict in his teacher identity construction within the workshop teaching model.

With the MFA students, writing was a central part of their identities as students and teachers. Johana’s love of poetry and dislike of essay writing affected her approach to teaching composition. As a teacher, she developed her course based on her dislike of essay writing, which was a common sentiment among her students as well. Elizabeth also explicitly brought her writer identity into the classroom. She explained, "Writing is my life so if anything I try to bring that enthusiasm of it to them more than maybe someone who's not a writer. I want them to love writing or I want them to hate it less." Therefore, she is very honest about her intentions and methods with her students as well.

Jeffrey first saw writing as a solitary activity, but then changed his mind through reflection during his professional development in the graduate program. He explained that when they first started talking about the writing process in the pedagogy course, he thought it was all "BS." However, on reflection of his own writing in advertising, he realized that writing was both a solitary and community affair. He explained:

> I would have to do a lot of research...And then we would talk about the audience, the reader if you will... And there'll be discussion back and forth. So what I did, I never did on my own... At some point, I did lots of things on my own. I had a problem so I would brainstorm with myself...And then suddenly...something pops...and then you write and you rewrite....And then you have somebody who's a graphic artist....there's this give and take between the artist and the writer... So the writer is never alone.... and then you test it out against other people because you talk about it and discuss....It's this whole process...of community, of feedback, of interaction, of relationship.

As he taught, he reflected on his experiences as a writer and adjusted his course, leading him to reflect on new aspects of his writer identity in a cyclical relationship of identity construction.

_TAs as Composition Theorists_

The participants entered their teaching assistantships with their own theoretical foundations whether implicit or explicit for them. All participants underwent the same professional development program under the same leader yet moved up to the front of the classroom with variations even on notions such as rhetoric, which they all saw as the main goal of the composition classroom but defined and implemented differently.
Composition theory is also about the general approach to the teaching of writing. Elizabeth approached the writing curriculum by making it relevant to her students. She taught writing as a means of empowerment for her students and, therefore, made the curriculum as relevant to her students' lives as possible to show how it was a part of our everyday lives.

Jeffrey also entered the classroom with the theory of relevance, which organized his entire approach to teaching the composition course. He gave an example of helping a theater student find relevance in his classroom. Since she was interested in the business side of theater, he explained that at some point she would need to write letters, requesting funding, and if she didn't know how to write a decent argument, she would never persuade anyone to fund her projects. Relevance was a priority for Jeffrey and a goal he had for each of his students.

As part of their theoretical grounding, all four participants had their own beliefs of the role of literature in the writing curriculum regardless of the institution's policies. Some of the participants placed a boundary between literature and writing, seeing the composition classroom as more of a rhetorical realm than a literary one. Johana recognized this boundary when describing how the composition courses should, "go away from the heavy literature emphasis because it just wasn't practical...because students were struggling so much with the reading material that they couldn't actually get to the point where they could write anything." For Johana, the heavy literature emphasis was an impediment for the writing students.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, constructed her teacher identity around the relationship between reading and writing. She commented, "You can't become a better writer without reading. I believe the more you read, intuitively you become a better writer." PC, for similar reasons, felt that there was a need for the integration of literature and writing because then students could see the rhetorical devices writers use.

Besides having a clear theory on the role of literature in the writing classroom, each participant had a clear theory on issues surrounding language. Being a college-level composition instructor, Jeffrey expressed that students need to be at a certain language level because he was not teaching language, but writing:

This is not an English course. This is not a course of literature. This is a course in rhetoric and composition. And it's college level. It's not a remedial anything. It's not a grammar course. You're expected to bring a certain level of saline language to it.

He was very aware of the language issues present in his class, and he tapped into his language abilities as a younger student to construct this theoretical aspect of his teacher identity, hoping to have students at least meet his abilities at their age.

PC believed that part of the language issue among students came from a lack of literature in the curriculum. He believed that:

It's like they don't understand... I did Robert Frost, By Design, and the first line was, "I saw a dimpled spider, fat and white." It's a difficult poem, and I was like, "Look. You know guys, I know it's a difficult poem, but we're going to break it down. Let's look at the first line. 'I saw a dimpled spider, fat and white.' What's he saying?" I got blank stares...So just throwing the language off to suit a rhyme scheme throws them off.

PC examined how reading and literature affected his students' language abilities. He explained that reading builds up vocabulary, and with the lack of reading, the issue was clearly vocabulary. Elizabeth echoed this same idea when she insisted that reading in the writing classroom was essential for vocabulary development.

Beliefs about language issues are part of the theoretical base of composition instructors. PC was still deciding on this aspect of his identity as a composition instructor during the
interview. He struggled with a student paper that had good content but many grammatical errors. He was debating how to handle and grade such a paper, whether to give two grades (one for grammar and one for content) or just not grade grammar.

Elizabeth, who had already been a TA for nearly two years, had a more set approach to dealing with language issues in her classroom based on her students' abilities:

If it's punctuation or things like that, then I can mark them on the page, speak to them in conference. They'll get it. If it's more than that, I'll speak to them about it. I'll point it out, and usually I'll ask them to go to the learning center, and I'll have the tutor go over it with them and spend more time. But the thing is when those are things that they should have learned, I can't keep the whole class back by teaching a lesson on that. If it's something the whole class is affected by, then by all means I'll make a whole class out of it.

Having more experience teaching the writing course than the other participants might explain Elizabeth's confidence in dealing with language issues since she has spent more time actively constructing her writing teacher identity.

TAs Balancing Identities

As new teachers who have other roles to play, the TAs were all trying to negotiate their identities not just as teachers but, in more general terms, as human beings who take on multiple positions at a time. As Danielewicz (2001) explained in her study:

No one has only a single identity. Every person is composed of multiple, often conflicting identities, which exist in volatile states of construction or reconstruction, reformation or erosion, addition or expansion. The bottom line is that no matter what the context, we are continually engaged in becoming something or someone. (p. 10)

However, identity is a more complex topic for the MFA TAs who saw themselves as writers, students, and teachers all at the same time and who were struggling to balance these three positions. Johana stated, "This semester I just had a bit of a struggle balancing my own writing and my own classes with teaching." Later on in the interview, she clarified her struggle balancing her multiple identities. She stated:

I think often I put [my students'] concern above my education and I actually have had some good conversations with other TAs, and they're like, ‘Oh. You just care too much.’ But I felt that I haven't really. This year I have not been writing as much and as well as I thought that I was doing last year before I was teaching. And so it is just frustrating, and at one point I was even thinking maybe I should give up the fellowship because the reason I am here is to be a writing student first and work on this book.

Balancing multiple identities was probably most difficult for Johana, but it was still an active process for all four participants.

Elizabeth, on the other hand, did not see these roles as being polarized based on her relationship as a student with her teachers and her knowledge of writers who have taken on the role of instructor in the past. To explain this phenomenon of identity, she explained that in the graduate program there was no gap between teachers and students because they were all writers at different levels and most writers teach at some point. This reasoning allowed Elizabeth to see her students as novice writers in the classroom.

Discussion and Conclusions

The concept of teacher training has been used in many institutions when referring to the preparation of people for the role of teaching. However, the notion of training implies that teaching can be taught to anyone like a set of skills taught in a workshop to a new employee on
the assembly line. Thinking of teacher preparation as the training of educators places the pedagogy of departments within the realm of the banking concept of teaching and learning that Freire (2005) tried to counteract. If we believe in the banking concept of education, then the construction of a teacher identity could be viewed as a passive act.

However, the findings of this study showed that unlike what the notion of training might emphasize, people preparing to become teachers are not empty vessels in need of filling with skills even though they participated in the same professional development program with the same leader. These participants all struggled with the construction of a new identity for themselves—a teacher identity. They revealed they are not only constructing and revising their new identities as composition instructors but also balancing that identity with other ones.

These participants came into the field of composition with knowledge based on their experiences as students and writers. Their different life experiences and ensuing secondary Discourses prior to moving up to the front of the classroom inform or contribute to the development of their teacher identity, through which they make classroom decisions. Some of these decisions might be about the goals of the course, classroom management, assignments, and grading. All these decisions are different for each participant based on each of their teacher identities regardless of having gone through the same professional development program.

The emerging idea from this study is that teacher professional development is mediated through people’s multiple experiences and identities to construct the teacher identity. Therefore, professional development of TAs should not exclude their life experiences and other identities or secondary Discourses. This curriculum should not just include but also make explicit these multiple identities and incorporate reflective practices before initial teaching.

**New Questions and Further Research**

Having started with a small pilot study, the next step is to increase the sample size and see how well the theory of primary and secondary Discourses holds within the framework of teacher identity construction. Future studies could look at the relationship among professional development, monitored reflective practices, and teacher identity construction or the effects that different types of professional development have on teacher dispositions and teacher identity construction. Future studies that employ various research approaches (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods) can enhance their contributions to the topic of teacher identity construction.

**References**


Geocentric Corporate Organizational Culture and Employee National Identity

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, the literature on geocentric organizational culture is reviewed; second, the dynamics between geocentric organizational culture and employee national identity is suggested as a necessary direction for HRD research.

Organizational culture has been viewed as the solution to all problems, “a victim of a fetish for ‘managing’” (Smircich, 1985, p. 56), or “a seductive promise for managers” (Martin, 2002, p. 8). As many companies go global, they change their markets, structure, processes, practices, and culture. Some global companies attempt to build a new type of corporate organizational culture – geocentric. This corporate organizational culture is based on values and beliefs that are “comprehensive and compelling” for all employees, regardless of their national origin, ethnic background, or professional experiences (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002, p. 299). Jacoby (1970) predicted that “geocentric companies [will] become numerous…and ethnocentric companies exceptional” (p. 54). A recent examination of human resource management practices in 11 major American-based multinational corporations (MNCs) showed a growth among geocentric and a decline of ethnocentric organizations (Washington, 2001). Yet, very little is known about geocentric organizations. Most business literature on geocentric organizations focuses on quantitative measures, such as global production, sales, consumption, or investment (Jones, 2005). Research on social and internal changes in organizational practices of these corporations, and particularly in organizational culture, is limited (Jones, 2005).

Organizational culture is facilitated and changed by human resource development (HRD) professionals. HRD is responsible for ensuring cohesion among an organization’s practices, policies, processes, and culture. Therefore, HRD professionals should lead the research on geocentric organizational culture and its applications to practice. The purpose of this paper is two-fold. First, the literature on organizational culture in general and geocentric one in particular is reviewed; second, the dynamics between geocentric organizational culture and employee national identity is suggested as a necessary direction for HRD research.

Development of the Organizational Culture Concept

Pettigrew’s (1979) work is considered the first publication on organizational culture in U.S. academic literature (Hofstede et al., 1990). He examined the birth and evolution of the organizational culture of a boarding school using social dramas as the research design to “discuss how purpose, commitment, and order are generated in an organization both through the feelings and actions of its founder and through the amalgam of beliefs, ideology, language, ritual and myth we collapse into the label of organizational culture” (p. 572). For Pettigrew, culture is “a source of a family of concepts,” such as symbol, language, ideology, belief, ritual, and myth (p. 574) which relates to organizational functioning (e.g., leadership, control, norms, purpose) and provides a system of meanings that gives people a sense of reality and direction for actions.

In the 1980s, Japan’s phenomenal success and the decrease in U.S. production moved researchers to re-examine knowledge of organizational management. Combined with a growing


http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/
interest in organizational culture, three bestsellers emerged. First, Ouchi (1981) studied the Japanese approach and its applicability to U.S. business, which he called Theory Z. “The organizational culture consists of a set of symbols, ceremonies, and myths that communicate underlying values and beliefs of that organization to its employees” (Ouchi, 1981, p. 41). Like any person, “an organization over time develops a distinctive personality” –culture (p. 132). Development starts with top managers who identify values and patterns of behavior, “instill” them “in employees by their own example and pass them down to succeeding generations of workers” (p. 195). Second, Peters and Waterman (1982) researched sixty-two U.S. businesses to identify characteristics of the best companies. Discovering that “in Japan organization and people…are synonymous,” they suggest that “treating people –not money, machines, or minds– as the natural resource may be the key to it all” (p. 39). They discuss culture in two ways: “companies…as distinctive cultures” (p. 102), and as values that are conveyed in stories, slogans, legends, and myths. Market-oriented culture appeared to be a characteristic of successful companies in which all employees understood their duties due to clear company policies and procedures. Third, though the term corporate culture was used by other researchers, it became popular after Deal and Kennedy’s (1982) book. Since culture affects all aspects of an organization, successful corporations carefully “build and nourish” their cultures (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 5), which include business environment, values, heroes, rites and rituals, and cultural network. A strong corporate culture represents “a powerful lever for guiding behavior” as it (a) provides clear rules for employee behavior and (b) creates a sense of belonging and pride which stimulate hard work (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p. 15). These early developments in organizational culture influenced subsequent research in management and organizational studies. As these three works turned into bestsellers, organizational culture became a frequent headline in popular business literature and a tool for businesses to increase their competitiveness in the global market (Denison, 1990). Organizational culture was considered responsible for the successes of Black & Decker, Johnson & Johnson, and Apple, for the downfalls of Sears, Bank of America, and General Motors (O’Reilly, 1989), and for failures of international mergers and acquisitions, for instance, of the German-American DaimlerChrysler in late 1998 (Kets De Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002).

Geocentric Corporate Organizational Culture

Globalization and the rise of multinational corporations (MNCs) brought more challenges to both researchers and practitioners who attempt to understand what corporate organizational culture should be to help increase organizational effectiveness. As some companies become global, they aim at building a new type of corporate culture-geocentric.

Why Geocentric Organizational Culture?

In the past two decades, MNCs have accumulated power to change the global economic, political, and cultural landscape. They are responsible for 40% of world manufacturing, including 85% of cars, 70% of computers, and 35% of toothpaste (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2000). The 500 largest MNCs are responsible for half of the world’s trade (Rugman, 2000). Although the top 200 MNCs employ only one percent of the global workforce, their revenues account for almost one third of world economic activity (Anderson & Cavanagh, 2000). During the past decade, the number of MNCs almost doubled and the number of their foreign affiliates has quadrupled (Kuper, 2004). The headquarters of the 430 largest MNCs are located in the U.S., European Union, and Japan (Rugman, 2000). Their operations can be located in several dozen countries, each with different national cultures. Many MNCs have been approaching cultural differences as barriers to fast company growth and, hence, choose to replicate their
organizational practices, including their corporate organizational culture, in host country subsidiaries (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2000). This home country-oriented approach, or ethnocentric orientation, leads to a global convergence of business practices and culture toward Anglo or American business models (Gupta & Wang, 2004) and “conveys [an] aura of corporate colonialism” (Begley & Boyd, 2003, p. 357). Negativity towards the ethnocentric orientation and anti-globalization feelings have made corporations address the question: “Can enterprise, which is a leading part of the problématique (political, economic, social and ecological), be also a leading part of the pragmatique, the set of practical constructive interventions that reduces future societal disorder?” (Perlmutter, 1984, p. 273).

Some MNCs have recognized the shortcomings of the ethnocentric orientation and have moved toward a global company with geocentric orientation (Perlmutter, 1984). Global companies attempt to be more pro-active in society by employing both profitability and public acceptance as criteria to measure their effectiveness and by establishing reciprocal relationships with other societal entities. They also seek new balances for independence and interdependence with others that would lead to win-win cooperation and to the creation of a more pluralistic global civilization. Geographic boundaries are “not barriers to potential products, business opportunities, and manufacturing locations” (Marquardt, 1999, p. 20).

**What is Geocentric Organizational Culture?**

Geographic boundaries are also irrelevant for global companies’ corporate organizational culture. These companies try to build geocentric, or “world oriented” (Marquardt, 1999, p. 20), organizational culture. Geocentric organizational culture “transcends cultural differences and established ‘beacons’—values and attitudes—that are comprehensive and compelling” for all employees, regardless of their national origin, ethnic background, or professional experience (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002, p. 299). These values, which are also expressed in the mission and vision of the organization, serve as a “common denominator of ethics practiced by its stakeholders, stockholders, managers, workers, and the international and local communities” (Mourdoukoutsas, 1999, p. 49). To build such a culture, companies use policies and practices that aim at “engendering cultural commonalities” (Jones, 2005, p. 190). Some of these companies distance themselves from any cultural or national origins to have “no national identity” (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2002, p. 298). A global company formerly known as British Petroleum has reduced its name to simply BP, which stands for Beyond Petroleum in one of its recent ads.

Kets De Vries and Florent-Treacy (2002) argue for the importance of leadership in building geocentric corporate culture. They researched values of top executives of global organizations and concluded that these leaders “establish a state of complementarity with the universal motivational need systems of their followers” (p. 296). This motivation system includes three ‘meta-values’: (a) community: leaders encourage support, commitment, and collaboration; (b) pleasure: leaders create a work environment where the employees enjoy working; and (c) meaning: leaders show employees their work improves others’ quality of life.

Tolbert, McLean, & Myers (2002) suggest that transforming organizational culture from ethnocentric to geocentric facilitates creation of a global learning organization, which should be “applicable across cultures…and globally inclusive in practice and theory at all levels” (p. 463). They suggest that such culture involves (a) leaders who actively build such a culture, (b) organizational policies and processes that ensure a global approach, (c) HRD practices that are “consistent with the organization’s global philosophy” (p. 465), and (d) organizational emphasis of cultural awareness.
Marquardt (1999) developed A Global Success Model to help HRD practitioners contribute in building a global organization. The organizational culture component integrates five dimensions: global vision, global mindset, global values, global activities, and globe-able heroes. Global vision, which is “borderless and multicultural” (Marquardt, 1999, p. 48), refers to a company’s goals and direction. Global mindset is the ability to transcend nation or culture, division or function, and balance local and global. Global values “provide purpose and meaning” for people’s actions (Marquardt, 1999, p. 49) and include such values as global thinking, cultural sensitivity, and empowered global people. Global activities refer to activities and events that foster global vision, global mindset, and global values. Globe-able heroes are members of organizations whose qualities are respected by others; organizations also implement activities, such as mentoring, training, and development, to develop future globe-able heroes.

**Geocentric Organizational Culture and Employee National Identity**

Most research on organizational corporate culture is conducted for “technical” reasons focusing on tools and strategies that enable management to achieve organizational goals (Alvesson, 2002, p. 10), and research on geocentric culture is no exception. One of the main criticisms of such a focus is the possibility that organizational culture becomes equated with the management ideology, while values, norms, and behaviors promoted by top management represent only one aspect of organizational culture (Alvesson, 2002, p. 46). This approach reinforces corporate culture as an ideology, “as an instrument for the universalization of managerial interests, the suppression of conflicting interests and the perpetuation of corporate and societal hegemony” (Ogbor, 2001, p. 591). Managing organizational culture serves as a tool to control non-rational behaviors, to coerce, to erase employee identity and substitute it with one desired by management, and to limit employee creativity and autonomy (Ogbor, 2001).

HRD professionals should assume leadership to guarantee that globalization focuses on individuals and their present and future needs (Marquardt, Berger, & Loan, 2005). Therefore, HRD professionals should be aware of positive and negative dynamics between geocentric corporate culture and employees, whether in managerial or non-managerial positions. The dynamics between geocentric organizational culture and employee national identity is one interesting area. In other words, what does it mean to be Irish, Brazilian, Lithuanian, or Korean and work for a corporation that attempts to build geocentric organizational culture regardless of national origins of employees or the corporation itself?

Creating geocentric organizational culture involves transforming each employee’s mindset, beliefs, and behaviors so that he/she could become a part of a global organization or “a world citizen in spite of having a national identity” (Marquardt, 1999, p. 47). National identity refers to “self-location in a group and … affect towards others in the group” (Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001, p. 74). National identity fosters love for homeland and its people, creates a sense of their uniqueness and distinctiveness and a feeling of belonging, and willingness to act in the interests of the group (Kelman, 2001). National identity cannot simply dissolve or be dropped (Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001).

National identity is one of many social identities of an individual. Social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). These evaluative (knowledge of one’s membership) and affective (value and significance of membership) aspects of a social identity reside within an individual; however, they emerge within a specific social context (Citrin, Wong, & Duff, 2001). The context, including “socio-cultural discourses, national myths, and intergroup relations,” is
socially constructed and constantly changing (Jussim, Ashmore, & Wilder, 2001, p. 6). The context shapes and reinforces ideas about a group’s beliefs, values, and uniqueness. Conversely, in a particular context an individual reevaluates the significance of his/her membership or the importance of a particular identity (Nkomo & Stewart, 2006). In the context of globalization, distance between cultures decreases and differences seem to blur, so people become more conscious about their cultural identities (Freedman, 1994). In organizations that undergo globalization, national identity becomes particularly relevant to employees’ social reality. National identity might constitute “an especially powerful and compelling symbolic resource for conveying boundaries and expressing communality within them” (Ailon-Souday & Kunda, 2003, p. 1090). Employees mobilize their national identities to express their uniqueness and reinforce their sense of belonging, to find alliances with others, and to use their national identity as a strategy to achieve goals.

Understanding the dynamics between geocentric organizational culture and employee national identity will provide insights into the links between individual-level dynamics (national identity) and organizational context (geocentric organizational culture). Understanding how individuals interpret and mobilize their national identities can help HRD professionals foster a connection between individuals and organization, and, hence, build organizational culture. This research will also help HRD professionals understand individual and group conflict and create interventions for their prevention or elimination.

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Adult Curiosity Dimensionality

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Abstract: The need to discern the dimensions of curiosity is compelling as researchers strive to understand better the developmental implications of learning. Six hundred and two participants completed 10 curiosity scales. Scores were factored using Principal Components Analysis and a varimax solution. A three-factor interpretation of the curiosity construct was supported.

Curiosity, which stands at the juncture of motivation and cognition (Loewenstein, 1994), is increasingly being regarded as one of the important facets of human behavior. The experiences gained through information seeking (curiosity) and exploratory behavior allow for normal patterns of cognitive development (Giambra, Camp, & Grodsky, 1992). Curiosity is an important element in the development of a psychologically healthy person, and the desire to satisfy one’s curiosity is one of the important factors motivating people to acquire new knowledge (Maslow, 1970). Curiosity and the exploratory behavior it elicits are vitally important because they help individuals flexibly adapt to changing environmental conditions and improve their problem solving skills (Voss & Keller, 1983). Moreover, the “disposition to be curious” is one of the seven essential contributors to good thinking (Perkins, Jay, & Tishman, 1993). Indeed, distinguished psychologists (Berlyne, 1960; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Fowler, 1965; Lepper & Hodell, 1989; Piaget, 1952; Vygotsky, 1986; & Woolfolk, 2001) all have viewed curiosity as one of the primary motivators and directors of the creation of knowledge, i.e., learning.

Definitional and Conceptual Issues

Two major research approaches have proven to be fertile ground for providing insights into the curiosity construct: a) taking a global research approach viewing curiosity as either an enduring personality trait or a temporary motivational state (Boyle, 1983, 1989); and (b) considering curiosity on a more fundamental level, where measures of curiosity are factor-analyzed and parsimonious factors identified to clarify the precise nature of the psychological construct. The latter approach was deemed most appropriate for the purposes of this study.

Dimensionality

Over the past several decades, researchers have developed numerous definitions and descriptions, together with a wide range of terms, to describe the psychological construct of curiosity. As they have done so, some have used the terms “sensation seeking,” “exploration,” “novelty seeking,” “play,” or “interest” interchangeably, while others have considered each of these to be quite separate constructs (Krietler & Krietler, 1994). Specifically, Olson and Camp (1984) considered curiosity to be unidimensional; Berlyne (1954; 1960), Day (1971), Langevin (1971), Ainley (1987), and Spielberger and Starr (1994) argued that curiosity has two dimensions. Others including Byman (1993) and Krietler and Krietler (1994) contended that curiosity is best thought of as having three or even five dimensions.

Regardless of the research approach they preferred, all of the scholars mentioned above favored investigating the information-seeking aspect of curiosity, which they characterized as a state of arousal induced by a lack of information, which motivates people to create knowledge. However, information seeking may not be the only kind of curiosity relevant to learning (Day, 1971; Spielberger & Starr, 1994; Zuckerman, 1979, 1994). Zuckerman (1979) for instance,
posited another kind of curiosity, sensation seeking (conceptually similar to Day’s [1971] “diversive” curiosity), which he defined as “the need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experience” (p. 10). Thus, the motivation for this type of curiosity is not necessarily for information and knowledge acquisition. Bjork-Akesson (1990) extended Zuckerman’s sensation-seeking personality construct to mean a broad preference for arousal and discovered that this type of curiosity increases the likelihood that individuals will have positive attitudes toward challenges, complexity in school settings, and working in small groups.

Factor-Analytic Investigations of Curiosity

Langevin (1976) re-examined his 1971 curiosity research conducted with 269 12-year-old Canadian children by studying what he considered to be an adult sample: 53 teacher education students and 30 hospitalized individuals. Although this second protocol is questionable with respect to both his subjects and his methodologies (e.g., inadequate sample size for factor-analytic work [Kline, 1993]), Langevin concluded that the two dimensions he previously found in his factor-analytic study of children’s curiosity (i.e., “breadth-of-interest” and “depth-of-interest”) were simply artifacts of the measurement forms he used.

Ainley (1987) followed Langevin’s research, correcting the problems associated with his study by using a much larger sample (Australian; primarily female). She also used self-report measurement instruments and what she considered to be “adults,” i.e., college students with a median age of 20 years. Ainley concluded that Langevin’s (1971) early work was supportable and that curiosity consists of two distinct dimensions or factors, breadth- and depth-of-interest. (Giambra et al., [1992] also supported using Ainley’s two-factor interpretation of curiosity for adults of any age because the two-factor interpretation facilitated clearer understanding when comparing different age groups.) Yet Byman (1993), taking a structural modeling approach, re-analyzed Ainley’s (1987) original data and argued for a third and perhaps a fourth curiosity factor. Clearly, more research is needed to clarify the dimensionality of the curiosity construct. This new information could lead to new measure development and subsequent research examining curiosity’s possible role in social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and spiritual development across the lifespan and for teaching and learning application.

The purpose of this study was to further investigate and clarify the dimensions of the curiosity construct. The hypotheses that guided this study were: (a) curiosity is a multidimensional construct, and (b) curiosity has four or fewer dimensions.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 255 males and 347 females, 17 to 64 years old (N = 602), from education classes at a large eastern US university (n = 369) and four businesses (n = 233). The overall sample was 85% Caucasian, 11% African American, 3% Asian, and 1% “other.”

Instrumentation

Four well-studied instruments with 10 subscales were selected from the curiosity measures reported in the literature for use in this study. The selected measures were in order: the Melbourne Curiosity Inventory (MCI; Naylor, 1981), the State-Trait Personality Inventory (STPI; Spielberger et al., 1980), the Sensation Seeking Scale (SSS; Zuckerman, 1979), and the Novelty Experiencing Scale (NES; Pearson, 1970). All of these measures are self-report, pencil-and-paper questionnaires, as recommended by Ainley (1987). Results of the study revealed that internal consistencies ranged between .69 and .88 for all but one of the subscales, the Experience
Seeking subscale of the Sensation Seeking Scale, which had an internal consistency of .49 (not investigated further in this study).

The Melbourne Curiosity Inventory has one 20-question state and one 20-question trait curiosity subscale, while the State-Trait Personality Inventory has 10-question state and trait curiosity subscales (the State-Trait Personality Inventory also has 10-question anger and anxiety subscales not used in this research); both the Melbourne Curiosity Inventory and State-Trait Personality Inventory are considered measures of information seeking, the cognitive type of curiosity. The Novelty Experiencing Scale, with its four 20-question subscales, includes two subscales representing cognitive curiosity (Internal and External Cognitive) and two subscales representing the sensation seeking type of curiosity (Internal and External Sensation). With sensation seeking, novel sensations and changing experiences are sought out more often merely for the experience. The Sensation Seeking Scale consists of four 10-question subscales measuring four dimensions of sensation seeking: Thrill-and-Adventure Seeking, Disinhibition, Boredom Susceptibility, and Experience Seeking. Thus, each of the measures is essentially a trait measure of curiosity.

**Procedure**

The selected curiosity measures, along with a demographic survey, were administered to all 369 participants in their respective education classes. The other 233 test batteries were administered at their places of work. Participation was voluntary, with complete anonymity assured. The purpose of the study was first explained; the measures were then distributed, with an average administration time of 35 minutes per individual. To reduce the risk of an order effect, the order of the instruments was altered at each site. Preliminary analysis of the curiosity scores from the four businesses indicated that the strength and direction of correlations were consistent by business, suggesting that there was not an order effect. Further evidence that there was not an order effect was ascertained by examining the patterns of correlations between four of the education classes as well. Again, the strength and direction of correlations between the research variables were consistent by education group.

**Data Analysis**

Sample size was determined by factor-analytic convention, which stipulates that there should be at least five, and preferably 10, cases per variable and a minimum sample size of 200 (Kline, 1993). As there were 10 variables and 602 participants in this study, this convention was comfortably followed. The two samples were analyzed for systematic differences (2 x 10 MANOVA) between the two groups (college students and working adults) by each of the curiosity variables. There was a significant multivariate main effect $F(10, 590) = 10.79, \ p < .001, \ \eta^2 = .16)$. ANOVAs with Scheffé post hoc analyses revealed that two of the variables were significantly different between the two groups (internal cognitive and boredom susceptibility), thus the results should be interpreted cautiously. A factor analysis by group and by gender produced very similar patterns of coefficients, with almost identical amounts of variance being explained. With these results in mind, Tabachnick and Fidell (1989) recommend combining the groups to increase sample size and statistical power. Thus, the student and adult worker groups were combined, but again the results should be interpreted appropriately.

**Results**

As endorsed by Olson and Camp (1984) and Ainley (1987), the scores from each curiosity subscale were entered as variables in an exploratory factor analysis. After an internal reliability analysis (Cronbach’s alpha) was performed and the correlation matrix for factorability was subsequently examined, a Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was rendered on all
variable scores of the 10 subscales, based on the matrix of their Pearson product-moment correlations. Using the Kaiser Criterion, where all factors with eigenvalues greater than one are retained and usually rotated for the final solution, only three factors were extracted. Recognizing that the Kaiser Criterion may over- or underestimate the number of factors (Kline, 1993), a scree test was used as a second criterion, and it indicated the need to retain three factors as well. As a general rule, after a PCA, an acceptable number of eigenvalues greater than one should be the number of variables divided by three and the number of variables divided by five (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989). Because there were 10 variables, two to four factors were predicted, and there were three. As was mentioned previously, the scree test called for the interpretation of three.

The eigenvalues of the three identified factors were 2.91, 2.32, and 1.14, accounting for 23.5 percent, 23.3 percent, and 16.8 percent of the total variance, respectively. Consequently, 63.6 percent of the total variance was explained by the three extracted factors.

Once the set of three factors was extracted from the correlation matrix by a PCA, they were rotated (varimax) to increase the interpretability of the factor solution. The varimax rotation is considered to be “THE orthogonal procedure” (Gorsuch, 1983, p. 204) as it maximizes the variance of the squared coefficients within factors, i.e., after extraction, high coefficients become higher and low coefficients become lower to facilitate the factor interpretation.

Examination of the three-factor solution yielded interesting results (see Table 1). With the three-factor solution, the internal cognitive, external cognitive, academic curiosity, MCI and STPI scale scores loaded on Factor 1 (Cognitive Curiosity; Malone [1981]). On Factor 2 (Physical Thrill-Seeking), the external sensation and thrill-and-adventure scale scores loaded significantly. Both the disinhibition and boredom susceptibility scale scores loaded on Factor 3 (Social Thrill Seeking). Similar to Ainley (1987), one scale score (internal sensation) loaded ambiguously on both Factors 1 and 2 and was deleted from further analysis.

Table 1.
Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation of 10 Trait Curiosity Scale Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curiosity Scale</th>
<th>Cognitive Curiosity</th>
<th>Physical Thrill-Seeking</th>
<th>Social Thrill-Seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal cognitive</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>-.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External cognitive</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STPI curiosity</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne curiosity</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal sensation</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External sensation</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrill-and-adventure</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disinhibition</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom susceptibility</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. N = 602. Emboldened coefficients are salient and thus interpretable (≥ .40; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989).

Discussion

Supporting the first hypothesis, there was no evidence of a single, general curiosity factor as was first predicted by Berlyne (1966), the “Father of Curiosity,” and later partially supported by Langevin (1976) and Olson and Camp (1984). Supporting the second hypothesis, the factor
structure of the test scores demonstrates that the curiosity construct has fewer than five
dimensions. Demonstrating the robustness of the findings, the three-factor interpretation was
appropriate also when splitting the data by gender and by group.

The findings of this exploratory study suggest that a three-factor interpretation of
curiosity provides an appropriate classification system for curiosity, explaining 63.6% of the
variance. The cognitive curiosity factor has a clear link to learning, as demonstrated in the
literature. Piaget (1952) suggests that development and learning is linked to both the cognitive
and sensory types of curiosity, but he does not specify to what degree. More research is needed
to determine how and why the sensory or physical and social thrill seeking types of curiosity
possibly interact with cognitive curiosity to stimulate development and learning. A possible next
step would be to conduct confirmatory research to further clarify curiosity’s precise structure.
This confirmatory information could serve as a vital guide to future educational and
psychological research and practice by providing a clear point of departure for exploring the role
and meaningfulness of curiosity as a motivator and promoter of learning.

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Inquiring Minds Want to Know: Inquiry-Based Learning in the General Education and Inclusion Science Classroom

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Abstract: This study sought to apply the concepts of inquiry-based learning by increasing the number of laboratory experiments conducted in two science classes, and to identify the challenges of this instruction for students with special needs. Results showed that the grades achieved through lab write-ups greatly improved grades overall.

The National Science Education Standards (1996) describes inquiry-based instruction as a way to involve students in a form of active learning that emphasizes questioning, data analysis, and critical thinking. This teaching practice encourages students to learn inductively and has a firmly established place in pedagogical tradition (Colburn, 2004). For example, theorists Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and Herbert Spencer have championed student learning through concrete experiences and observations rather than rote memorization. Students at all grade levels, in every domain of science education, should be afforded the opportunity to use scientific inquiry to develop the ability to think and act in ways that are associated with inquiry (Bell, Smetana, & Binns, 2005). A convenient way to accomplish this goal in middle school classrooms is to enhance the inquiry aspects of activities that are already incorporated into the curriculum (Godbey, Barnett, & Webster, 2005).

Teachers are challenged to effectively use inquiry-based learning strategies to motivate and teach students, particularly those in a special education curriculum. When properly introduced, inquiry-based activities increase student interest and motivation. The student becomes a fellow investigator, with motivation shifting from an extrinsic desire for a higher grade to an intrinsic one for satiating a curiosity of nature (Baker, Lang, & Lawson, 2002).

Area of Focus

Students demonstrate significant learning gains through inquiry based learning (Palincsar, Magnusson, & Collins, 2001). Students with special needs and students with low abilities showed changes in understanding comparable to those of general education. For students to achieve success in the classroom, it is imperative that they understand concepts presented to them. Therefore, when students are unmotivated and fail to complete the lab write-up assignment because of lack of conceptual understanding, they can fall behind and miss important science skills that form a foundation to other needed skills, especially in science.

Although most teachers claim inquiry based teaching, with its emphasis on creative and critical thinking, is an effective teaching strategy, they have concerns. Most teachers argue they do not have enough time or the energy to provide their students with this style of learning (Maroney, Finson, & Beaver, 2003). Another concern is the lack of resources most schools encounter. Since an inquiry-based teaching strategy, such as science laboratory, relies on extremely costly supplies and equipment 40% of all science classes are taught in classrooms not designed for laboratory use (Hendrickson, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges that inquiry-based science instruction presents to students with special needs. The study was developed to answer the following questions: (a) What are the challenges that inquiry-based science instruction presents...
to students with special needs in an inclusive setting? and (b) How do students with special needs respond to inquiry-based learning strategies?

**Method**

**Participants**

A total of 49 students from two eighth-grade science classes at a middle school, located in Miami, Florida, participated in this study. One class is an inclusion classroom with 15 out of 24 students in special education; the other is a general education class with 25 students. The ethnic backgrounds of the students who attend this middle school is mostly Hispanic (88.6%), and the rest a mix of Caucasian (6.1%), Asian (3%), and African American (2.3%).

Parents of the students were also asked to participate; 57 parents participated. Teachers in the science department were also asked to participate; 11 teachers participated.

**Instruments**

Quantitative data were collected as the primary research method for this study. Student grades for tests and laboratory (LAB) write-ups were the main source of data. These scores, which followed standard grade point average scores (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F=0), were averaged per student and then per test or lab. Mean test scores allowed for comparison of pre- and post-laboratory tests, as well as quarterly tests that were given.

**Procedures**

At the start of the 2006-2007 school year, students from both classes, the inclusion and general education, were required to take a pre-test, monthly exam, and post-test for each of the three nine-week grading periods. The general education class took an additional quiz during each grading period (but the results were not included in the data analysis). During the three nine-week grading periods, both classes were required to participate in weekly laboratories and submit lab write-ups to receive a grade. Laboratories correlated with the content taught in the class, which was then covered on the exams and quizzes. At the end of the second nine-weeks of the school year, students were given a midterm exam, covering all content learned up to that point. Toward the end of the third nine weeks, the public school system required that teachers begin preparing the students for taking the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT). An FCAT preparation exam was given at the end of the third grading period as the second quarterly exam. This was followed by an FCAT mock exam, which was included in the data.

At the start of the study, all possible participants were provided with a packet that included teacher surveys, parental permission forms, parent surveys, and student surveys. Students were asked to complete a self-assessment survey to determine how much time they spent on school work as well as their feelings about their science class. Parents of the students were asked to complete a survey to gain insight into their involvement as it applies to homework assignments.

**Data Analysis and Results**

**Surveys**

Analysis was done of the teacher, parent, and student surveys. The result of the student data revealed that every student surveyed agreed that science is fun, with 76% responding that the best thing about science class is doing lab experiments. Although the majority, 76%, felt that the lab experiments were the best part of science, 47% felt the hardest part of science was completing the lab write-ups that correlated with the experiments. The majority, 97%, of the students had access to a computer outside of the school; however, 40% of these students stated that they used the computer one hour or less per week for school work.
Analysis of the parent data showed 70% of parents surveyed were satisfied with the science education their child had received in the past, yet 87% of parents felt that their child would benefit greatly from an increase in the number of laboratories done in the science class. However, just 63% answered that they would change nothing about the way science classes were run. When asked how many hours per week parents helped their child with their homework, 32% spent only one hour per week helping their child and 34% felt that their child needed no help at all.

A minority of the teachers, 45%, responded that they engaged their students in labs at least once a week. All teachers surveyed said they monitor their students’ conceptual understanding of content taught at all times during science class, yet 9% responded that inquiry-based learning in the science classroom has not helped their students at all.

Pre-Lab and Post-Lab Tests

Data were analyzed by comparing the performance of the two classes on the various tests, both teacher-made, school-wide and the Mock FCAT tests (Figure A). Also included in data analysis were laboratory report grades (Figure B). Student performance was well documented throughout the year. The first pre-lab test for the school year was a laboratory safety test, covering knowledge the students had gained prior to entering the 2006-2007 school year. This was a multiple-choice test, created by the teacher, which questioned the students on various laboratory safety procedures and precautions. Out of the 24 students in the inclusion class, 19 took the test. The average grade for this first test was a 3.2, with a mode of 3. For the general education science class, out of the 25 students, 22 took the test. The average grade for this first test was a 3, with a mode of 4. On average, the two classes performed about the same (3=B grade point average), with more variability in the general education science class toward the higher scores (4=A grade point average). The average performance for the post-lab test for the inclusion class was 2.1 and for the general education class, a 2.2. The average performance for the second pre-lab tests was 3.4 for the inclusion class as well as for the general education class. The average grade for the second post-lab tests for the inclusion class was 2.7 and a 2.6 for the general education class. For the final pre-lab test, the inclusion class averaged a grade of 0.7 and the general education averaged a grade of 1.8. This test was given to the students upon their return to school after a two-week winter break, when teachers report most students go down in performance and test grades. The average grade for the final post-lab test increased to a 2.2 from the inclusion class and a 3.2 from the general education class.

School-Wide Tests

Also administered to the students were school-wide science exams, both monthly and quarterly. On the first monthly exam, the inclusion class received an average of 1.9 while the general education class received an average of 2.1. The average performance for the second monthly exam was higher for both the inclusion class and the general education class when compared to the prior monthly exam, with the averages being a 3.6 and 3.9, respectively. The quarterly exams were given two times during the first three marking periods. The inclusion class average performance for the first quarterly exam was a 0.7 and for the second quarterly a 1.4. The general education class averaged a 2.5 grade on the first quarterly and a 2.4 grade on the second (Figure C).

FCAT Mock Exam

The last exam given during the third nine weeks of the school year was the FCAT mock. Though only a practice exam, teachers hoped that the students would take it as seriously as they would the actual exam. The students in the inclusion class received an average grade of 1.5. Of
the eleven students who took this exam, five received a grade of 0 while another five received a grade of 2. The students in the general education class received an average grade of 2.7. Twenty-four students took this mock exam, with three receiving a grade of 0. The mode for both classes was 3.

**Discussion**

The general science education teacher, along with the special education teacher, decided the most effective teaching strategy was to incorporate inquiry-based instruction into the lab activities to improve student learning. The strategies that were implemented included the use of hands-on lab experiments through the use of an inquiry-based learning approach. Students with special needs were exposed to opportunities of collaborative learning and peer tutoring.

Although it was the intention of the researchers to have test scores improve with an increased number of laboratory experiments completed in the classroom, this was not always the case. However, students in both classes did achieve higher lab grades. By scoring high grades for the lab write-ups, students were able to increase their overall grades. Students in the general education class, when comparing averaged overall grades, did better than their peers in the inclusion class. The lowest overall grade for period 4 (the general education class) was a 2.1 and the highest achieved was 3.6 (Figure D). Period 3 (the inclusion class) achieved a 1.5 and the highest achievement was 3.1 (Figure E). This is a difference of 0.6 and 0.5 points for period 4 and 3 respectively. Analysis of data showed significant improvement in student test grades in both inclusion and general education classes did not occur until the third nine weeks of the school year. Student lab grades, however, were high, which helped students achieve higher grades than would have been earned if relying on test scores alone.

A review of the results of this study prompted additional action, including continuing an inquiry-based science curriculum in both general education and inclusion settings. Additionally, the continuous communication among teachers within the science department is included for the further planning and implementation of the inquiry-based learning approach in all science classes. The teachers will now meet once a week to develop inquiry-based lesson plans and departmentalized testing.

Factors that impacted the results of the study during the school year included (a) students missing class on a regular-basis, (b) the lack of resource materials accessible to students outside of school, (c) the number of parents feeling that their child does not need their help with school work, (d) inability of students with disabilities to keep up with the increased amount of work in the classroom, (e) inability to follow lab instructions, and (f) negative feelings toward collaborative working lab groups. Any one of these variables or a combination of them can influence how a student learns in the science classroom, either negatively or positively influencing their overall grades.

**Future Plan**

Following data analysis, the general education teacher has decided to continue including inquiry-based learning in her classrooms. Despite the fact that test averages varied throughout the school year, an increased number of laboratory experiments conducted in the science classroom had a positive impact on student understanding of the content taught. The goal of the general education teacher is to increase the number of laboratory experiments the students will be able to complete during the upcoming school years. This depends greatly on funding available for the additional equipment and resources that would be needed. Also, time management may be an issue when trying to incorporate additional lab experiments into the schedule.
Final Thoughts

The purpose of this action research was to examine the impact of inquiry-based learning on the general science knowledge of middle school students with special needs. Learning should never be considered a tedious task; rather, it should be filled with fun, so it follows a person through his/her life. Students should be engaged in hands-on exploration, allowing them to analyze, question, and defend their findings on their own, bringing learning to a new level. Inquiry-based teaching lifts the external constraints and opens the door for students to be spontaneous and have moments of insight (Kliene, Browne, & Harte, 2002). Academically, unsuccessful students become increasingly motivated and participate more in inquiry-based lessons. As with anything new, inquiry-based strategies can present challenges when first introduced into a classroom. Moving forward, with time and patience, a teacher can bring the classroom to a student-led inquiry-based teaching environment with few problems (Johnson, 2006).

Inquiry-based learning changes student learning in positive ways. However, this may not always be the situation, as seen with the students in this study. There are many challenges that students with special needs learning in inclusive classrooms may face, which include, but are not limited to; inability to keep up with extra work; inability to follow lab instruction, leading to lack of lab write-ups; lack of motivation; and lack of understanding. These challenges may also extend to general education students as well.

Although the participating students in this research study achieved average test grades that varied throughout the three nine-week grading periods, their lab grades were, for the most part, high. This helped to increase the overall grade the students received at the end of each grading period. Although it was the expectations of the researcher that an increase in the number of lab experiments conducted in class would correlate with higher test grades, this was the first year students completed a large number of experiments. By the third nine weeks, students managed to improve the post-test scores in both classes. It may take students a while to get used to the increase in labs done in the science classroom, especially if they come from a class in which few to no labs were completed the prior year. As the years progress, one can hope that students will be influenced positively by inquiry-based learning and that all science classes, general and special education alike, will include multiple lab experiments to provide their students with hands-on learning that will increase their love for science.

References

Figure A. Average Pre-Laboratory & Post-Laboratory Exam Grades

![Graph showing average exam grades for Pretest 1 to FCAT Mock tests for Period 3 and Period 4.]

Figure B. Average Laboratory Grades

![Graph showing average laboratory grades for Labs 1 to 27 for Period 3 and Period 4.]

Figure C. Period 3 Average Exam Grades

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**Figure D. Period 4 Average Exam and Laboratory Grades**

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**Figure E. Period 3 Average Exam and Laboratory Grades**

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Exploring Employee Engagement Among Three Non-Salaried Employees: A Phenomenological Study

Brad Shuck and Carlos Albornoz
Florida International University, USA

Abstract: This exploratory empirical phenomenological study looks at employee engagement using Kahn (1990) and Maslow’s (1970) motivational theories to understand the experience of non-salaried employees. This study finds four themes that seem to affect employee engagement: work environment, employee’s supervisor, individual characteristics of the employee, and opportunity for learning.

In the United States, 146 million people go to work daily (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Employees desire positive feelings about their work experience (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2002) that go beyond traditional definitions of job satisfaction, “an individual’s attitude towards their work” (Brayfield & Rothe, 1951, p. 307). Measures of job satisfaction are often based in generalities of work that are subject to swings in affect depending on the day-to-day challenges of work, rather than an employee’s experience, a more enduring indication of feeling positive at work. Employee engagement is defined as an employee’s “involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work” (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002, p. 269) and is based in an employee’s experience, inclusive of long-term emotional involvement, and is an antecedent to measures of job satisfaction. When employees are engaged, they are emotionally connected to others and cognitively vigilant to the direction of the team (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002).

In a survey of over 1,000 employees, The Gallup Organization found that 71% of employees go to work disengaged every day (Crabtree, 2004). Disengaged employees are defined as individuals who have distanced themselves from the rational and/or emotional components of work (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004). Engaged employees, as measured through the Gallup Workplace Audit, averaged 27% less physical absenteeism than disengaged employees, saving companies 86.5 million days per year in lost productivity (Wagner & Harter, 2006, p. xiii). A survey of over 50,000 employees found that engaged employees are 87% less likely to leave a company (Corporate Leadership Council, 2004), five times less likely than disengaged employees. Once an engaged employee is at work, his or her willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty increases by 57%, resulting in a 20% increase in individual performance improvement (Buchanan, 2004). Engaged employees are happier employees, produce increased profit, exhibit high levels of creativity, experience less absenteeism, have fewer on-the-job accidents, and positively affect business unit level outcomes.

Despite the benefits of having highly engaged employees, a surprisingly small body of literature examines the construct (Saks, 2006). Current trends in hiring more independent, non-salaried employees as well as the depleting talent shortage across the globe have demanded a new look at the employability and sustainability of this growing workforce population (Beck, 2003). A non-salaried employee is defined as independent, contract labor paid by the hour (Beck, 2003). Little research has investigated the experience of being engaged from the employee

perspective and little is known about how non-salaried employees experience engagement or how engagement affects their experience at work.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to explore how non-salaried employees describe the experience of being engaged at work. Conversational interviews are used to explore emergent themes about how participants experience engagement. The phenomenon of interest is engagement at work of non-salaried employees. The research questions are as follows: (a) how do non-salaried employees describe the experience of being engaged at work, and (b) what factors contribute to the feeling of engagement? First, a conceptual framework of employee engagement is presented. Second, the method of data collection and analysis is explained. Lastly, the findings of factors that contribute to the creation of employee engagement are described.

**Conceptual Framework**

Kahn’s (1990) seminal grounded theory of employee engagement and disengagement posited that engagement is the concurrent expression of one’s preferred self and the promotion of connections to others. Disengagement is the withdrawal of one’s self and of one’s preferred behaviors, promoting a lack of connectedness, emotional absence, and passive behavior. Expressing or withdrawing one’s authentic self is the emotional, social, and physical act of employee engagement.

Constructs important to understanding engagement and disengagement at work are meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Meaningfulness is defined as the positive “sense of return on investments of self in role performance” (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). Safety is defined as the ability to show one’s self “without fear or negative consequences to self image, status, or career” (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). Availability is defined as the “sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary” for the completion of work (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). Employee engagement or employee disengagement develops to the degree that these psychological constructs can be fulfilled (Kahn, 1990). Herzberg’s two-factor theory parallels Kahn’s engagement theory by positing autonomy in being, recognition of self and work, and meaningful understanding as factors that increase an employee’s intrinsic willingness to engage in work (Latham & Ernst, 2006). Intrinsic factors rather than extrinsic factors (i.e. compensation, company image) motivate employees to be engaged in their work. The identification and satisfaction of individual needs was recognized as important components to engaging employees in Kahn (1990) and Herzberg’s (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) theories; however, an understanding of individual needs was never fully explored. Maslow’s (1970) theory of motivation provides a straightforward conceptual framework for understanding basic human needs.

The importance of Maslow’s motivation theory in relation to employee engagement is the conceptualization of each of the basic needs. These needs, individually listed as physiological, safety, belonging and love, esteem, and self-actualization needs, are the basic needs of human beings (1970). The esteem need is defined as the “desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of [the self], for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others” (Maslow, 1970, p. 45). Self-actualization is defined as the completion of activity that intensely satisfies (Maslow, 1970). The drive to self-actualization parallels the concept of employee engagement as used in Kahn’s (1990) work by conceptualizing the drive to ultimate self fulfillment, a deep need for internal, emotional satisfaction that all humans long for.

**Method**

Phenomenological researchers attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions to ordinary people in particular situations. This research seeks to capture and describe employees’ experiences of being engaged at the workplace, beginning with silence and
ending with interpretation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this case, the meaning that participants
give to events that predate or coexist with the sense of being engaged as well as with the
activities they perform at work is the phenomenology under study. All employees interviewed
for this study worked for a multinational service corporation ranked by Forbes magazine as one
of "America's Most Admired Companies." The Director of Operations for the company agreed to
be the key informant for the study and was used to identify potential participants. A key
informant is particularly helpful, insightful, and articulate in identifying potential participants
(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The key informant was not interviewed for this study.

The first participant was a male working in his current position for three months,
identified as John throughout the duration of this research. The second participant was a female,
identified as Ashley, working in her current position for 10 years. The third participant,
identified as Sarah, was a female working in her current position for 3 years. This study was
implemented in Miami-Dade County, Florida, where 60.6% of the population is Hispanic (US
Census Bureau, 2004). Coincidentally, the three participants willing to give interviews were
Hispanic. Although this homogenous factor can be considered a limitation of the study, we make
no claim that our conclusions are generalizable to the larger Hispanic population in Miami-Dade
County, the global workforce, or that we reached saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Data was collected through conversational interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2005) lasting an
average of 1 hour and 17 minutes. A 30 question conversational guide was used to help the
interviewer focus on the agreed research topic. A conversational guide is a structured set of
questions that gives direction to the starting points of conversation (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The
guide included questions about expectations at work, general feelings about work, resources at
work, the use of skills and/ or talents at work, supervision, co-workers, and general questions
about an employee’s satisfaction level. Interviews were transcribed and checked for accuracy
independently by each researcher.

Transcripts were read and coded by each researcher twice. During the first round of
readings, one researcher identified 26 patterns and the second researcher identified 21. During
analysis, a journal was used to record observations and reflections about emergent patterns and
experiences of the researchers. A second round of readings was completed with the researchers
together using a spreadsheet to compile patterns capturing the participants’ experience of
engagement at work. After the second reading, the initial patterns identified in the first round
were collapsed into four emergent themes. Emergent themes were presented to three groups for
peer review. The first group was comprised of graduate students studying qualitative research at
an accredited, large, public, urban university. The second group, a writing for publication class,
was comprised of graduate students. The third group included professionals in Human Resources
and Development (HRD), professors, and graduate students studying education at a writing club.
Feedback received from these venues has been incorporated into this paper.

**Influencing Themes of Employee Engagement**

Four emergent themes identified through the analysis of data are (a) work environment,
(b) supervisor, (c) characteristics of the employee, and (d) opportunity for learning.

*Work Environment*

A work environment is defined as the physical and emotional characteristics of the
workspace, including relationships with colleagues and typical job functions. How individuals
feel about the environmental climate where they work affects their level of engagement (Brown
& Leigh, 1996). Cooperation, support, trust, and partnerships were ways participants described
their idea of an engaging environment. Early in our interview, John recalled a disengaging
experience in a previous job, describing that work experience as a cutthroat, aggressive environment. When asked about how this type of environment affected his motivation, John shared the following about his experience: “It’s awful, because I took work home with me. I take it all up here, so I mean, if it’s bad at work, you take it home with you.” When probed deeper, John disclosed further and compared his previous work environment to his current work environment: “I worked in some places where you get along with the person, but it is still work, you know. It’s I like you, but don’t mess up, cause…you’ll get fired. It’s not like that here.”

The varying experience of safety from one environment to another affected John’s experience of work. John later described that the fear of being fired was the sole motivating factor in the first job described. As John described his current position, relief could be heard in his voice. Safety needs, such as feeling protected, being free from fear, having a feeling of order, and knowing one’s limits, are potent needs for human beings (Maslow, 1970) and are essential to the foundation of motivational theory as operationalized in Brown and Leigh (1996). Supervisors cannot disregard the need for employees to feel safe at work; without fulfilling this need, employees can become paralyzed mentally. Employees may show up for work physically, but mentally and emotionally, they are not present.

**Supervisor**

A supervisor is defined as any person who is charged with the direct management of an employee. Frontline supervisors do much of the engagement work. Employees see their companies from the same perspective they see their supervisors (Galford & Drapeau 2003). In our interviews, each participant’s supervisor came up as a motivating force for being engaged or disengaged at work. Being new to the industry, John needed a developmental leader who could help him learn about the business. “[Supervisors are] the ones that evaluate me; they’re the ones that, you know, demand that I do a good job… I feel like they both have been unbelievable, so far. They have been good, probably the best bosses that I’ve had.” John chose the words to describe the experience with his supervisor carefully: “evaluate,” “demand,” and “unbelievable” describing a supervisor are not traditionally paired together. For John, this current supervisory style allows for feelings of safety, high expectations, and growth. The feeling of having great supervisors, maybe the “best bosses” he has ever had, has an impact on his experience of work.

**Characteristics of the Employee**

Unique characteristics, beliefs, and work philosophies are ubiquitous among humans. A characteristic of the employee is defined as a perception that the employee has about himself or herself and that is actively applied to life roles. Two unique characteristics emerged as patterns throughout our data collection: (a) the need for challenge and (b) an entrepreneurial spirit. The need for challenge referred to by the participants related to how challenge affects performance and engagement. Ashley shared stories about her previous experience working in several restaurants and large hotels before her current position. She spoke of looking for challenge in her work and seeking opportunities to grow. Ashley went on to share that if she challenged herself, she would learn more on the job, and potentially be promoted. When asked why she felt a need for challenge, Ashley expressed feeling an innate characteristic that was hard to capture in words: “There is something inside of me, I want to keep going, I want to learn more, I want to jump higher. I want to be challenged.” Sarah alluded to her motivation at work and the need for challenge. She hoped to someday open her own restaurant. Sarah recalled that she looks for challenge to keep occupied and in continuous development for the future. “I am a very quick learner, so I get bored really fast if I don’t have challenges; if something is not challenging, it’s boring.” Probing deeper with Sarah, we asked about a challenge she had recently faced. Sarah
shared a story about learning to work on a cash register for the first time in a very commanding and confident tone. She felt like she could try anything and liked the idea of being challenged daily at work: “I had never worked on a register on my life. I just figured it out. Let me do it. That doesn’t bother me at all.” This self-awareness, while not tangible, was important to the experience of engagement at work for our participants.

**Opportunity for Learning**

Opportunities to learn something new at work were important to all three participants. Learning is defined as “a change in behavior, cognition, or affect that occurs as a result of one’s interaction with the environment” (Werner & Desimone, 2006, p. 33). A learning environment results from opportunities to learn at work and is defined as an environment that allows employees to gain new skills and knowledge “without fear or negative consequences to self image, status, or career” (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). Participants expressed learning as an incidental experience rather than an act they set out to accomplish every day. Incidental learning is defined as ever-present unconscious learning (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Ashley recalled her promotions at an earlier company. She shared her experiences of working in the dish room, next being moved to prep chef, and lastly finding herself in the kitchen as an assistant; but she was never formally trained or asked to attend professional development to gain the skills to continue advancing. “Every time they kept moving me, they [gave] me some more money, more benefits, but by that time I did not even care about the money, because I was happy because they were moving me and I was learning.” For Sarah, learning emerged as an important pattern in her motivation for coming to work and performing her best. Although unable to define the learning that was occurring, when asked how she ranked the feeling of learning with other tangible artifacts such as pay, Sarah shared that learning for her was the most important variable right now. She saw her career aspiration of opening a business as primary motivation that enhanced the motivation for work. “For me right now, experience is more important than money, because this is my career. I want all the experience I can get.”

**Discussion**

The findings of this paper suggest that supervisors play an important role in the development of employee engagement. They must be aware of their influence regarding the work environments they create (Wagner & Harter, 2006). Work environments have implications for feelings of safety and meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990; Maslow, 1970) as well as formal and informal learning opportunities presented to employees, all of which seem to affect the development of employee engagement. Additionally, our findings suggest that to enhance employee engagement, someone must work to empower opportunities for learning, establish a rapport between supervisor and employee (i.e. build trust), and encourage the understanding of unique employee characteristics. In conclusion, HRD practitioners should begin focusing on helping supervisors develop ways of encouraging the themes discussed within this paper. As this study suggests, a focus on how work is experienced rather than how work is delivered might be a first step in this practice.

**References**


The Pronunciation of the Aspirated Consonants $p$, $t$, and $k$
 in English by Native Speakers of Spanish and French

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Abstract: This study examines whether explicit phonetic instruction helps Spanish and French speakers more closely approximate native pronunciation of the aspirated variants of the English consonants $p$, $t$, and $k$. The study results indicate that phonetic instruction clearly benefited the subjects, and the findings warrant further investigation.

Native speakers of English consistently use aspirated variants of the consonants $p$, $t$, and $k$ when they occur at the beginning of words (i.e., these three consonants are pronounced with a small puff of air when they occur in initial position). These aspirated variants are phonemes, basic units of sound that native speakers can distinguish; phonemes are indicated by a slash mark on either side. The use of the aspirated phonemes helps the listener to distinguish minimal pairs in English, which are pairs of words, such as $pill/bill$, that differ only by a single sound. English consonants that are aspirated often present difficulties for speakers of languages, such as Spanish or French, which lack these sounds. Does explicit phonetic instruction that targets the description and practice of these aspirated consonants offer any benefit to native speakers of Spanish and French?

This study specifically focuses on the production of the aspirated variants of voiceless stop consonants in English by native speakers of Spanish or French. English, like Spanish and French, has two sets of stop consonants, consonants produced by stopping the airflow completely. The phonemes /b/, /d/ and /g/ are voiced stops because the vocal chords vibrate; /p/, /t/ and /k/ are voiceless stops because the vocal chords do not vibrate. This underscores the function and importance of aspirating initial voiceless stops in English because the single small difference between the initial consonants in pairs like $pill/bill$ is that one is voiced and the other is voiceless. Spanish and French speakers may simply fail to aspirate initial voiceless stops in English as a result of familiarity with the written forms of Spanish, French, and English. They may not realize that the letters $p$, $t$, and $k$ do not necessarily represent the same phonemes in English as they do in Spanish or French. Further, they may not understand that aspirating initial voiceless stops is an important phonological cue for the listener and that communication may be unsuccessful when the expected aspiration is absent.

This paper reports on a study of pronunciation patterns for English language learners whose native language, which is hereafter referred to as L1, is Spanish or French. The students were tested, both before and after phonetic instruction, for the pronunciation of /p/, /t/, and /k/ in initial position as they occur in English, the second language that the student is learning. The student’s second language is hereafter referred to as L2. The data and results from the studies reviewed below rather convincingly demonstrate the benefits of explicit phonetic instruction in developing phonological L2 competence. The bulk of existing studies concentrate on L1 English speakers who are learning Spanish or French. Consequently, it seems justified to develop a methodology that measures the effect of
focused phonetic instruction on L2 English phonological competency by L1 Spanish and French speakers because this has received relatively scant attention in the literature.

**Review of the Literature**

Much of the current literature (e.g., Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995; Díaz-Campos, 2004; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1995) concerning phonetic instruction that addresses the differences between English phonology and Spanish or French phonology has focused on L1 English speakers learning Spanish or French, most often in study abroad programs. The relative dearth of information regarding the phonological problems of L1 Spanish or French speakers learning English reveals a need that remains to be addressed adequately. This is particularly true in light of the large immigrant population of Spanish speakers in the United States and the high volume of commerce between the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Any research that evaluates methods of English phonetic instruction for Spanish or French speakers offers a much-needed contribution to pedagogy.

The most basic question to address is to what extent L2 learners acquire new phonetic categories in the process of learning English. Flege and Eefting (1988) gathered data from a group of L1 English speakers, a group of monolingual L1 Spanish speakers and a group of bilingual L1 Spanish speakers. They created 16 test sounds on a continuum ranging from an unaspirated variant of the phoneme /d/ to an aspirated variant of the phoneme /t/. Their findings revealed that the bilingual L1 Spanish speakers were able to imitate and distinguish three categories, from non-aspirated to aspirated variants, defined by voice onset time (VOT; i.e., the length of time between the beginning of the consonant to the beginning of the following vowel). They concluded that the bilingual L1 Spanish speakers had acquired a new phonetic category for the aspirated variant of /t/.

Although the above study provides the most relevant type of data, much more attention has been devoted to L1 English speakers learning Spanish, comparing the effects of both phonetic instruction and study abroad. These studies also create a better understanding of the role that English and Spanish phonology play in L2 acquisition. However, this kind of data can only be extrapolated in order to gain insight into the acquisition of L2 English. González-Bueno (1997) studied the use of aspirated variants of voiceless stops, such as /k/, in the perception of foreign accent in the speech of L1 English speakers learning Spanish. She created 28 unaspirated and aspirated stimuli. Eighteen L1 Spanish speakers from Seville, Spain, were asked to judge the speech samples. The variants having a VOT ranging from 15 ms to 35 ms were perceived as native. Since the perception of native speakers varied according to how VOT was manipulated, González-Bueno suggested that phonetic instruction be used to shorten the VOT of voiceless stops in order to produce more native-like pronunciation in L2 Spanish.

Even more striking was the data that Lord (2000) obtained in a study of the effects of phonetic instruction versus study abroad. Her focus was on the production of voiced stops (b, d, and g) when they occur between two vowels, which in Spanish become fricatives (i.e., the airflow is constricted but does not stop). Eight students were enrolled in an 8-week study-abroad program in Mexico. The experimental group of four students had taken a Spanish phonetics course one to two semesters before the study-abroad program, the other four had not. None of the students had any problem producing voiced stops (b, d, and g) in the pretest and post-test. Lord suggested that the stop variants were the default value as a result of transferring the voiced stop values from L1 English. For the intervocalic fricative variants, the average accuracy for the control group was 3.3%, compared with 8.6% for the
The post-test showed 5.8% accuracy for the control group and 28.7% accuracy for the experimental group. The effect of phonetic instruction here, especially in combination with study abroad, is impossible to overlook.

The transfer of voiced stops from L1 English that Lord (2000) noticed indicates that they are unproblematic for English speakers. In the same way, because the variants of English voiceless stops are unaspirated when they are not in initial position, they will be easy to produce for L1 Spanish or French speakers, compared with the aspirated variants. The use of generative phonology by Flege and Eefting (1988) to explain the acquisition of a new phonetic category for the aspirated variant of /t/ bears directly on studies of L1 Spanish or French speakers acquiring the aspirated variants of initial voiceless stops in English.

Three ESL primary school teachers in Murcia, Spain, conducted another significant study. Blanco, Gayoso, and Carrillo (2001) sought to measure the effectiveness of an initial teaching program of English that concentrated on L2 phonology. They worked with experimental and control groups of second-graders (with an average age of 7) and tested for oral and reading skills. Blanco et al. (2001) postulate the process of “equivalent classification” of L2 sounds as L1 sounds, blocking the formation of new L2 categories. The results of their research indicate that the sounds with only slight differences from the L1 categories are the most difficult to acquire, whereas the sounds with no close L1 equivalent are easiest to learn. Kuhl (1993), another researcher investigating the difficulty of acquiring L2 phonology, suggests that beginning at the age of one, L1 phonological prototypes act as perceptive magnets that attract similar L2 sounds.

Blanco et al. (2001) intended to overcome this phonological deficit by teaching explicit and analytical phonology to 2nd grade students. Their research suggests that the capacity to perceive and form new phonological categories is not lost and that training in the perception and articulation of L2 sounds can help learners to form new phonological categories. The authors then go on to discuss the Motor Theory of Speech Perception (Liberman & Mattingly, 1985), which claims a very close connection between the perception and articulation of speech. Proponents of this theory have tried to demonstrate that the basic unit of speech perception is speech articulation, not the acoustic signal (Bowman & Goldstein, 1989).

Blanco et al. (2001) used the aforementioned research by Liberman and Mattingly (1985) and Bowman and Goldstein (1989) to justify designing the program around complimentary components of perceptive and articulatory training. They concentrated on activities that developed the ability to discern rime units of varying complexity (VC, VCC, VCCC) that form parts of the words being analyzed, with the students encouraged to categorize and label the different phonemic units. Articulation was approached as a cumulative process, using the vowel nucleus as the starting point and gradually adding consonants until students could pronounce the entire rime unit correctly. The post-test results of their study confirmed the effectiveness of the experimental training in the phonological skills and also in the areas of reading, word repetition, and spelling. Particularly useful is the premise of Blanco et al. that articulation rather than acoustic signals generates the process of distinguishing and producing new phonetic categories. To a certain extent this mirrors intuitive understanding, as we can often observe everyday examples of L2 users who have the benefit of years or decades of L2 acoustic input yet do not acquire certain L2 phonetic categories.
Method
This section describes the study subjects, elicitation material, pretest procedures, test procedure, and post-test procedures.

Subjects
The eight subjects were native speakers of Spanish or French, languages that lack the aspirated variants of voiceless stops that are found in initial position in English.

Elicitation Material
The researcher gave the subjects sentences containing the monosyllabic English words, pill, tip, and cod, examples of all three types of aspirated voiceless stops in initial position. The tokens with initial voiceless stops were contained in complete sentences in order to generate natural speech patterns. The tokens, pill and tip, contain [ɪ], a high vowel, and the token, cod, contains [a], a low vowel. Both the vowel height and the tenseness or laxness of the vowel that follows the initial voiceless stop may very well affect aspiration. The phoneme [ɪ] is a lax rather than tense vowel, which minimizes obstruction to the airflow; and because it is a high vowel, it is pronounced with the lips relatively close together, which concentrates and maximizes the puff of air produced during aspiration. It might be expected that the low vowel [a] does not maximize aspiration as much as the high vowel [ɪ]. This factor needs to be taken into consideration when analyzing the samples produced by the subjects. The sentences containing the tokens, pill, tip, and cod, were combined into a list of seven sentences and randomized as follows, with sentence 1 repeated a second time, just before sentence 6:

1. She gets a pill everyday. 2. He wants a good dip. 3. He’s always talking about cod. 4. She gets a bill everyday. 5. He wants a good tip. 6. He’s always talking about God.

Pretest Procedures
In Pretest Procedure 1, the researcher gave the subjects the list of sentences from the elicitation material. The subjects were asked about any unfamiliar words. The researcher gave the subjects a definition and also told them when they were pronouncing the word correctly. The researcher did not model the words for the subjects but only verified that the subjects understood the vocabulary.

In Pretest Procedure 2, the researcher asked the subjects to read the sentences at a natural rate of speed. The examples were recorded using an Olympus digital voice recorder. The tokens from the pretest recordings were measured for voice onset time (VOT) using spectrograms produced with sound analysis software.

Test Procedure
The researcher conducted a brief lesson that explained the aspiration of initial voiceless stops. This lesson served as a means for evaluating the efficacy of phonetic instruction as regards the acquisition of the aspirated variants of voiceless stops in English.

Post-test Procedures
The subjects read the elicitation material to generate a second round of recorded samples. The tokens from the post-test recordings were measured for VOT using spectrograms produced with sound analysis software.

Results
The recorded sample from Subject 1 produced a typical set of pretest (see Figure 1) and post-test (see Figure 2) spectrograms for the variant of /p/ which occurs in initial
position. The time sequence is from left to right. Going from left to right, the large dark area starts to cover the upper half of the image about halfway across the spectrogram. This indicates where the sound of the consonant \( p \) begins. The thick line with graph points begins to the right of this. This indicates where voicing begins, that is to say, where the vowel sound begins. Therefore, the time frame between where the dark area begins and where the thick graph line begins indicates the length of time from the beginning of the voiceless stop /\( p \)/ to the beginning of the following vowel, or the VOT. This is how the degree of aspiration for initial voiceless stops is defined.

**Figure 1.** Subject 1—Pretest spectrograph

![Figure 1](image1)

**Figure 2.** Subject 1—Post-test spectrograph

![Figure 2](image2)

The number under the small time section in the middle of the spectrograph, then, is the VOT, as measured in milliseconds. The pretest VOT is 15 ms. The post-test VOT is 35 ms. Subject 1 more than doubled the degree of aspiration for the initial \( p \) variant. Native English speakers in North America exhibit a VOT for initial voiceless stops ranging between 20 ms and 60 ms. Listed in the Table 1 are the results from all eight subjects for the Table 1

<table>
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<th>Voice Onset Time for Initial P Allophone</th>
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initial \( p \) variant. The subjects exhibited similar improvement for the initial \( t \) and initial \( k \) variants.

**Significance**

Average voice onset time for speakers in North America is in the range of 20 ms to 60 ms. If we allow that speakers in England might possibly have a voice onset time of up to 100 (twice the North American average), at least for British Received Pronunciation, then we have a maximum scale of no more than 100 for the entire English-speaking world. On a scale of 100, a standard deviation of 10 is used for a small sample such as this. A z-test yields:

\[
z = \frac{15.75}{10/\sqrt{8}} \approx 4.455
\]

In a one-way analysis of variance, if the probability of observing a value greater than 4.455 for the standard normal distribution is less than .05, then the results can be considered significant. A rough estimate is that the \( p \) is less than .01, which would make it very unlikely that the above results would be obtained under the null hypothesis. In this case, then, the null hypothesis can be rejected, although no further conclusions can be made.

**Conclusion**

Typological markedness is a concept from Universal Grammar, a theory of linguistics postulating principles of grammar shared by all languages. This concept predicts that a less natural form, such as the aspirated stops that are found in relatively few languages other than English and are not found in Spanish or French, will be more difficult for L2 learners to acquire. This is especially true because this is a phonetic category that is close to and easily replaced by an already existing L1 category in Spanish and French (unaspirated voiceless stops). One measure of markedness is the fact that out of over 200 languages in Europe, only English, German, and Icelandic have aspirated stops, although they occur sporadically in languages outside Europe.

The data from the small sample in this study indicates that brief, focused phonetic instruction may be beneficial to L1 Spanish or French speakers in acquiring the aspirated English variants of voiceless stops. Study on a larger scale would yield more definitive results. Beyond that, there is potential for the use of explicit instruction in dealing with other problems in phonology which impact L2 learning.

**References**


“Like a Family”: Perspectives of Doctoral Students from Traditionally Under-represented Populations on Cohorts

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Abstract: This study examined the experiences of special education doctoral students from minority populations and investigated the perceptions of students in the cohort experience. Three themes emerged: The cohort was a (a) family for bonding and support, (b) motivator for academic success and retention, and an (c) inhibitor of educational growth.

In recent years, a number of universities and institutions for higher learning have been using different types of learning models in an attempt to improve the quality of the education being offered; one of these models of learning has been the cohort educational model (CEM). The CEM stems from Vygotsky’s theory of the zone of proximal development, which consists of two levels: solving problems independently and accomplishing goals by seeking the assistance of a more knowledgeable peer (as cited in John-Steiner & Mahn, 2003). Vygotsky maintains that having the same group of peers interact and share their learned experiences will further one’s own knowledge and understanding. A CEM is a group of students bound together by a program of study who take the majority of their coursework together (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 2000; Miller & Irby, 1999; Potthoff, Fredickson, Batenhorst, & Tracy, 2001).

Huey states (as cited in Potthoff et al., 2001) that there are eight dimensions to cohorts: (a) social interaction, (b) common mission, (c) group and individual learning, (d) cohesiveness, (e) collaboration, (f) academic success, (g) interaction with professors, and (h) retention. Social interaction is created by the bonds formed in the CEM and it extends from simply meeting for class to learning about each other and interacting outside of the courses. The CEM offers all students in the model a common mission: to finish a pre-determined program of study in a period of time. The model allows for the individuals to grow independently and as a group through their shared experiences (John-Steiner & Mahn, 2003). Through the interactions and collaboration as a group, a cohesiveness or bond is formed within the group (Potthoff et al., 2001). Academic success and retention are improved by the motivation created by the group; members drive each other to complete the program.

Within my doctoral program of Special Education, there existed a CEM which consisted entirely of students from minority populations who were enrolled in the same courses I was. One of the members asked me if I would be interested in conducting a study with her on the CEM; she wanted to study the perspectives of non-cohort students. Upon some preliminary research on the CEM, I was unable to locate any study that focused on the perspectives of students in a cohort whose members were all minority students. This piqued my curiosity. Having been able to study them as an observer in classes, I would further investigate how they felt about the cohort, and the whole program. It would also give me insight on why they chose this educational model over the more traditional models. From this study I hoped to answer two major questions: (a)

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1 The special education faculty had received a federal grant to implement a leadership preparation program for students from under-represented populations.

What are the doctoral experiences of minority students in a CEM, and (b) What motivators help doctoral students continue in the programs?

The Researcher and the Participants

As the researcher, I studied the participants with whom I have been taking courses for the past two years. Although I am not part of the cohort, I have become familiar with them through their presentations and group assignments. Not having all of my classes with them gave me enough distance to see them with the eyes of an outside observer, yet still have good enough rapport to ask questions about their CEM experiences. Since they already knew me, my study habits and my dispositions, getting them to trust me as an interviewer was a non-issue. The hardest part was not including identifiable information. The CEM is relatively small; therefore, personal information could reveal participants’ identity.

For this reason I chose responsive interviewing. This type of interviewing allowed the interviewee to feel comfortable speaking to me, knowing that I would keep his or her confidentiality and anonymity. Responsive interviewing creates a dialogue where both parties are comfortable and each one’s style is allowed to be expressed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). I used journaling to reflect upon each interview and to analyze questions to determine whether further investigation was needed. I adjusted my questions as I saw connections.

There were 16 students in this doctoral CEM, with a mean age of 36 and each of the students was non-traditional, meaning that each represented a minority group (44% were Hispanic, 38% were African American, and 19% were Caucasian; all were from a religious minority; three were males and 13 were females) while holding full-time jobs and being enrolled in a full-time university doctoral program. This CEM was located in a large state university within a large Hispanic community. The CEM itself was created to represent the existing university which consisted at the time of the study of 52% Hispanic, 14% Black, 21% Caucasian, and 3% Asian, Indian, and other ethnicities (Fact Book, 2001). As John pointed out, the CEM “is a miniature, cultural melting pot.” This was the second year of the CEM and most students have a handful of courses left prior to their dissertations. All courses were taken as a group, except those who entered the CEM later. For most of their courses, the CEM members were the only students in each course.

All members of the CEM were employed in varying capacities, from teaching to having a position in education in one of three large neighboring school districts. The three participants chosen for this study also varied in their respective positions in the school system. Pseudonyms have been given to each to protect their identities.

Mily was a Hispanic female in her late twenties. She had earned a Bachelor’s degree in Elementary Education and a Master’s degree in Educational Leadership. At the time of the study, she was an administrator in a local public elementary school. Her educational background was not special education, but she decided to pursue this degree to learn how to better help the students she was serving.

John was a male of a religious minority in his mid forties, married with two very young children. He taught within the juvenile prison system, instructing young incarcerated adults. Education is his second career, and he also had no background in special education. His Bachelor’s degree was in Management and Computer Science and his Master’s degree was in education. He chose to enter this program because most of the students he taught were students with learning disabilities.

Katherine was an African American mother in her early thirties. Her educational background was very much ingrained in special education, having received a Bachelor’s degree
in Mental Retardation and Varying Exceptionalities, a Master’s degree in Reading and Learning Disabilities, and a Specialist degree in Early Childhood Education. She was a reading specialist in an urban school, serving as a mentor and coach, empowering teachers with instructional strategies for literacy.

**Method**

An interview protocol (see Appendix A; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) was developed by testing a series of questions with another colleague from the same CEM and who is studying cohorts from a different perspective. The questions were then revised to tie some loose ends. Participants were chosen by asking for participation, one by one, in no particular order. When one declined to participate, another CEM student was asked. Each participant was interviewed for approximately one hour on audiotape. The interviews were immediately transcribed. Then they were e-mailed to the participant for accuracy of transcriptions (Merriam, 2002), and to the colleague studying cohorts for peer review (Merriam, 2002). A reflective journal was used to clarify questions and find missing information.

Grounded theory was used to gather data and find the emerging themes. In grounded theory, “the concepts and themes must emerge from the data without the use of the literature” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 221-222). Open coding, or “coding as you go along,” (p. 222) helped in developing the main themes (see Appendix B); I probed the next participant in topics that arose from the previous interview. Some themes that emerged were similar to ones from existing literature but new themes also emerged.

A general search for “cohorts” was conducted using WilsonWeb and APA psychNET. This resulted in too many items, so the search was narrowed to “doctoral students in cohorts.” I also searched ERIC using “cohorts” and “doctoral students.” The term “cohort” was being used to describe any group, including larger groups of students. Having the literature and the themes from the coding, I proceeded to search for similarities and differences between the two sources.

**Findings**

The definition of a CEM that emerged from this study differed from the one used by Huey (as cited in Potthoff et al., 2001). Instead of eight dimensions of a CEM, three emerged. The CEM as seen by these minority students is one is a (a) family for bonding and support, (b) motivator for academic success and retention, and (c) inhibitor of educational growth.

**CEM as Family for Bonding and Support**

According to all three participants, the first three dimensions to Huey’s definition were one and the same under their view of “family.” The group of individuals was “coming together for a common goal” (Mily). This common goal or “bond,” as John called it, brought a new element into the definition.

The CEM became more than just a group; it was a group with a mission, which created a unity and a tighter bond than just students taking courses together in a particular order. The term “family” was a sub-theme in the literature for describing this tighter bond (Potthoff et al., 2001; Wesson, Holman, Holman, & Cox, 1996). However, all three participants in this study continually referred to each other as family members, raising this to a major theme in this study. “Within a CEM you have almost like a family type experience,” stated Mily. Mily referred again to the CEM as a family, stating, “I think you get a feel of closeness, like almost as if you have your own family within the cohort.” Katherine felt that CEMs allow a “family bond that you can create knowing that you have someone there with you.” This knowledge of not being in it alone was also shared by John. He compared the members of the CEM to sailors on a ship that had already embarked on the journey and they had to keep the ship afloat or all would sink. In
comparing the CEM to other models, Katherine felt “it’s a little more close knit so it [is] still more of a family as opposed to you are just the recipient of this scholarship and you are in this group and you will take classes together.”

Like in all new families, this CEM went through an adjustment period when they were still getting to know each other and did not want to offend or enrage anyone. As Mily explained, In the beginning like everybody is tip-toeing around each other and you know, somebody still doesn’t want to say something because you don’t want to offend somebody else. But I think that once you have gotten to that point where maybe you have [to] duke it out with somebody in the sense that you have had words, you understand where they are coming from. Or once you understand who people are, you actually had that chance to build that bond with them.

Apart from this adjustment period, members felt that their group is not as cohesive as they would like to see it. John pointed out that “forced integration [isn’t] necessarily . . . happening.” As Katherine stated,

To a certain degree I think smaller cliques have been created in the cohort. . . . you tend to get along better with some people based on whether it’s where you live or who you work well with or, you know, just who you get along with in conversation. And, but I think for the most part everyone supports one another to a certain degree, because we can be critical of one another but not get upset. We know we are all working towards the same goal. So in the end everyone is pretty much supportive.

The other two participants supported this view. Mily phrased it best by saying, “But even for those, I guess that I’m not as close to, you can still count on them. You’re having a bad day; they will still encourage you on.” Despite the adjustment periods and the cohort-within-a-cohort, the “family” pushed through and all helped each other. “We all gotta be supporting each other to make it to the finish line,” stated John. This concept was supported by Miller and Irby (1999) who report that the CEM provides empathy, support, and solidarity for the ultimate goal.

**CEM as Motivator for Academic Success and Retention**

Academic success and student retention were tied to motivation for these participants. All three participants have multiple degrees and attribute their success so far to intrinsic motivation. John sees it as “the improvement of the self and well, the intellectual conquest.” However, with all of them holding full-time jobs and supporting themselves and a family, motivation to complete this degree was not found without outside help. “Before it was just me and I had the time to do it and I had the energy. But now with work and the kids and the family, the doc program, it is proving to be challenging,” stated Katherine. Being in the CEM gave them the extra push when they are feeling overwhelmed. Not wanting to let the group down or be last in the group helped Katherine finish tasks. This type of positive competition helped maintain academic success. The family atmosphere that was created also stops many from just quitting. Knowing that they were all going through the same process together allows them to be a support group for each other. Using John’s metaphor, the ship needed to reach ashore for the members to disembark.

**CEM as Inhibitor of Educational Growth**

Participants in the CEM obtained their education easily, but this limited their growth. Many minute yet important items were handled by professors or assistants, so participants had fewer worries and can concentrate more on the program. Their program of study was pre-designed, and their materials were already prepared. They had the same professors and were all in the same classes. Classes and meetings were held at convenient times. Professors were
notified of the fact that they will be teaching the CEM. However, these conveniences also took away some possibilities for expansion and growth. For Mily, being with the same group for all her classes limited her interactions and stunted the growth of knowledge that she would have acquired from having outside sources. She states, “You don’t get to meet other people as much,” limiting her experiences to those in the CEM. Since all of their coursework was pre-planned, they did not explore different paths in the minor cognate. This limited their individual learning and experiences to that which was pre-set by the program.

Discussion

This study reaffirms some of the findings of previous research on the function of CEMs but narrows the components previously mentioned to three. This study raises the sub-theme of family found in prior literature to an actual theme. Family and family atmosphere is important to doctoral students. The CEM expands their existing families and creates a tighter bond that then helps them to move forward in their studies and careers. This study supports research that a cohort-within-a-cohort creates smaller tensions, but in the big picture does not change the feeling of family. The participants enjoy fewer tensions than most doctoral students, including a group of students who would be in the same classes. This reliable group helps in motivating the doctoral students to continue their studies. Motivation to complete the program of study is no longer left to simply intrinsic forces but rather to the collective forces of all members of the CEM. The CEM is a strong factor in ensuring that all of its “family” members complete the program together. On the other hand, being with the same group throughout all of their coursework has its limiting problems. Students felt hindered in their experiences and resources as well as in their choices for classes and further study.

One implication of this study is that there should be more involvement from professors. It is not enough to have their questions answered in class; they need more involvement in upcoming events, such as the dissertation. Students are to begin their dissertations, but they need more guidance in the middle and final steps of their program. Barnett et al. (2000) speaks about the positive impact that professors of the CEM have on its members as it relates to faculty advisement, teaching assignments and faculty-student relationships. Mixed feelings about their professors’ active role in their academic learning emerged from this study’s participants. Katherine feels that the professors are supportive in helping in coursework and being flexible; however, as she feels she’s had lack of training in her upcoming dissertation: “I am hoping with our last few courses they nip that in the bud.” Mily states, “Yes we are adults and yes we have successful jobs and we have our family, but it doesn’t feel like they are as involved and really care if we pass or not unless it starts to reflect on them.”

Conclusions and Implications for Further Study

There are distinct advantages afforded to members of CEMs. The unity, or family type atmosphere, creates a positive learning environment where all are working towards achieving the same goal. Competition is limited to small positive effects and working as a group to find solutions are rewarded. The facilitation of studies, by relieving small but tension-causing items, helps the students focus on their study. Although all students seeking a doctoral degree bring in their own intrinsic motivation, the CEM continues to fuel this motivation and replenish it when the energy is low.

As evidenced by this study, there is a need for more investigation on the role of the professors in the CEM. This model of instruction calls for a different type of teaching from the professor, one that has not yet been clearly defined. The needs of the CEM are different from the
individual needs of doctoral students. Understanding this need could help increase retention of doctoral students and improve graduate studies programs.

Further studies should be conducted on the cohort-within-a-cohort found in this study. Further investigation should focus on whether CEMs made up of minorities tend to work within their own minority group. This investigation would help in the creation of programs to better integrate mixed CEMs and maximize their potential.

References


Appendix A: Interview Protocol

*Questions for Students in a Cohort*

- Would you please tell me a little bit about yourself, your educational background, and professional experience?
- Would you define what a cohort means to you?
- Please tell me a bit about how you heard about the cohort you are part of and how you first became interested in it.
- Please describe your current educational experiences in a cohort.
- Please share what you feel the positive experiences are for you in the cohort.
- Please describe any negative experiences or limitations you have encountered as part of a cohort.
- What do you think makes students want to join a cohort?
- Describe how you think the cohort has supported you to continue your studies.
- What other factors motivate you to continue your program of study?
- Is the cohort program paying for your studies?
- How have your courses trained you for the dissertation process (formal IRB process, not just course projects)?
- How has the cohort program prepared you to meet your professional goals?
- Is there anything else you would like to share that I did not ask?
Using a Bilingual Reading Strategy to Reduce SLD Numbers

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Abstract: Studies show that for Spanish speaking students, vocabulary expansion in Spanish increases fluency and comprehension in English. Therefore, creating a bilingual reading intervention program with a strong emphasis on vocabulary building in the early grades will help improve the students’ overall reading comprehension in English and avoid improper placement.

In the past 30 years, the number of students categorized as Specific Learning Disabled (SLD) has more than tripled (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). The overrepresentation of minorities in this category is just as alarming as its general increase. Many Hispanic students are mislabeled as being SLD when, in reality, a language barrier is the main cause of their poor reading skills (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). Studies show that Spanish speaking students transfer phonological awareness and word-identification skills to the English language (Lindsey, Manis, & Bailey, 2003; Proctor, Carlo, August, & Snow, 2006). Increasing the breadth and depth of the lexicon is an important and well documented factor in improving reading skills (August et al., 2005; Biemiller & Boote, 2006). Improving students’ reading skills before they are labeled reduces the number of students in special education.

Proctor et al. (2006) found a correlation between Spanish vocabulary and English fluency in the early formative years. Their study was conducted using bilingual students and studying the effects of literacy instruction in one language (Spanish) on the reading comprehension of the second language (English). Expanding the vocabulary in Spanish helped increase fluency and comprehension in English (Proctor et al., 2006). The purpose of this paper is to argue that a bilingual reading intervention program with a strong emphasis on vocabulary building in the early grades will help improve a student’s overall reading comprehension in English, thus lowering the number of Hispanic students being placed in SLD.

Properly Defining SLD

Specific Learning Disability (SLD) is a disorder “in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, §2657.30(a)). Children who have a great discrepancy between their IQ-test and their academic achievement receive the label of SLD. This model requires the student to fail before treatment is given (Compton, Fuchs, Fuchs, & Bryant, 2006). For the most part, identification of potential at-risk students does not occur until the third grade under this model. This is especially true for Hispanic students. Hispanic students who are learning English as a second language do not possess the same reading skills as students whose first language is English (Carlo et al., 2004). By the time these students’ needs are addressed, the achievement gap between them and English only learners (EOL) is very wide, forcing many into unnecessary special education programs (August et al., 2005). These students do not have a learning disability, rather a deficit in the size and scope of their vocabulary that hinders their reading pace and comprehension. Without proper early interventions, English Language Learners (ELL) may be confused for students with specific deficits and needs in reading. Placing them in special education programs will only further widen the achievement gap.

http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/
The re-authorization of Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 changes the method of identifying children who may have a SLD. The Act now allows a local education agency to use any research-based intervention in the evaluation process of the child. This empowers teachers, allowing them to identify students with possible disabilities earlier and provide students with proper assistance in their studies. A current form for identifying students is Response-to-Intervention (RtI), which uses research based interventions by the classroom teacher to monitor and remedy gaps in student learning. The success of RtI relies heavily on early intervention in Kindergarten and first grade on the part of the teacher.

**Early Intervention and RtI**

Early intervention is based on the notion that if students are given proper attention and supplemental support, the number of students needing long term remediation or special services is reduced, thus narrowing the gap between the low and high performing students (Schwartz, 2005). Using the early RtI model for SLD identification in reading allows for earlier identification, a stronger focus on the effective instruction of students, and a continuous monitoring process of student learning and desired instructional outcomes (Compton et al., 2006). For RtI to be effective, practitioners must intervene at an early age. Early reading interventions should occur between Kindergarten and first grade to maximize the effectiveness of the RtI (Compton et al., 2006; Spira, Bracken, & Fischel, 2005). Spira et al. (2005) found that if the skills needed to read are not attained by the beginning of third grade, the students would be unlikely to learn the skills. Early intervention allows for the participation of those students identified at-risk in the second tier intervention, before their reading problems increase (Compton et al., 2006). This minimizes the number of students who are low achievers being categorized as SLD because of inappropriate instruction.

The basic model of RtI includes three tiers. The first tier involves either a universal screening test in reading for all students in Kindergarten or first grade or continuous monitoring of the progress of the whole class and recording discrepancies amongst the students by the teacher for the first five to ten weeks (Compton et al., 2006). The second tier provides specialized instruction and remediation in smaller groups to students who are functioning at a slower pace than the general class (Compton et al., 2006; Schwartz, 2005). This tier calls for continuous monitoring of the remediation throughout an 8-20 week period (Davis, Lindo, & Compton, 2007; Schwartz, 2005). If the student has not been successful with the intervention, the student would be moved to the third and final tier, which normally is special education and requires an evaluation by the multidisciplinary team to determine the student’s exact needs (Compton et al., 2006; Davis et al., 2007). The goal is to intervene early and remediate the reading deficit before it becomes a major problem. Under this model, ELLs receive additional remediation under tier two. With this remediation, the gap between the ELLs and EOLs would narrow.

**Vocabulary Acquisition**

Although many factors are pertinent to being able to read and comprehend what is read, one aspect of being a successful reader is overlooked by most primary school curriculums - vocabulary. Vocabulary, or the building of the lexicon, may be a powerful predictor of reading comprehension (Biemiller & Boote, 2006). Ironically, though, our schools are not emphasizing vocabulary importance in the curriculum. In fact, their lack of inclusion in the curriculum are causes the gap to continue to expand among the students with reading differences (Biemiller & Boote, 2006). Studies have stated that low or restricted vocabulary in the primary grades has a
limiting effect on a student’s reading comprehension in the middle grades (Biellmiller & Boote, 2006).

Vocabulary builds schema. It creates literal meanings, connotations, semantic associations, and ties to other words and constructs (August et al., 2005; Carlo et al., 2004). As a student reads a passage, the different words conjure up these different schemas and connections. If a large majority of the words in a passage have no pre-established schema for the student, or are unknown to the student, then the reading of the passage becomes a daunting feat for the student (August et al., 2005; Droop & Verhoeven, 2003). As the student’s vocabulary expands, so does the refinement of the existing schemas and phonemic differences between the words, improving reading comprehension (Droop & Verhoeven, 2003; Roberts, 2005). Vocabulary has also been found to be extremely important in the building of phonological awareness (Lindsey et al., 2003; Roberts, 2005). The connections between schema and phonological awareness with vocabulary help ease the students into reading.

From an early age, vocabulary may be taught through the repetition of words and stories with direct explanations of word meanings (Biemiller & Boote, 2006). By repeating the words and having the children attach meaning to them, vocabulary acquisition improves (Biemiller & Boote, 2006), thus allowing students to make phonological connections to words (Roberts, 2005). In a study conducted by Bemiller and Boote (2006), the researchers’ use of repetition of oral reading combined with explanations of unknown words helped improve the number of words that young students were able to learn. This study involved a total of 122 students from grades K-2 and approximately half were students who learned a language other than English first. Students gained an average of 12% of word meaning by repetition and 10% more when adding word explanations to the repetition. How does vocabulary acquisition affect ELLs?

**English Language Learners**

English language learners (ELL) enter the classroom with many disadvantages. The majority of ELLs are learning a language that is different from the one spoken at home (Lindsey et al., 2003), limiting their exposure to the English language only to the classroom setting. English Only Learners (EOL) come into the classrooms with 5,000 to 7,000 learned words before beginning formal reading instruction (August et al., 2005), while ELLs come into school with significantly less learned vocabulary (Droop & Verhoeven, 2003). Although ELLs probably bring with them the equivalent size of vocabulary in their native language, their lack of vocabulary in English places them at a great disadvantage. ELLs also enter the classroom with fewer word associations and schemas (Droop & Verhoeven, 2003). In essence, even if they possess the knowledge of a certain word, they may not be able to apply the word in all of its contexts correctly.

Despite the limitations in language of these students, significant strides have been made through the implementation of reading interventions. Effective interventions have at their core a strong focus on vocabulary development. In their study, Droop and Verhoeven (2003) found that ELLs’ vocabulary had a strong and direct influence on their reading comprehension. The increase in ELLs’ vocabulary size and the connections they made to other word meanings helped make drastic improvements in reading comprehension. In another study by Carlo et al. (2004), reading comprehension for ELLs also improved as vocabulary increased. This study further found that direct vocabulary instruction (explicitly teaching new words with explanation of meaning as the reading was done) and instruction in word-learning strategies were effective methods for teaching ELLs. There should be an even greater increase if ELLs were allowed to learn as bilingual learners.
Bilingual Learners

Building the students’ vocabulary in both languages will expand the students’ connections and schemas of words, improving their reading skills. Exposing students to two languages has been effective in improving reading and writing skills (Lesaux & Siegel, 2003). Proctor et al. (2006) found that students who speak two languages are able to focus more and have better use of the meaning-making strategies from both languages. Furthermore, these researchers found that knowledge of Spanish vocabulary enhances English reading comprehension. Other studies have found that bilingual students use their knowledge in the native language to infer meanings for English cognates (August et al., 2005). As previously stated, phonological awareness and word-identification skills were transferable from Spanish to English in studies of ELLs (Lindsey et al., 2003; Proctor et al., 2006).

Future Considerations

The question still remains - How do educators develop a successful intervention program for ELLs? The goal should be to create an early RtI program that focuses on strengthening vocabulary through systematic repetition of words and direct explanation of said words. The key is to develop this program through bilingual instruction. Instead of forgoing the vocabulary these students have learned in the native language, it should be used to build new connections to the English language. The ELLs benefit from receiving English vocabulary and reading instruction in conjunction with the EOLs in the class. They should also receive an additional amount of time learning the same vocabulary and reading in their native language, thus allowing students to make the semantic connections of the new words and transfer them to learning English.

References


Gender Biases and Nontraditional Literature in the Urban Elementary Classroom

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Abstract: Gender stereotypes pervade children’s literature. This action research project sought to alter stereotypical perceptions of gender roles held by a classroom of urban elementary school students through the introduction of nontraditional gender role literature. Results suggested that some stereotypical perceptions could be altered through utilization and discussion of such literature.

Due to gender- and racially-based oppressive, prejudicial, and discriminatory aspects historically fundamental within American society, how individuals or groups are perceived by society remains important. The manner in which individuals come to perceive their social world is heavily dependent upon the physical, psychological, and social environments available to them. Therefore, forming adaptive perceptions of societal constructs (such as gender roles) can be viewed as a significant developmental challenge. Furthermore, such a challenge may be incrementally more difficult for individuals from environments involving multiple constraints that may prevent exposure to diverse notions of social ideologies. One environment that may significantly limit access to alternative views of adjustment may be that of the inner-city. Urban populations of children are often confronted with institutionalized inequality at school and within the greater community, potentially prompting relational crises in the adaptive negotiation of racial and gender identity development (Stevens, 2002). Therefore, investigating the perceptions of gender roles held by children in urban environments may provide meaningful insight into factors and processes that promote and maintain particular experiences among members of this group. Listening to the representative voices of these children may reveal specific and unique developmental mechanisms guiding psychosocial perceptual adjustment, and in turn explain future developmental outcomes.

Emergent gender role beliefs are generally dictated by factors such as societal barriers, guidelines of cultures, and particular customs of families (Stevens, 2002). Unfortunately, many influences upon these developing perceptions of gender roles may exhibit gender preferences that are typical of traditional societal views. For example, from preadolescence, children within our society are bombarded with images of females manifesting inferior gender-roles. By kindergarten, children assign females a smaller range of lesser-paying jobs than their male counterparts (Stroeher, 1994). In addition, as females grow older, they assign escalating statuses to masculine jobs and male workers, while deeming themselves inadequate to function within such positions (Durkin & Nugent, 1998; Liben, Bigler, & Krogh, 2001). Stereotypes of gender inferiority pervade books (Wason-Ellam, 1997), television (Durkin & Nugent), and other aspects of popular culture. Children come to reflect these stereotypes in their attitudes and cognitions (MacGillivray & Martinez, 1998). Fictional characters from children’s literature can influence children’s schemas for subsequent perceptions of the world and their role in it (Zipes, 1986). Knowledge of gender stereotypes increases with age in elementary school, and core gender stereotypes solidify well before school-age (Zemore, Fiske, & Kim, 2000). Teen-Talk Barbie, for
sale only a decade ago, giggled, “Math is hard! I love shopping! Will we ever have enough clothes?” (Ben-Zeev et al., 2005). The present action research project sought to alter perceptions that may develop through such stereotypical portrayals of gender in a classroom of students in an urban elementary school through the introduction of nontraditional gender role literature.

Method

Action research involves practitioner self-reflection in an effort to increase the justice of their work (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). In this respect, it was appropriate to use my own class in the investigation. The research project took place at an urban elementary school in Miami, Florida where I was a fourth grade teacher. The student composition of the school was 73% African American, 25% Hispanic, and 1% White. Over 90% of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch (MDCPS, 2006). The participants included a classroom of 33 fourth grade 10- and 11-year-old students (23 male, and 10 female; 25 African American, and 8 Hispanic).

One facet of action research includes providing a vehicle for educators to develop a better understanding of students as learners (Rogers et al., 2007). The goal of action research is to investigate a perceived problem, or achieve a goal in current practice (Gall et al., 2007). In this spirit, the current study sought to investigate gender perceptions, but also attempted to take steps to change traditional stereotypical perceptions through literature and discussion.

Initial information was gathered through daily observations of students and teachers within my school. Observations were collected in daily journals and events and information relevant to gender role stereotyping were highlighted. A survey was administered to participants. The survey items reflected traditional gender stereotypes, and were derived from Measurement of Gender-Role Attitudes, Beliefs, and Principles (Prasad & Baron, 1996) (see Appendix A). The initial survey was followed by semi-structured group interviews. The group interview sample was deliberately chosen from my class. Purposeful cluster sampling was used to select four groups of 4 fourth-graders. Each group included male and female participants. The students in each group were friendly with, and had conversational familiarity with, each other.

The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes each. They centered on student perceptions of gender roles. Interviews were guided by the predetermined set of survey questions, but considerable latitude was given and follow-up questions were based on student responses. Extensive fieldnotes were taken to capture relevant statements. Fieldnotes were then rewritten and coded, categorizing similar statements of perception and experience. The coded passages were reanalyzed to determine which were related to participants’ perceptions of gender.

Following the initial surveys and interviews, participants read and reported on a number of children’s books depicting nontraditional pursuits of boys and girls (see Appendix B). Each book met the criteria of a main child character acting contrary to a prevalent gender stereotype. The books were reported on in a simple book report format: Students were to predict what they believed would happen in the story, read the story, then summarize the story, describe the main character, and reflect upon their prediction. Post-intervention, students completed the gender-role surveys, and participated in group interviews for a second time. Post-intervention interviews centered on the students’ book reports; books were discussed individually and collectively. The same coding process was implemented.

Results

Pre-Intervention

Analyses of pre-intervention surveys and interviews revealed three major categories of gender biases: (a) social roles, (b) academic competence, and (c) future competence.
Social roles. Consistent with traditional social role stereotypes, students predominantly rated girls as better at chores, housework, and taking care of children, while a large majority rated boys as tougher, faster, and better at sports. These social gender biases were consistent across gender. A response typical from both boys and girls when questioned about typical female jobs was given by one participant: “Girls be taking care of the kids and stuff.”

Academic competence. In general academic categories, participants consistently rated girls as being more competent than boys. Although some said that boys and girls performed equally, none said that boys do better homework or receive more A’s. Furthermore, only one student said boys turn in better classwork. These responses were similar across gender, except girls were more likely to rate themselves as smarter. Boys were unwilling to make that jump—mostly rating girls and boys of equal intelligence. Responses differed by gender, however, regarding specific academic areas. Boys very rarely rated girls as superior in specific areas such as math and reading. Girls most often said that boys and girls displayed equal competence in specific academic areas, even rating boys more competent in science. Although they recognized superior overall academic performance by females, consistent with societal stereotyping they ranked males as better in specific mathematics and science areas. When participants were confronted with the apparent incongruity of rating boys as more competent in specific areas, yet less competent in general, answers were conflicting. Whereas many boys assured me they were better at math, others questioned their confident peers: “No, boys don’t do better no way; look at the 100% [bulletin] board; it’s mostly girls!” Boys searched for explanations: “Girls just don’t want to tell the truth and admit we better,” a boy explained. “But all the girls I know get A’s,” another countered. “Boys not really better at math…even though I still say boys are better,” a boy displayed his confusion. “That’s because boys don’t do homework,” one hypothesized. “Boys just be playing outside more,” said another. “They don’t be focusing on they work,” yet another commented. “Girls do their homework because they don’t have video games.” Another boy jumped in, “Boys attract to Nintendo.” The general consensus was that boys would do better than, or as well as girls if they had fewer distractions. The responsibility for lackluster performance was relinquished from the males and placed on distracting outside influences.

Future competence. Participants’ gender perceptions of future competence were very different from those of present academic competence. Seventy-six percent of students expected males and females to perform equally in high school. Correspondingly, 70% expected males and females will perform equally in college. The students who did not expect equal performance expected girls to do better in high school, but boys to outperform girls in college. Following schooling, there was a big swing in expectations. The majority of students believed boys would be better at working outside the home. Students chose boys over girls to get a better and higher-paying job and to have more money. Analyzed by gender, girls’ responses were relatively equally distributed regarding who would succeed in the working world, often choosing same. Boys, however, overwhelmingly chose themselves as more competent in every area following high school leading up to a career outside the home. Overall, gender perceptions of a more successful working career favored boys, whereas perceptions of present academic competence favored girls. When presented with this apparent disparity, participants said it does not surprise them; girls said things would “even out,” whereas boys were more adamant that they would come out on top. “The older [girls] get, they get worse; they see their moms and be like that…Girls work at home or stay and do nothing.” Several participants seemed convinced that future success was less necessary for girls than boys. Despite differences in present performance, boys were often undaunted about their opportunities for future success; they said that “boys grow
into it.” Oppositely to boys, responsibility for lesser competence in girls was placed directly on the girls themselves. The consensus was that when boys didn’t succeed, an outside influence (Nintendo, playing outside) affected performance. However, when girls didn’t succeed, it was characterized as a personal choice to “do nothing,” an intrinsic character flaw.

**Intervention – Discussions of Nontraditional Literature**

During discussions, students were especially cognizant of qualities of characters that reflected nontraditional gender roles. “Jacob is special because he shares feelings with dad,” one girl mentioned about a male character. This is not a common action for males in children’s literature. “He liked to sit and smell the flowers...he did not fight” a boy said of another male. This cognizance was also apparent in statements about female characters. “The girl did courageous things,” a girl described one female character. Courage is an attribute often reserved for male characters in children’s literature. “She had a caterpillar with her and loved all kinds of slimy things normal girls would not touch,” a boy said of another girl. The students also recognized what the stories had in common: “Oooh, the girls all had their own way of doing something,” and “the girls wanted to do something that boys do.” Also, “boys do what the girls do, like [being] good at taking care of something.” Dialoguing helps students influence their own change (McIntyre, Chatzopoulos, Politi, & Roz, 2007). Students became the agents for change as the discussion continued, and girls became offended when some pursuits were called “boy things.” A girl explained, “Sports ain’t a boy thing; a lot of girls [are] good at it.” Statements describing similarities in books then began to become less gender-oriented. “All [characters] did what they wanted to do and be what they wanted to be,” a boy articulated. One girl verbalized the books’ general theme: “Being it no matter what anyone else thinks about it.”

**Post-Intervention Surveys**

Some encouraging trends emerged from post-intervention surveys. Most notably, there was a clear response difference in the areas most heavily tied to gender stereotypes. These included both social role items and specific academic areas. These items were also most often the focus of the nontraditional literature.

**Social roles.** Whereas in pre-intervention surveys 73% of participants rated girls as better at childcare, in post-intervention surveys, the majority of participants rated both genders as equally competent at this task. The majority of participants also rated both genders as equally competent at chores and housework. Similarly, whereas in pre-intervention surveys 79% of participants rated boys as better at sports, in post-intervention surveys, almost half of the participants rated both genders as equally competent at this task. These increases in perceptions of equal competence in such social role performance held true across gender.

**Academic competence.** Similar to pre-intervention, in general academic categories, students consistently rated girls as presently being more competent than boys. They reported that girls do better homework, receive more A’s, and do better classwork. These responses were similar across gender. When speaking about specific academic areas such as math, boys often rated themselves superior pre-intervention. Post-intervention, however, the large majority of boys rated genders equally competent in these areas.

**Future competence.** Notably, the collection of gender-fair literature did not change participant perception of gender difference between present and future success. Students still consistently rated girls as presently more academically competent. Also, although girls now rated themselves in a more equal light, boys still consistently rated themselves as more competent in the professional world following college.

**Discussion and Implications**
In the elementary school environment, girls perform equal to or better than boys on nearly every measure of achievement, but by the time they graduate high school or college, they have fallen behind (M. Sadker & Sadker, 1995). Biased classroom interaction decreases females’ confidence in their intellectual abilities (Crawford & MacLeod, 1990). Courses of study and careers remain gender segregated and even gifted programs often reinforce gender segregation (D. M. Sadker, 2000). Societal stereotyping may be a major cause of these phenomena. Child perceptions mirror our societal reality and not an equitable ideal. The byproducts of the social power structure are stereotypical perceptions of gender roles evidenced in this study; this may cause children to limit their future paths based on the perception that future success is tied to gender, and that male flaws are environmentally caused while female flaws are intrinsic traits.

Clearly, gender biases are reinforced at school. Classrooms are microcosms of society. It thus follows that normal socialization patterns of young children that often lead to distorted perceptions of gender roles are reflected in the classrooms. In the elementary classroom, this bias is embedded in literature (Ernst, 1995), and thus is implicitly part of the curriculum. Using literature that omits contributions of women, generalizes the experiences of either gender, and stereotypes gender roles is common. Stereotypes in traditional children’s literature can condition boys and girls to accept such gender images (Fox, 1993). In contrast, this study demonstrates how nontraditional gender role literature provides children the opportunity to reevaluate their gender biases and inspires them to adopt more gender fair perceptions. Educators are often unaware of the subtle gender bias that often occurs in the classrooms (Lundeberg, 1997). This research provides evidence of how the use of nontraditional gender role literature allows students to develop more flexible attitudes towards gender roles, and helps students view each other as individuals, instead of as general members of a gender with a predetermined role. Educators and parents should be aware of the gender bias embedded in many educational materials and texts, and need to combat this bias. One method could include the use of nontraditional gender role literature. Such literature should include the following: individuals portrayed with distinctive personalities irrespective of their gender, achievement not evaluated on the basis of gender, occupations represented as gender-free, and individuals display emotion depending upon the situation, not on their gender (Rudman, 1995). Additionally, combining traditional and nontraditional literature brings about classroom dialoguing on gender stereotypes (Jett-Simpson & Masland, 1993). Many children’s books can be used as catalysts for classroom dialogues (Joseph, 2004; McGowan, McGowan, & Wheeler, 1994) (see Appendix B for a list). Future research is necessary to explore the role of nontraditional gender-role children’s literature in altering biased perceptions of children on a larger scale. Also, the role of teacher and parent perceptions in shaping gender stereotype awareness should be explored.

References


Wason-Ellam, L. (1997). "If only I was like Barbie." Language Arts, 74(6), 430-437.

Appendix A

Survey Questions

For each statement, check BOYS, GIRLS, or SAME for what you think is the best answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>BOYS</th>
<th>GIRLS</th>
<th>SAME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better at Math</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Turn in better homework</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Better at Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Better at Science</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Better at sports</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better at learning to use computers</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Faster runners</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better at chores and housework</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Will get better jobs</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Better at taking care of children</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will have more money in the future</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Better at working outside of the house</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will do better in high school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will do better in college</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better at baseball</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers are nicer to</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers give more A's to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers receive better work from</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Will be more successful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers pay more attention to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers like more</td>
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<tr>
<td>More well-behaved</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tougher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will get a higher paying job</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Smarter</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Nontraditional Children’s Literature (Joseph, 2004)

Nontraditional Pursuits of Girls

Gauch, P. L. (1992). This time, Tempe Wick?
Henkes, K. (1987). Sheila Rae, the brave.
Little, J. (1991). Jess was the brave one.
Nontraditional Pursuits of Boys

Corey, D. (1992). *Will there be a lap for me?*
DePaola, T. (1979). *Oliver Button is a sissy.*
Graham, B. (1988). *Crusher is coming!*
No Child Left Behind, Stereotype Threat, and the Standardized Testing of African American Third-Graders

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Abstract: Stereotype threat theory proposes that the possibility of being judged in terms of a negative stereotype in a particular domain negatively affects one’s performance. The proposed mixed-methods research will investigate the influences of stereotype threat on African American third-graders in a post-No Child Left Behind environment.

Stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) refers to the risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one’s group in a particular performance domain. Stereotype threat theory assumes that underperformance is triggered by the possibility of being judged in terms of said stereotype. Given the possibility of positive intervention (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Cohen, Garcia, Apfel, & Master, 2006; Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003), a necessary next step is to examine how children experience stereotype threat effects. This is particularly important when addressing potential remedies for the racial achievement gap in standardized testing, which has become increasingly important at the elementary level (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Therefore, the research questions that guide this proposal are: (a) How does stereotype threat influence the reading test performance of African American children in an urban elementary school? What mediates these stereotype threat effects? (b) How do African American children perceive these influences, and navigate through the school year approaching the standardized test?

African American children are targeted by a negative stereotype of intellectual inferiority in all academic areas (Steele, 1997). This negative racial stereotype is made salient in a standardized testing situation, thereby impeding performance and causing African American elementary students to perform more poorly than they would in a neutral context (McKown & Weinstein, 2003, Study 2). However, past research on stereotype threat effects on African American children failed to take into account domain-identification. That is, individuals most affected by stereotype threat are highly identified with the domain in question (Steele). Threatening situational pressure thus has greater effect on a subset of the stereotyped group that more strongly ties their identity to the standardized test results.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) (2002) has mandated for schools that do not make Adequate Yearly Progress (based on standardized test scores) to adopt state sponsored tutoring programs (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). These schools house predominantly African American populations, and often adopt curricula centered on standardized test practice (Ahlquist, 2003; Cawelti, 2006). African American students at such schools tie their identity to their standardized test scores (Kozol, 2005). Negative stereotype threat performance effects are augmented when the performance domain is highly self-relevant for the individual (Aronson et al., 1999; Keller, 2007; Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999). The main hypothesis of the proposed study is that the stereotype threat conditions evoked by diagnostic testing will negatively affect the standardized test performance of stereotype-aware African American children, but more so if they are domain-identified. Another hypothesis is that the effect of stereotype threat conditions

http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/
on standardized test performance will be mediated by increased anxiety, decreased self-efficacy, and orientation towards a performance-avoidance achievement goal. The last hypothesis is that stereotype threat effects can be mitigated by presenting exams as nondiagnostic, and eliminating the threatening environment. The qualitative segment of the proposed study will investigate how African American third-graders perceive their stereotyped status, and will allow for a deeper understanding of the underlying processes.

Theoretical Framework

The conceptual model clarifies the hypotheses (see Figure 1). Awareness of the threatening stereotype is a necessary prerequisite of stereotype threat experiences (McKown & Weinstein, 2003, Study 1). Identity salience, or one’s consciousness of one’s stereotyped identity (Shih, Pittinsky, & Ambady, 1999), and domain-identification (Aronson et al., 1999; Keller, 2007; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele, 1997), augment negative stereotype threat performance effects. Diagnostic standardized testing situations have been enough to evoke negative stereotype threat performance effects in stigmatized populations (McKown & Weinstein, 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Experiencing stereotype threat has been linked to orientation towards performance-avoidance achievement goals (a focus on avoiding negative judgments instead of mastering the task) (Ryan & Ryan, 2005). Whereas stereotype threat research has failed to reliably pinpoint mediating processes (see Smith, 2004 for a review), performance-avoidance achievement goals have been directly linked to increased anxiety (Elliot & McGregor, 1999, 2001), decreased self-efficacy (Middleton & Midgley, 1997), and subsequent depressed test performance. In this manner, when stereotype-aware African American children take a standardized test presented as diagnostic of ability, it can be reasonably hypothesized that they will experience increased anxiety and decreased self-efficacy, accompanied by depressed test performance. Furthermore, students who are domain-identified will likely experience augmented negative performance effects. Additionally, relevant experiences of these children during the school year approaching the standardized test will be investigated.

Proposed Method – Phase 1

The proposed research will utilize a mixed method design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Specifically, a sequential mixed method design (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) will be implemented; a quantitative phase of the study will be followed by a separate qualitative phase. Methods will be mixed for the purpose of complementarity (Greene, 2007), to gain a more comprehensive understanding by exploring different aspects of a complex phenomenon. The phenomenon being investigated is stereotype threat: the risk of confirming a negative stereotype about one’s group in a particular performance domain.

The participants will be African American third grade students at an urban elementary school in a major metropolitan area in Florida. The student composition of the school is 80% African American, 19% Hispanic, and 1% White. Over 90% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch (MDCPS, 2006). The school has never made Adequate Yearly Progress (U.S. Department of Education, 2007) by NCLB standards, and has implemented several test-preparation protocols mandated by the state as a result. These characteristics are typical of many schools in urban centers in the United States (Kozol, 2005). Third-graders were chosen because of the particularly high stakes of the third grade standardized reading test: low performance can result in mandatory retention based on NCLB standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Following an open-ended approach to assessing children’s stereotype awareness (Biek, 2006; McKown & Weinstein, 2003), a written measure was developed which asks participants how a planet where green people did not think blue people were smart was like the real world.
The Domain Identification Measure (DIM) will be administered to stereotype-aware participants. A median split will be performed on the resulting scores to create domain-identified and non-domain-identified groups within each threat condition. Steele and Aronson’s (1995) methods will then be applied, manipulating stereotype threat conditions by characterizing a practice Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) in Reading as either a practice standardized test diagnostic of ability, or as a nondiagnostic performance task. The practice FCAT will consist of two grade-level reading passages, each followed by 10 multiple choice questions from state-provided standardized test practice materials (for a total of 20 items). Performance will be measured by number of questions answered correctly in 30 min. The domain-identified and non-domain-identified participants will each be randomly assigned to either a diagnostic or nondiagnostic testing condition. The experimenter will prepare students for the activity using a script derived from McKown and Weinstein (2003) (see Appendix A). After reading comprehension activity directions are given, but before the participants begin working, the goal orientation, self-reported anxiety, and self-efficacy of participants will be assessed using the appropriate measures. Self-reported anxiety will be measured for all participants using the State Anxiety Scale from State Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAIC) (Spielberger, Edwards, Montouri, & Lushene, 1973). Self-efficacy will be measured for all participants using the academic self-efficacy component of the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS) (Middleton & Midgley, 1997; Midgley et al., 1996). Goal orientation of participants will be measured using the performance-avoid goal orientation (revised) component of the PALS (Midgley et al., 2000). Additionally, although research has established that stigmatized individuals suffer impaired performance under stereotype threat conditions, the anxiety presumed to help mediate this effect has proven difficult to establish through self-reports. Therefore, following the model of Bosson, Haymovitz, and Pinel (2004), anxiety will also be assessed by a judge blind to all procedures directed to look for behaviors that communicate anxiety during the test. Ratings for each participant will be averaged to find a mean level of observed anxiety during the test.

**Proposed Method – Phase 2**

The participants will be a purposefully selected group of 4 of the African-American third grade students found to be domain-identified with reading in Phase 1 of the study. The design of the study will include interviews supplemented by classroom observations. Participants will be interviewed on several occasions throughout the school year with questions related to identity salience, stereotype awareness, goal orientation, test anxiety, and domain-identification related to the FCAT. The interviews will be semistructured. Semistructured interviews allow the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). A framework for each interview will be developed beforehand. The initial framework will be adapted to create an outline of interview questions more specific to participants. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed and participants will read the transcripts and make any changes they deem necessary. Similar statements will then be categorized through a detailed line-by-line analysis. Codes will then be applied to transcripts, and coded passages will be reanalyzed to develop cogent categories related to the discussed mediators of stereotype threat. The passages will then be grouped and reorganized into themes. Conclusions on perceptions of influencing factors will be drawn from these themes. This data will be supplemented with fieldnotes from classroom observations. The classroom observations and member checking will serve as forms of triangulation.

**Pilot Study**
A pilot study was conducted to provide preliminary quantitative data on the effects of stereotype threat on African American third graders in an urban elementary school. The procedure was identical to that delineated in the Phase 1 methods, with two exceptions: (a) anxiety was assessed only through self-report, and (b) the final sample of stereotype-aware participants included 17 students from one classroom.

A 2 (domain-identification) x 2 (threat condition) MANOVA was conducted evaluate the effects of stereotype threat on reading test scores, anxiety, self-efficacy, and goal orientation. There was a significant main effect of threat condition on reading score $F(1,13) = 15.81$, $p < .01$, and a near significant main effect of threat condition on anxiety $F(1,13) = 4.32$, $p = .06$. As hypothesized, participants in the nondiagnostic condition scored significantly higher ($\bar{x} = 47.56\%$) than participants in the diagnostic condition ($\bar{x} = 15.75\%$). Also, participants in the nondiagnostic condition reported less anxiety ($\bar{x} = 28.65$) than participants in the diagnostic condition ($\bar{x} = 36.68$) (see Figures 2 and 3). There were no other significant main effects. This may be due to the small sample size utilized in the pilot study.

There was also a near significant interaction between domain-identification and threat condition on reading score $F(1,13) = 2.58$, $p = .13$. The simple main effects were further analyzed, revealing highly significant differences in reading test scores between threat conditions only for domain-identified participants $F(1,13) = 19.15$, $p < .01$. Domain-identified participants in the nondiagnostic condition scored significantly higher ($\bar{x} = 57.80\%$) than domain-identified participants in the diagnostic condition ($\bar{x} = 15.20\%$). Scores differed in the same direction for non-domain-identified participants; however, this difference was not statistically significant (see Figure 4). These results were in line with the primary research hypothesis. There were no other significant interactions. This is likely a factor of the small sample size utilized in the pilot study. The results of the pilot study provide preliminary data highlighting the importance of the proposed study.

**Educational Implications of Potential Results**

Stereotype threat theory posits that awareness of negative stereotypes induces members of stigmatized groups to become concerned that their performance will be judged in terms of these stereotypes, which depresses their performance within the stereotyped domain (McKown & Weinstein, 2003; Spencer et al., 1999; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Members of stigmatized groups who are more identified with the performance domain are particularly affected by stereotype threat manipulations (Steele, 1997). Results of the pilot study support the main hypothesis that the stereotype threat conditions evoked by diagnostic testing will negatively affect the standardized test performance of stereotype-aware African American children, but more so if they are domain-identified. If results of the larger proposed study support this hypothesis, this would indicate that racial stereotypes regarding academic performance become salient and have adverse performance effects at early ages. The subsequent qualitative investigation will lead to a deeper understanding of the situational and cognitive processes mediating these effects from student perspectives. These potential effects are disconcerting in a time when NCLB has drastically increased the significance of standardized testing in the elementary grades. NCLB supported testing regimens may have adverse cognitive and performance effects on certain populations of students. Attention to the situational presentation of testing is therefore critical. The proposed research could bolster the argument that high-stakes standardized testing situations make relevant social stereotypes salient, thereby causing depressed performance in stigmatized populations. Such information is of particular importance to educational policymakers involved in standardized achievement based legislation.
Additionally, if results support the hypotheses, this would suggest that test performance is sensitive to situational and cognitive processes amenable to teacher intervention. This is particularly important to teachers of African American children in that attention to the environmental details surrounding standardized testing situations can potentially prevent maladaptive consequences for their students. Positive intervention has already been demonstrated in middle school and college populations by teaching students to view intelligence as malleable rather than fixed (Aronson et al., 2002; Good et al., 2003), by having students reaffirm their sense of self-worth (Cohen et al., 2006; Frantz, Cuddy, Burnett, Ray, & Hart, 2004; Martens, Johns, Greenberg, & Schimel, 2006), and by increasing accessibility to positive in-group role models (Huguet & Regner, 2007; Marx & Roman, 2002). If educators are interested in ameliorating the racial achievement gap, implementation of interventions to help prevent the negative performance consequences evoked by stereotype threat is essential at earlier ages. The proposed research will highlight opportunities for possible intervention.

References


Appendix A

Directions

Diagnostic Condition

Now we are going to complete some reading questions. Some are easy and some are hard. You probably will not get all of the questions correct. Let me tell you why we are doing these questions. The questions you are going to answer are practice for the FCAT. They are a very, very good way of finding out how well you will perform on the actual FCAT. The test is difficult so that I can really find out how well you will do on the FCAT. Please do your best so I can see what you are good at, and what you are not so good at.

Nondiagnostic Condition

You are about to complete a problem solving activity. This is not a test. The questions are difficult so that I can really see how children solve problems. Please try the best that you can.
Figure Captions

*Figure 1.* Conceptual model illustrating the mechanisms mediating stereotype threat as related to diagnostic test performance.

*Figure 2.* Effect of threat condition on the reading test performance of African American third graders.

*Figure 3.* Effect of threat condition on the self-reported anxiety of African American third graders.

*Figure 4.* Effect of domain-identification on stereotype threat reading test performance effects for African American third graders.

Figure 1
Figure 3

This bar chart illustrates the mean anxiety scores between two testing conditions: Non-Diagnostic and Diagnostic. The y-axis represents the mean anxiety score, with a range from 0 to 40. The chart shows a higher mean anxiety score in the Diagnostic condition compared to the Non-Diagnostic condition.
Figure 4

The bar chart shows the mean reading test scores (in percent) for different testing conditions. The x-axis represents domain identification (Not Domain-Identified and Domain-Identified), and the y-axis represents mean reading test score. The chart compares scores under non-diagnostic and diagnostic conditions.
The Effect of Cultural Schemata on Reading Processing

Yang Yang
Florida International University, USA

Abstract: This paper examines the history of schema theory and how culture is incorporated into schema theory. Furthermore, the author argues that cultural schema affects students’ usage of reader-based processing and text-based processing in reading.

Researchers studying reading process have long known that readers’ background knowledge affects their reading comprehension. In the last few decades, this has been explained by schema theory. In this paper, the author will trace the origin of schema theory and examine how culture affects schema development. Furthermore, the author relates cultural schema to research in reading field by exploring how it affects reading processes. By doing so, the author aims to raise the awareness of the diversity of students’ cultural backgrounds among educators and lead to the changes in instructional pedagogies correspondingly.

Schema Theory and Cultural Schemata

The term schema was first used in the 19th century by Kant, who considered it an intrinsic structure that people use to organize and interpret the outside world (Ajideh, 2003; McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005). Bartlett first proposed the schema theory as a construct in his classic book Remembering. Bartlett (1932) believed that understanding and remembering occurs in the contexts of people’s previous experiences and information. He used schema referring to “an active organization of [those] past reactions, or past experience” (1932, p. 201).

Schema (pl. schemata) is defined as “an abstract knowledge structure …that represents the relationships among its component parts” (Anderson & Pearson, 1984, p. 10) and “a hypothetical mental structure for representing generic concepts stored in memory” (Rumelhart, 1980, p. 34). As people continually encounter various cases, they start to summarize what they have known into a set of general, abstracted ideas and concepts (Ajideh, 2003). People organize and manage these ideas and concepts actively to make them meaningful to themselves. In some situations, the network of these meaningful and related objects, people, events, and experiences establishes broad schemata. In other situations, schemata could refer to a specific concept and various aspects of the concept itself (Vurdien, 1994). In both situations, schemata stress the wholeness of the structure and the connectedness among component parts.

Seen as organized previous knowledge and experiences, schemata determine how a person interprets incoming information and furthermore shape how to expect situations or information he or she will encounter. A person tries to arrive at an interpretation that is in accordance with his or her experience of the way the world is (Yule, 1996). When the incoming information does not match a person’s schemata, he/ she may not understand the information; consequently, it would be difficult to expect what is going to happen next as well.

http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/
Schemata are not fixed structures. Rather, schemata consistently shape and are shaped by experiences. Based on various incoming experiences, schemata change in two different ways. On the one hand, if new information is related to the previous knowledge, existing schemata adjust or expand by assimilating the new information; on the other hand, if new information does not exist in existing schemata, new mental structure must be built up (Ajideh, 2003). Either way, humans continually build on and revise their schemata according to new information.

The idea of schemata is based on the interaction between individuals and objects, events, circumstances, ideas, and concepts in society. During this interaction, culture, which is deeply embedded in society, comes into play. Brooks (1968) referred to culture as “the individual’s role in the unending kaleidoscope of life situations of every kind and the rules or models for attitudes and conduct in them. …What is important in culture…is what one is expected to think, believe, say, and do…in typical situations” (pp. 218-221). Fleck (1979) defines culture in a more mutual way – a formation in a community of people who share their experiences to the group, “mutually exchanging ideas or maintaining intellectual interaction” (p. 39).

Both definitions have implied some key features of culture in spite of the different perspectives. First, all members share some assumptions about rules, models, ideas, etc. that are unique to a cultural group. Furthermore, members from the same cultural group are expected to behave in appropriate ways based on those share assumptions. Those assumptions are regarded as an integrated part of group members’ perception and/or behavior patterns (Pritchard, 1990). When people generalize the abstract concepts from their interaction with different circumstances in society, they internalize those cultural assumptions in their mental structures. Cultural assumptions are the core elements in schemata development.

Bartlett (as cited in Saito, 2000) considered schemata as cultural structures of the mind, patterns that extend into the social and cultural world. Schemata “explain the constitutive role of culturally organized experience in individual sense making” (McVee, Dunsmore, & Gavelek, 2005, p. 535). Therefore, if an individual encounters new information or experiences without having corresponding cultural schemata, he or she may not know how to understand or respond. If new information a person encounters contradicts with existing cultural schemata, he or she may be confused and must either adjust or build up a new component to the current cultural schemata.

**Cultural Schemata and Reading Processing**

In 1970s and 1980s, reading researchers started to realize the active role of the reader in reading process; they drew heavily upon schema theory since then. Reading used to be seen as a passive behavior. Readers were expected to remember and recall as much information as they could from the text. The goal of reading was making a “photocopy” of the page (Tierney & Pearson, 1986, p. 4). In this reproductive view of reading, text played a key role while readers were neglected. Later on, researchers realized reading is more than just memorizing and recalling the information. Psycholinguistic theorists proposed the constructive view of reading, stating that reading is an ongoing process during which readers relate the new information to their preexisting knowledge--schemata, to reduce uncertainty and construct meanings from the texts (Goodman, 1976; Smith, 1982). In reference to Bartlett's definition of schema theory, readers can
understand the meaning of text only when they take into account their organized structure of previous knowledge and experience. Based on both schema theory and constructive view of reading, readers come to the center of the reading process while the text is considered as a resource to construct meaning; reading comprehension means readers build a meaningful representation of the text in their own mind (Tierney & Pearson, 1986). Tierney and Pearson (1986) used the following simile: “The reader, like an architect or a builder, uses the text as a blueprint as he or she creates meaning” (p. 4).

Reading process is an interaction between what readers already know and bring to the reading experience and the complex characteristics of the text itself. In this interaction, two sub-processes are generated. One is reader-based processing, during which readers construct meaning based on what they already know; the other is text-based processing, during which readers construct meaning based on textual information. Reader-based processing and text-based processing contribute to the understanding of the text respectively (Adams & Collins, 1977; Lindsay & Norman, 1977).

During reading, from the first moment that readers start encountering new information, they activate recalling and retrieving knowledge and experiences in their schemata. When the new information matches or is similar to what they have already known, they could easily assimilate the new information into their existing schemata (Singer & Donlan, 1982). Consequently, interpretations tend to occur quickly, smoothly, and accurately. More importantly, these interpretations help readers predict what is going to happen next in the text. Therefore, given a culturally related text, if the new information is comparable with the existing knowledge in readers' cultural schemata, readers are expected to trigger reader-based processing easily. It is difficult for readers to interpret, predict, or comprehend a text when they lack appropriate cultural schemata, even though they recognize the meaning of every word in the text.

Text-based processing occurs when they lack appropriate previous knowledge or experiences in their schemata. During the process of retrieving the previous knowledge in mental structures, if readers find nothing exists to relate to the new information, they rely heavily on the cues and information from the text itself. Doing so, they organize the new information and thus build up new schemata based on the text. Generally, it takes more effort and time to build up new schemata than to relate or assimilate into an existing one; therefore, reading is more difficult and slower when text-based processing dominates in the reading process.

Reader-based and text-based explanations are negatively correlated: they do not happen at the same time (Magliano, Trabasso, & Graesser, 1999). Importantly, reader-based processing and text-based processing are not static or exclusive; rather, they are ongoing and reciprocal in reading a given text. When readers could fit new information into their existing schemata, they trigger and continue reader-based processing until when they cannot adjust new information into their current schemata or the related schemata is absent, and then they switch to the text-based processing. By continually conducting text-based processing, readers organize new, incoming information into a new, meaningful structure. As soon as the meaningful structure built up, they switch back to reader-based processing, relating new information to the just-established schemata. Readers switch continually during reading to construct meaning with the least effort.
Also, cultural knowledge influences how text is processed. When two groups of participants, Indians and Americans, read two articles, one about a typical Indian wedding and the other about a typical American wedding, both groups made more culturally appropriate interpretations on texts from their own cultures; they also produced more culturally-based distortions on texts from the foreign culture (Steffensen, Joag-dev, & Anderson, 1979). This study echoed Bartlett's (1932) findings that readers modified or distorted a story consistent with their own cultural understanding. Readers tend to trigger their cultural schemata when they encounter culturally related information. If readers use cultural schemata regardless of whether new information matches the existing cultural knowledge or not, the reader-based processing is at risk of being overused or used inappropriately. Doing so, readers either neglect text-based processing by missing accurate cues and information from the text itself or distort the meaning of the text to reduce its discordance with existing cultural schemata.

**Implications for Educators**

Educators should take two actions regarding reading process. First, while we highly value reader-based processing and teach students to connect new information with their previous knowledge and experiences deliberately, we should not dismiss text-based processing, which contributes to reading comprehension as well. Clearly, text-based processing must be used when necessary. Meanwhile, educators must teach students how to conduct text-based processing wisely. For example, instead of simply distorting new, incoming information, educators must help readers expand or adjust current schemata by adding on new components or aspects. This way, they may trigger and adjust the existing schemata more appropriately.

**References**


College of Education Conference Symposia

**Symposium 1: Can Customer Service Exist within the Academy?**

*Chair: Karen K. Wollard*

To investigate the role of customer service within the academy, these research questions are asked: (a) How is customer service perceived and defined within institutions of higher education? (b) How does non-instructional staff define customer service within their institution? (c) How do faculty and other instructional staff define customer service within their institution? (d) How do students define and view customer service within their institution? (e) What is the impact of increased service orientation on attraction and retention of students, faculty and staff?

*Discussants:*
Karen K. Wollard, Kelly, Wollard & Associates
Jesus Fernandez, DeVry University
Thomas G. Reio, Jr., Florida International University

**Symposium 2: ACT Research Update: College and Career Readiness**

*Discussant: Gennine D. Brewer, Consultant--ACT, Inc.*

**Symposium 3: Racism’s Influence on Education across the Lifespan: A Critical Race Theory Analysis**

*Chair: Tonette S. Rocco*

The purpose of this symposium is to share three personal stories of racism and analyze these incidents using critical race theory (CRT) to determine the impact racism has had on the education of the storytellers. In order to teach and to learn about racism, CRT is a necessary tool to analyze stories of people of color. Novice scholars believe they are using CRT in their work through storytelling. We maintain that storytelling without a CRT analysis is just storytelling or narrative.

*Discussants:*
Elizabeth A. Peterson, National-Louis University
Willene A. Adker, Florida International University
Lorenzo Bowman, University of Georgia

**Symposium 4: Two Methods of Coding Qualitative Data**

*Chair: Debra M. Pane*

In this symposium, two methods of coding qualitative data will be shared with the audience: interaction analysis and content analysis. Types of codes, creating codes, definitions of codes, naming codes, checking codes, memoing, levels of details, and when to code will be discussed and visually portrayed.

*Discussants:*
Debra M. Pane, Florida International University
Raquel Diaz, Florida International University
Steve Rios, Educate Tomorrow
Appendices

The 7th College of Education Research Conference 2008 Program

The 8th College of Education Research Conference 2009 Call for Papers

The 8th College of Education Research Conference 2009 Call for Symposia
The purpose of the Florida International University Annual College of Education Research Conference (COERC) is to enhance the existing research culture. The conference provides a meaningful vehicle for the preparation, mentorship, and presentation of scholarly work by students, faculty, and alumni.
### Symposium/Session

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<thead>
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<td>8:00 – 8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>GC 243</td>
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<td>Registration &amp; Light Refreshments</td>
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**Welcome**

Tonette S. Rocco  
*Chair, Conference Steering Committee*

Luis Mirón  
*Dean, College of Education*

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**Opening Keynote:**

**REFORMING MEDICAL EDUCATION AND MAYBE SAVING THE WORLD (AT LEAST THE COMMUNITY), CAN WE DO IT?**

**PEDRO JOSE “JOE” GREER**  
*Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs*  
*College of Medicine*

“Never let your schooling interfere with your education”—Mark Twain

At FIU's College of Medicine, we are instituting an old concept into a unique and progressive model of education. As medicine more and more releases itself from its scientific isolation and becomes more integrated into the social and non-traditional sciences, we have the most unique educational program in American medicine. Since the majority of diseases are caused by social factors, we will educate our students in the classroom and in the households and communities on the bases of public health, nursing, social work and education, so they can truly understand all the indicators of the illnesses people and communities suffer. They will learn about social determinants, cultural competencies, health inequities and innovation so they can resolve them locally and individually. They will be educated in interdisciplinary teamwork and assigned household and neighborhoods to care for and help resolve issues as a team (inclusive of the community). The students will have extensive backgrounds in the ethical foundations of medicine and society and be expected to address, predict and resolve ethical issues they confront. We hope to produce physicians who will be the most ethically and socially aware and responsive our community and nation have seen.
| Session 1 | Can Customer Service Exist within the Academy?  
Chair: Karen K. Wollard  
To investigate the role of customer service within the academy, these research questions are asked: (a) How is customer service perceived and defined within institutions of higher education? (b) How does non-instructional staff define customer service within their institution? (c) How do faculty and other instructional staff define customer service within their institution? (d) How do students define and view customer service within their institution? (e) What is the impact of increased service orientation on attraction and retention of students, faculty and staff?  
Discussants:  
Karen K. Wollard, Kelly, Wollard & Associates  
Jesus Fernandez, DeVry University  
Thomas G. Reio, Jr., Florida International University | GC 243 |
| --- | --- |
| Session 1 | Culture’s Influence  
Moderator: Glenda Musoba  
Geocentric Corporate Organizational Culture and Employee National Identity  
Maria Plakhotnik, Florida International University  
American Teachers in Anti-American Environments: How to Incorporate “Culture” in the EFL Classroom  
Julie Dell-Jones, Florida International University | GC 316 |
| Session 2 | Cohorts in Higher Education  
Moderator: Roger Gonzalez  
Professors’ Perspectives on Educational Cohorts  
Whitney Moores-Abdool, Florida International University  
“Like a Family”: Perspectives of Doctoral Students from Traditionally Under-represented Populations on Cohorts  
Caridad H. Unzueta, Florida International University | GC 340 |
| Session 3 | Human Rights  
Moderator: Teresa Lucas  
Under the ABC Umbrella: Orphanages, Rights, and Education in Mexico  
Claudia G. Grigorescu and M. Fernanda Pineda, Florida International University  
Toward Prevention of Childhood Sexual Abuse: Preschoolers’ Knowledge of Genital Body Parts  
Maureen C. Kenny, Florida International University  
Sandy K. Wurtele, University of Colorado | GC 343 |

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| 10:25 – 11:25 a.m. | **Symposium 2 & Concurrent Sessions 4, 5 & 6**  
**Symposium 2**  
ACT Research Update: College and Career Readiness  
Discussant: Gennine D. Brewer, Consultant--ACT, Inc.  
**Session 4**  
Literacy and Culture  
Moderator: Fernanda Pineda  
- The Effect of Cultural Schemata on Reading Processing  
  Yang Yang, Florida International University  
- Rap to Read: Employing a Culturally Relevant Curriculum with African American Students  
  Cynthia Moredock Januszka, Florida International University  
**Session 5**  
Health and Well Being  
Moderator: Marilyn Montgomery  
- The Relationship between Civic Engagement and Health among Older Adults  
  Laura C. Batista and A. Margarita Cruz-Ledón, Florida International University  
- The Theory of Planned Behavior and Ethnically Diverse Community College Students and Their Intentions to Exercise: A Preliminary Analysis  
  Marilyn Gordon, Florida International University  
**Session 6**  
Adult Curiosity and Engagement  
Moderator: Linda Bliss  
- Adult Curiosity Dimensionality  
  Thomas G. Reio, Jr., Florida International University  
- Exploring Employee Engagement Among Three Non-Salaried Employees: A Phenomenological Study  
  Brad Shuck and Carlos Albornoz, Florida International University  |
| Notes:       |
11:30 – 1:00 p.m.

*Lunch is served buffet style. Quickly and quietly get your lunch at the back of the room, find a seat, and prepare for a delightful interactive panel discussion.*

**GC 243**

Panel Discussion:

**STORIES OF COLLABORATIVE WORK AND RESEARCH WITH SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES**

Chair: Janice Giles
Florida International University

**Edison Senior High School Participants:**


**PLEASE NOTE:** This discussion will begin with a 10 minute contextual introduction of the Algebra project, the school, and the work. Next the students will make a whole group presentation for 15-20 minutes or so. After the whole group presentation of the High School students, they will break up into small groups to join the tables (where conference participants are having lunch) for demonstrations for another 10 minutes or so. To close the session, all students will return to the front of the room for 10-15 minutes of questions and answers.

The Center for Urban Education & Innovation in the College of Education at Florida International University (FIU) has chosen to investigate the work of Dr. Bob Moses and his Algebra Project (AP) in a 9th grade classroom in the fourth largest metropolitan school system in the nation, Miami Dade County Public School System (MDCPS). The system operates in a state that holds the record for the second highest number of high school dropouts in the nation (AP, 2007). Through the collection of data via classroom observations, interviews unearthing student perspectives, and the assessment of evaluations, we hope to uncover the successes of the Algebra project and demonstrate the merits of the extended collaboration with the three organizations, MDCPS, FIU, and AP as an attempt to create school-based, university-affiliated school reform, where the accountability of the reform rests upon student success, in recognition that the demand for effective education is a matter of civil rights.

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<td><strong>Racism’s Influence on Education across the Lifespan: A Critical Race Theory Analysis</strong></td>
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<td>Chair: Tonette S. Rocco</td>
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<td><em>Moving to the Front of the Classroom: English Graduate Students as Composition Instructors</em></td>
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<td>Jacqueline Peña, Florida International University</td>
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<td><em>“Half Bricks and Half Clicks”: Is Blended Onsite and Online Teaching and Learning the Best of Both Worlds?</em></td>
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<td><em>Roadblocks to Teaching English as a Foreign Language in a Climate of Accelerated Curricular Change</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Margaret McKenzie, Florida International University</td>
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<td><em>Bringing ESL Students to Literacy and Social Integration: Barriers and Strategies</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Heidi Steen Anderson, Florida International University</td>
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<td><strong>Notes:</strong></td>
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**Notes:**
| Symposium 4 | **Two Methods of Coding Qualitative Data**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chair: Debra M. Pane</th>
<th>GC 243</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In this symposium, two methods of coding qualitative data will be shared with the audience: interaction analysis and content analysis. Types of codes, creating codes, definitions of codes, naming codes, checking codes, memoing, levels of details, and when to code will be discussed and visually portrayed.</td>
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| Discussants:  
Debra M. Pane, Florida International University  
Raquel Diaz, Florida International University  
Steve Rios, Educate Tomorrow |

| Session 9 | **Diversity in Education**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderator: Tom Reio</th>
<th>GC 316</th>
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</table>
| School Segregation, Educational Disparities, and Impacts on Haitian Youth in South Florida  
Tekla Nicholas and LéTania Severe, Florida International University |
| No Child Left Behind, Stereotype Threat, and the Standardized Testing of African American Third-Graders  
Martin Wasserberg, Florida International University |

| Session 10 | **Being Silenced, Being Bullied**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderator: Maureen Kenny</th>
<th>GC 340</th>
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| “Who’s that Faggot at the Board?”: A School-based Intervention with a Gay Student  
Javier Berezdivin, Union Institute & University  
Edmon W. Tucker, Florida International University |
| Speaking Up: A Phenomenological Study of Student Perceptions of Being Silenced in their Higher Education Classrooms  
Antonio Delgado, Florida International University |

| Session 11 | **Issues in Research**  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moderator: Lu Blitzer</th>
<th>GC 343</th>
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</table>
| Urban Education Research: A Paradigm Shift  
Liana Gonzalez, Delsue Frankson, and Monica Shealey, Florida International University |
| Examination and Critique of Codebook for Textual Analysis  
L. Donna Fowler, Florida International University |

Notes:
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<tr>
<th>Session 12</th>
<th>Language and Gender Bias</th>
<th>GC 316</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderator: Monika Shealey</td>
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<td><em>Bilingualism in the USA: A Transition to Monolingualism?</em></td>
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<td>Daniel Ramírez Lamus, Florida International University</td>
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<td><em>Gender Biases and Nontraditional Literature in the Urban Elementary Classroom</em></td>
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<td>Martin Wasserberg, Florida International University</td>
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<th>Session 13</th>
<th>Second Language Literacy</th>
<th>GC 343</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Moderator: Dawn Addy</td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>Using a Bilingual Reading Strategy to Reduce SLD Numbers</em></td>
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<td>Caridad H. Unzueta, Florida International University</td>
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<td><em>The Pronunciation of the Aspirated Consonants P, T, and K in English by Native Speakers of Spanish and French</em></td>
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<td>Philip Suarez, Florida International University</td>
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<th>Session 14</th>
<th>Math and Science Education</th>
<th>GC 316</th>
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<td>Moderator: Karen K. Wollard</td>
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<td><em>Early Childhood Mathematics: How does it Add Up to Teachers?</em></td>
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<td>Raquel Munarriz Diaz, Florida International University</td>
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<td><em>Inquiring Minds Want to Know: Inquiry-Based Learning in the General Education and Inclusion Science Classroom</em></td>
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<td>Gena M. Rosenzweig, Maria Carrodegaus, and Luretha Lucky, Florida International University</td>
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Notes:
4:20 – 5:00 p.m.
Award Presentations and Raffle (Must be present to win)
GC 316

Lorraine R. Gay Award for Excellence in Research/Scholarship
Adriana McEachern
Award for Best Graduate Student Paper

Dissertation Award: Best Manuscript or Article
sponsored by
Office of Research and Graduate Studies
Isadore Newman
Manuscript Finalists (in alphabetical order by title):

Case Studies in Exemplary Service Delivery by Karen Kelly Wollard, Tonette S. Rocco, and Jinlin Zhao
Connecting Human Resource Development to Vocational Rehabilitation: Improving Outcomes for Workers with Mental Retardation by Sandra Fornes, Tonette Rocco, and Howard Rosenberg
Employee Evaluation and Job Performance: How Employees Learn from Team Primacy Concept (TPC)-Based Evaluation by Eivina Muniute-Cobb and Mary V. Alfred
The Transfer of Pre-Service Teachers’ Knowledge of Instructional Strategies to their Classroom Practice by Lawrence Orihuela and Abbas Tashakkori

Article Finalist


GSN Award: Best Student Conference Paper 2008
sponsored by
College of Education-Graduate Student Network (COE-GSN)
Jacqueline Pena, President Graduate Student Network

Closing
Tonette S. Rocco,
Chair, Conference Steering Committee
PROGRAM SPONSORS

************

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An independent, not-for-profit organization that provides more than a hundred assessment, research, information, and program management services in the broad areas of education and workforce development.

Afrodita's Garden at FIU
A full-service floral design studio dedicated to creating quality floral arrangements.

Center for Urban Education and Innovation (FIU)
Assists schools in providing an excellent education for those children who are typically underserved, particularly poor children and children of African descent; develops initiatives to promote research and creative experiences that address critical issues of power and pedagogy in schools and communities, both locally and nationally; and supports existing College of Education programs that are congruent with the mission of the Center.

College of Education Graduate Students Network
GSN hosts events with great speakers, offers a community for writing the dissertation, and provides opportunities for socializing and sharing learning experiences among graduate students and faculty in the College of Education.

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The nation's leading educational publisher of textbooks, educational materials, and professional technical reference books.

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PDK is an international association for professional educators. The organization's mission is to promote quality education as essential to the development and maintenance of a democratic way of life by providing innovative programs, relevant research, visionary leadership, and dedicated service.

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Wal-mart provides a great selection of high-quality merchandise, friendly service, and everyday low prices.

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10004 Premier Parkway
Miramar, FL 33025
Conference Mission: The purpose of the Florida International University Annual College of Education Research Conference (COERC) is to enhance the existing research culture. The conference provides a meaningful vehicle for the preparation, mentorship, and presentation of scholarly work by students, faculty, and alumni.

Interculturalism, Interconnectedness, Inquiry, Instructional Leadership: Decades of educational research indicate that the practice of educating our nation’s citizens cannot be judged from a single vantage point. Individuals come to the educational enterprise with different needs and goals often addressed through educational research that weaves a tapestry between practice and theory. We recognize the diverse applications of educational research and the behavioral, psychological, and cultural viewpoints that exist at local, national, and international levels. Conference participants are encouraged to consider the richness of the diverse content areas in education (school and non school based) serving children and adult students.

The Lorraine R. Gay Award for Outstanding Research: To identify and honor the College’s emerging scholars, presenters of outstanding research will be awarded with the Lorraine R. Gay Award for Outstanding Research. This award honors the memory of the founding member of the COE research faculty, Lorraine R. Gay. The award will be presented to the best manuscript authored by an individual student or group of students.

Who Should Submit: All current and former FIU College of Education students and faculty are encouraged to submit manuscripts. Manuscripts are welcomed from practitioners, students, and faculty from other institutions, universities, centers, institutes, and schools. Manuscripts may be submitted by single or multiple authors. Students are encouraged to submit manuscripts based on theses/dissertations or other scholarly work. Faculty and students are encouraged to submit work performed independently or in collaboration with colleagues.

Manuscript Categories

Reports on Research: Reports on research (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods studies) including thesis and dissertations with their implications for practice and research.

Methods and Issues in Research: Controversial and critical questions vital to research and practice, such as in research methods, ethics, the use of research in practice, practice-generated needs for research, and processes by which researchers determine the areas in which to conduct research. A description of the issue or summary of the points at issue should be presented.

Perspectives in Practice, including theory, method, and literature reviews: Questions and concerns regarding practitioners’ work in various settings. This may include, but is not limited to practice in education and training programs in schools, corporate and community organizations, leisure activities for children and adults, or other extra-curricular activities. Manuscripts may address problems and/or solutions in areas of practice such as curriculum design, strategy selection, teaching and learning, or program implementation. They may also address how practitioners view research related to their concerns.

Evaluation Studies or Action Research: Reports on studies involving needs assessment, priority setting, goal analysis, evaluation or other forms of applied research.

Conference Timeline

Manuscript Submission Deadline – Monday December 1, 2008

Authors Notified of Submission Status – Monday, January 26, 2009

Authors Send Revised Manuscripts to the Proceedings Sub-Committee – Monday, February 23, 2009

Camera-Ready Manuscripts - Monday, March 30, 2009

Submission Instructions

All submissions must be formatted as MS word documents and sent as email attachments to the COERC Steering Committee Chair, Dr. Tonette S. Rocco, at roccot@fiu.edu by December 1, 2008. The title of the subject line of the email message should be: "COERC 2008". Upon receipt of the manuscript, the Committee Chair will send an e-mail acknowledgement.

Each manuscript submission must contain two documents: the cover page and the manuscript.

Please submit the 2 email file attachments as follows:
1. Cover Page – Name this file attachment with your last name and the word "Cover" (e.g., Jones.Cover.doc).

Cover page should include the following information:
* All author(s) identification/contact information and institutional affiliation (COE Department or other institution) on the Cover Page.
*Manuscript Category (see Manuscript Categories list and guidelines)  
*Three (3) Key Words that are not in the Title to characterize the focus of the manuscript  
*Authorship category: student(s)-only, student(s)-faculty, or faculty-only manuscript.  
*The Warrant Statement.

2. Blind Copy of the Manuscript- Name this file attachment with your last name and the word "Blind" (e.g., Jones.Blind.doc).

The manuscript should include the following information:
*Provide an abstract of 25-50 words maximum.  
*The manuscript should be six (6) single spaced pages, including references with one inch margins on all sides;  
*Extra two pages maximum may be added after the References for tables, figures, and/or pictures.  
*APA 5th edition guidelines must be adhered to for format, organization, headings, reference citations, grammar, and other issues.

Research with Human Subjects: Please be mindful that the FIU Division of Sponsored Research requires completion of the National Institutes of Health Human Subjects Online Training Module (http://cme.nci.nih.gov) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval before the collection of any data involving human subjects. For further information contact one of the COE IRB representative, Dr. Leonard Bliss at blissl@fiu.edu or 305.348.1903.

Review and Selection Process

The Review and Selection Committee will screen manuscripts for adherence to Submission Instructions and American Psychological Association (APA) 5th (ed.) guidelines. Manuscripts that have not followed these basic instructions will be returned to author(s) for corrections and possible re-submission within two weeks of receipt. All submissions will undergo a double blind review by the Review and Selection Committee, who will review each manuscript for content, clarity, and organization. Manuscripts may be accepted, accepted with revisions, or rejected.

Monday, January 26, 2009-Notification of Submission Status  
Authors will receive a letter with notification of submission status and feedback from reviewers. Authors are expected to either make revisions or address the reason the revision was not made in a cover letter within one month of receipt.

Monday, February 23, 2009 -  
Submission of the Revised Manuscripts to the Proceedings Sub-Committee  
Authors must re-submit the revised 6-page single spaced manuscript along with the cover letter that describes what changes were made to Proceedings sub-committee via email: mplak001@fiu.edu. The proceedings editors will edit every manuscript, making necessary formatting and editing changes. The edited manuscripts will then be returned to the authors. Authors are expected to return camera-ready manuscripts within one month.

Monday, March 30, 2009 -Submission of Camera-Ready Manuscripts to the Proceedings Sub-Committee  
Please assist us in our efforts to produce high quality proceedings by following instructions, addressing editors/reviewers suggestions for improvement, meeting deadlines, and adhering to APA 5th edition guidelines.

Saturday April 25, 2009 8:30 a. m. to 5 p. m.  
Eighth Annual COE Research Conference  
Manuscript Discussion Sessions: One to two manuscripts may be presented during the 60-minute sessions organized around common themes. Each session will be in a separate room with up to three concurrent sessions scheduled. The presenter of each manuscript will be allotted 10 to 15 minutes to present the key points from the manuscript. Interactive presentations are encouraged. MS PowerPoint, overheads, or handouts are encouraged but not required.

Sample Cover Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief Manuscript Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title typed double space in Uppercase and Lowercase Letters and Centered between the Right and Left Margins</td>
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<tr>
<td>First author’s name</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Author’s Email and Phone number</td>
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<tr>
<td>College of Education, Department of XXXXX</td>
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<td>(List in order of contribution)</td>
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<td>Second author’s name, Third author’s name, etc.</td>
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"I (we) warrant that if this manuscript is accepted, I (we) will address all concerns of the COERC Reviewers and Proceedings Editors and submit a final (revised) MS Word six page (single-spaced typed) manuscript for publication in the Conference Proceedings. I (we) understand that if this final manuscript is not received in its final form on or before Monday, March 30, 2009, this manuscript will not be included as part of the Proceedings.”

Author Preparing Warrant Statement:

Manuscript Category:
Reports on Research □
Evaluation Studies □
Methods and Issues in Research □

Authorship category:
Student(s)-only □
Student(s)-faculty □
Faculty-only manuscript □

Key Words: (List three words not in the Title that characterize the focus of the Manuscript)
For questions on submission instructions contact Dr. Tonette S. Rocco roccot@fiu.edu or 305.348.6151 or any member of the Seventh Annual COE Research Committee.

Note: All moderators, presenters, and their family and friends are expected to register for the COE Research Conference.

Suggested Areas to Address in Manuscripts:

- Theoretical framework/review of the literature that sheds light on the practitioner concern, research question, evaluation purpose, or research issue.
- Clear statement of the research concern/question/purpose/issue to be addressed.
- Research design
  - Rationale for method (qualitative/quantitative/mixed)
  - Research question(s)/Hypothesis
  - Data collection and analysis
- Results of the study and reflections for potential changes in practice/policy/research
- Relationship of findings to existing theory
- Implications and recommendations for a specific field in education (school or non school based)

Manuscript Submission Checklist

Electronic files

- Submission Instructions are followed

Sample Blind Manuscript

Cover Page

- Manuscript Title is provided
- All authors’ names, First author's email, phone number, and affiliation
- Manuscript Category (from Manuscript Category List)
- Three Key Words not in Title characterizing the focus of the Manuscript
- Warrant Statement

Blind Copy

- No author identification is present
- Manuscript Title is included in 14 pt. Bold, centered at the top of the page
- APA (5th ed.) Guidelines followed throughout
- A theoretical framework for the project is provided
- A clear research question or purpose is stated
- Clearly written using concise language and few pronouns
- Headings are meaningful and provide clear guide to organization
- The scholarly work is relevant to the COE audience
- Method description provides details on what, how, and why for all elements in the research design description
- Manuscript Category is evident in the presentation
- APA format is followed for references cited in text and listed in References
- All references listed appear as citations
- Tables and Figures provided after References, an extra two pages for figures, tables, and/or pictures may be added.
COERC 2009 Symposia: Call for Proposals

The COERC 2009 Steering Committee encourages the presentation of symposia on timely topics. Symposia can be valuable for promoting scientific interchange and developing new concepts in a way that crystallizes thinking in particular areas. This particular format also helps investigators and practitioners keep abreast of developments in fields that may not be intimately related to their own major research and professional interests. The COERC 2009 Steering Committee is responsible for selecting symposia to be included in the conference.

Proposals for symposia should include:

1. Title of the symposium.
2. Name, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and e-mail of the chairperson.
3. Justification of need for the symposium in the particular field (maximum 1000 words).
   3.1. Justification should include the timeliness of the topic and anticipated outcomes for those in attendance.
4. Format of the symposium.
   4.1. Each symposium is scheduled for 60 minutes.
   4.2. The expected format for a symposium consists of a 5 minute overview by the chair, two (2) speakers giving 10-15 minute talks, 5 minutes for discussion between talks, and concluding with 10-20 minutes for summary and discussion.
   4.3. The Steering Committee encourages the inclusion of a component of translational research in each symposium.
5. Title of each presentation followed by the name of the first author, his/her institutional affiliation, mailing address, country and e-mail, and the name(s) of the co-author(s), their institutional affiliation, and mailing address.
6. Summary of each presentation given by faculty (maximum 500 words). Presentations based on papers authored by individual students or groups of students must adhere to the submission instructions for individual manuscripts to allow consideration for the Lorraine R. Gay Award for Outstanding Research. The Review and Selection Committee may request that student papers be revised. Symposia may be rejected if student presentations are not revised and returned according to the deadlines set by the Review and Selection Committee.

Proposals should be submitted via email to Dr. Tonette S. Rocco at roccot@fiu.edu by January 3, 2009. Authors will receive feedback by January 31, 2009.

The 8th Annual College of Education Research Conference will be held on Saturday, April 25, 2009. For more information about the Annual College of Education Research Conference, please, visit http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/