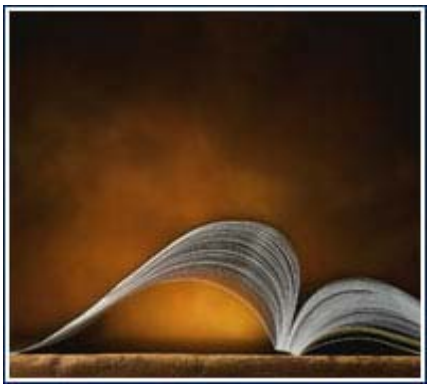
# The Eighth Annual College of Education and Graduate Student Network Research Conference
# Saturday, April 25, 2009



## *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 and Graduate Student Network 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.

---

# COERC 2009

## Proceedings of
## The Eighth Annual College of Education and Graduate Student Network Research Conference

April 25, 2009
Florida International University
Miami, Florida USA

# Proceedings of
# The Eighth Annual College of Education and Graduate Student Network Research Conference

**Co-Editors:**

Maria S. Plakhotnik, Ed.D. Candidate, Adult Education and Human Resource Development, Florida International University

Sarah M. Nielsen, Ed.D., Assistant Professor, English, DeVry University

Debra M. Pane, Ph.D. Candidate, Curriculum & Instruction (Language, Literacy, and Culture), Florida International University

College of Education
Florida International University
Ziff Education Building, Miami, FL 33199

# Contents

Click on a content item to start reading

**Acknowledgements**……..vii

**Committee Membership**…….viii

**Faculty and Student Reviewers**……..ix

**Sponsors**…….....x

**Keynote Speaker**……...xi

**Lunch Panel Discussion**……...xii

**Lorraine R. Gay Award for Excellence in Research/Scholarship**……..xiii

**The College of Education Graduate Student Network Award**……...xiv

**Barnes & Noble Best Faculty-Student Paper Award**……...xv

**Moderators and GSN Volunteers**……..xvi

**College of Education & GSN Research Conference Peer-Reviewed Papers**…….……..1

**Revisiting Entrepreneurship Education Literature: Implications for Learning and Teaching Entrepreneurship**
Carlos Albornoz and Tonette S. Rocco..……..2

**Motivational Strategies to Increase Completion of Assignments in Mathematics Classes**
Rebeca Alea……..…….……..8

**The Role of Leadership Style in Employee Engagement**
Laura C. Batista-Taran, Michael Bradley Shuck,
Cinthya C. Gutierrez, and Sofia Baralt…..……15

**The Exclusion of Race from Mandated Continuing Legal Education Requirements: A Critical Race Theory Analysis**
Lorenzo Bowman, Tonette S. Rocco, and Elizabeth Peterson.……..21

**The Effect of Using Portfolios on Student-Parent and Parent-Teacher Communication**
Joel Davis……...27

**Can Executive Skills Help Underachieving Bilingual Students? Pedagogical Implications**
Lianhong Gao……33

**Integrating Technology in a Statistics Course for a Special Program at Florida International University**
Ramon Gomez……39

**The Role of Forgiveness in Adult Learning and Education**
Jerry Griffin……44

**Can the Undocumented Student Speak?**
Eduardo Hernandez……50

**The University as a Genre and Activity System**
Eduardo Hernandez……56

**The Effects of Proper Implementation of Bilingual Programs in Elementary Schools in the United States**
Elvia M. Hernandez……62

**The Effects of Repeated Readings on Reading Abilities of English Language Learners with Specific Learning Disabilities**
Katrina Landa and Patricia Barbetta……69

**An Historical Look at Gender in the ESL Classroom**
Patricia Malloy McCaughan……80

**What Teaching Strategies Can I Employ to Improve Student Achievement in the Addition of Fractions with Different Denominators?**
Teresita A. Nieves……85

**Reducing the Discipline Gap Among African American Students: Learning in Classroom Communities of Practice**
Debra Mayes Pane……92

**Hispanics: Does Our Language (Spanish) Define Who We Are?**
Elsie E. Paredes……98

**Four Components of a Manuscript Reporting Qualitative Empirical Studies: A Brief Overview**
Maria S. Plakhotnik and Tonette S. Rocco……105

**From Foster Care to College: Perceptions of Young Adults on Their Academic Success**
Steve J. Rios……112

**An Exploratory Qualitative Study of the Proximal Goal Setting of Two Introductory Modeling Physics Students**
Vashti Sawtelle……119

**Engagement Leadership: A New Developmental Model**
Michael Bradley Shuck……126

**A Historical Perspective of Employee Engagement: An Emerging Definition**
Michael Bradley Shuck and Karen K. Wollard……...133

**Project POWER: *P*romoting *O*ur *W*ill Through *E*ducation and *R*esearch**
Martin J. Wasserberg and Louie F. Rodriguez……140

**Pro-Literacy: A Historical Evaluation and Presentation of Strategies That Have Influenced the Development of the Volunteer Based Adult Education Program**
Chaundra L. Whitehead……...146

**"I Am Not Stupid, I Just Don't…"- A Qualitative Study of Expatriates' Cross-Cultural Experiences**
Yang Yang……...151

**College of Education and GSN 2009 Research Conference Symposia** …..……..157

**Appendices**……..161

**The 8th College of Education and GSN Research Conference 2009 Program**

**The 9th College of Education and GSN Research Conference 2010 Call for Papers**

**The 9th College of Education Research and GSN Conference 2010 Call for Symposia**

# Acknowledgements

The FIU College of Education and Graduate Student Network Research Conference Steering Committee would like to thank the College of Education faculty and students for supporting the eighth annual COE research conference. Special thanks must go to the Office of Research and Grants for their sponsorship under the guidance of Associate Dean Patty Barbetta, for the invaluable work of program assistants Katrina Landa and Maria Tester. We would never have solved many logistical problems without the support of Maria.

Nella A. Roberts and Adriana McEachern continued the campaign to secure sponsors. They secured about $500 dollars in donations to sponsor lunch, breakfast, tables, and gifts for our raffle. This is the second year symposiums were included in addition to papers. The first year 3 proposals were submitted. This year the steering committee accepted 8 symposia.

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 third year, there will be an award for the best student paper sponsored by the Graduate Student Network. This year GSN has become a full partner with the college causing the steering committee to rename the conference the COE-GSN Research Conference. This organizations support was crucial in securing the rooms in the Graham Center. Teresa Lucas and Maria Plakhotnik facilitated the review process. This includes locating faculty to review, prompting reviewers to return reviews, and doing additional reviews when needed.

Special thanks must go to Adriana McEachern and Sarah M. Nielsen who have worked on behalf of this conference since its inception in 2000-2001 and the first conference in 2002. Adriana has stepped in this year to help in more ways then ever, feeling the void left by colleagues who worked on the steering committee up until leaving the university. Maria S. “Masha” Plakhotnik has stepped up and volunteered to assist with the review and selection committee, program planning, marketing, proceedings editing, and putting together the CD rom. 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. She has my deeply felt thanks. Masha and Sarah have edited every paper in the proceedings for years. This year Debbie Pane joined them. Sarah has done this since she was a doctoral student seven years ago. Sarah and Debbie also helped organize the program.

Without the continuing support of so many, this conference would not exist, so thank you again for making our eighth annual conference so successful.

From all of us on the COE-GSN 2009 Research Conference Steering Committee

# Committee Membership

**College of Education and Graduate Student Network 2009 Research Conference Steering Committee:**

Tonette S. Rocco, *Chair*
Roger Gonzalez
Hilary Landorf
Teresa Lucas
Adriana G. McEachern
Ann Nevin
Sarah M. Nielsen
Debra M. Pane
Maria S. Plakhotnik
Nella Roberts

**Review and Selection Sub-Committee**
Teresa Lucas, *Co-Chair*
Maria S. Plakhotnik, *Co-Chair*
Debra M. Pane

**Proceedings Sub-Committee**
Sarah M. Nielsen, *Co-Chair*
Maria S. Plakhotnik, *Co-Chair*
Debra M. Pane

**Marketing and Sponsorship Sub-Committee**
Adriana G. McEachern, *Co-Chair*
Nella Roberts, *Co-Chair*

**Program Planning Sub-Committee**
Tonette S. Rocco, *Co-Chair*
Adriana G. McEachern, *Co-Chair*
Katrina Landa
Teresa Lucas
Sarah M. Nielsen
Debra M. Pane
Jackie Pena
Maria S. Plakhotnik
Nella Roberts
Maria Tester

**Lorraine R. Gay Award Sub-Committee**
Adriana G. McEachern, *Chair*
Ann Nevin
Roger Gonzalez
Sarah M. Nielsen
Maria S. Plakhotnik
Debra M. Pane

**Barnes & Noble Best Faculty-Student Paper Award Sub-Committee**
Adriana G. McEachern, *Chair*
Sarah M. Nielsen
Debra M. Pane
Maria S. Plakhotnik

# Faculty and Student Reviewers

**Faculty Reviewers**

Ben Baez
Jina Bang
Martha Barantovich
Patricia M. Barbetta
Linda Bliss
Laura Blitzer
Erskine S. Dottin
Maria Fernandez
Roger Gonzalez
Hilary Landorf
Teresa Lucas
Claudia Matus
Glenda Musoba
Ann Nevin
Tony Normore
George O'Brian
Thomas G. Reio, Jr.
Diana Rincon
Angela Salmon

**Student Reviewers**

Antonio Delgado
Raquel Diaz
Claudia Grigorescu
Eduardo Hernandez
Alex Martinez
Rita Menendez
Debra M. Pane
Jacqueline Pena
Fernanda Pineda
Maria S. Plakhotnik
Steve Rios
Rehana Seepersad
Brad Shuck
Maryam Soltan

# Sponsors

**ACT**
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.

**Barnes & Noble**
The FIU Bookstore, operated by Barnes & Noble Booksellers, has been servicing the FIU campuses for over twenty years. We sell all required and recommended textbooks for your classes both new and, used copies when available. For additional information go to our webpage at: http://fiu.bncollege.com.

**Delta Iota Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota International**
Promoting Excellence in the Profession of Counseling. For additional information go to our webpage at: http://www.csi-net.org/

**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.

**OfficeMax**
A leader in both business-to-business office products solutions and retail office products. The company provides office supplies and paper, in-store print and document services through OfficeMax ImPress™, technology products and solutions, and furniture to consumers and to large, medium and small businesses.

**Pearson Education**
The nation's leading educational publisher of textbooks, educational materials, and professional technical reference books.

**South Florida Organizational Development Network**
Dedicated to promoting the practice of OD and sharing OD practices with our community.

**Wal-Mart**
Wal-Mart provides a great selection of high-quality merchandise, friendly service, and every day low prices.

**Waves Spa**
A healing spa that specializes in The Rolf Method of Structural Integration, Brennan Healing, Customized Massage, Eminence Organics Facial and EB Ion Cellular Cleanse Detox.

## Keynote Speaker
## Dr. Lorenzo Bowman

## "Critical Race Theory:
## The Cure for Our Color Blindness in Education"

Dr. Lorenzo Bowman's career in education began over 20 years ago when he made the decision to leave his engineering career to pursue a career in higher education. Over the course of his career in higher education, Dr. Bowman has held both teaching and administrative assignments. He served as Dean of the School of Business for DeVry University Georgia from 1997 to 2003. Dr. Lorenzo Bowman is currently an Adult Education faculty member in the Department of Lifelong Learning, Administration, and Policy of the College of Education at the University of Georgia. He also currently serves as the program coordinator for the College of Education's graduate off campus programs. His research interests include race, gender, and sexuality issues in adult education. He received his Ph.D. in Adult Education from the University of Georgia, a J.D. and a M.S. in Management (concentration in Human Resources Management and Organizational Behavior) from Georgia State University, and a B.S. (Magna Cum Laude) in Industrial Engineering Technology from Southern Polytechnic State University. He has been a member of the State Bar of Georgia since 1993.

Dr. Bowman is the author of a number of journal articles and presentations on critical race theory and race issues in adult education, continuing legal education, and research. Recent publications include "Race and Continuing Legal Education: From the Functional Approach to the Critical Approach" (*Adult Learning, 16*(3/4), 14-7) and "The Exclusion of Race from Mandated Continuing Legal Education Requirements" (*The Seattle Journal for Social Justice, Seattle University's College of Law, 8*(1), to be published in 2009).

## Lunch Panel Discussion

## "Think 360 – The Hows and Whys of Global Learning"

FIU has chosen global learning as the focus of our Quality Enhancement Plan, a key portion of the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS) reaffirmation of the university in 2010. The purpose of FIU's Global Learning QEP is to educate for global citizenship - to ensure that every FIU graduate has the educational opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to actively address issues and challenges in an interconnected world.

Panelists will discuss the meaning of global learning, why global learning should be intrinsic to every student's education at FIU, and how to implement global learning across the curriculum.

*Moderator:* Hilary Landorf – Director, Office of Global Learning Initiatives, FIU

*Panelists:*
Dan Bentley-Baker – Instructor, English, FIU
Ophelia Weeks – Associate Professor, Biological Sciences, FIU
Deanne Butchey - Assistant Dean, Assurance of Learning and Accreditation, College of Business Administration, FIU
Stephanie Doscher, Associate Director of the Office of Global Learning Initiatives, FIU

## 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 and Graduate Student Network 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), Ann Nevin, Roger Gonzalez, Sarah M. Nielsen, Maria S. Plakhotnik, and Debra M. Pane.

### L. R. Gay Award Recipients

2008 Antonio Delgado, *Speaking Up: A Phenomenological Study of Student Perceptions of Being Silenced in their Higher Education Classrooms*

2008 Tekla Nicholas and LéTania Severe, *School Segregation, Educational Disparities, and Impacts on Haitian Youth in South Florida*

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

2006 Suzanne J. Gallagher, *A Phenomenological Study of Learning Processes at Work; Confirming, Extending, and Challenging Holistic Learning Theory*

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 four 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 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.

This year, GSN is giving an award for the Best Student Conference Paper 2009. Under the guidance of the GSN president, Jacqueline Peña, the GSN team conducted a blind review of all the student manuscripts and selected the winner based on research and writing guidelines developed by the GSN executive board and its members.

## Barnes & Noble Best Faculty-Student Paper Award

The purpose of the award is to acknowledge, in the name of *Barnes and Noble*, outstanding scholarship on a paper written by a faculty-student(s) team and presented at the College of Education and Graduate Student Network Annual Research Conference.

It is anticipated that one award will be presented annually to a faculty-student team. 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 and Graduate Student Network Annual Research Conference. Award decisions are determined by a panel of faculty and students serving as the Barnes & Noble Award Sub-Committee. Members of this sub-committee are to be selected by the entire Steering Committee. The current members of the Barnes & Noble Award sub-committee are Adriana G. McEachern (Chair), Sarah M. Nielsen, Maria S. Plakhotnik, and Debra M. Pane.

# Moderators and Graduate Student Network Volunteers

**Session Moderators**

Carlos Albornoz
Judith Bernier
Linda Bliss
Antonio Delgado
Jesus Fernandez
Alexis McKenny
Sarah Nielsen
Debra Pane
Steve Rios
Gregory Salters
Rehana Seepersad
Brad Shuck
Marc Weinstein
Joan Wynne

**GSN Volunteers**

Claudia Grigorescu
Yalda Amir Kiaee
Jacqueline Peña
Katherine Perez
Fernanda Pineda
Yang (Lydia) Yang
Maryam Soltan Zandeh

# College of Education and Graduate Student Network
# 2009 Research Conference
# Peer-Reviewed Papers

# Revisiting Entrepreneurship Education Literature: Implications for Learning and Teaching Entrepreneurship

Carlos Albornoz and Tonette S. Rocco
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** Courses and programs about entrepreneurship show so much variation that it is hard to identify typical teaching strategies. Although diversity is good, consistency is needed because the value of entrepreneurship education has not been established. A literature review on teaching and learning in entrepreneurship was conducted; three challenges were identified.

In the 21st century, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship became critical factors for modern prosperity (Carden, 2008). Echoing this trend, there is an unprecedented student demand for business education that provides the skill set needed to succeed in an increasingly divergent business environment (Cooper, Bottomley, & Gordon, 2004). By 1995, over 400 institutions offered entrepreneurship courses in the United States (Vesper, Gartner, & Williams, 1997). Today, more than 2000 institutions offer entrepreneurship courses (Cone, 2008).

Despite the increasing energy and resources dedicated to teaching entrepreneurship, no clear relationship has been demonstrated between entrepreneurship education and students becoming entrepreneurs (Hostager & Decker, 1999). In fact, the proportion of people starting businesses shortly after graduation is minimal (Luthje & Franke, 2003). Research has even shown that after four years of entrepreneurship courses, interest in pursuing self-employment tends to dissipate (Whitlock & Master, 1996).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the literature on teaching and learning in entrepreneurship education to understand what the current state of teaching and learning is in an effort to determine best practices. The paper is divided into four sections: method, teaching entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial learning, and implications and future research questions.

## Method

An integrative literature review was conducted (Torraco, 2005). All databases relevant to business, professions, education, and social sciences were searched. Data bases included: ABI Inform, Anthropology, PLUS, Black Studies, Business Full Text, ECO (Electronic Collections Online), Education Full Text, ERIC, Hispanic American Periodicals Index (HAPI) via UCLA, MEDLINE on Pubmed via National Library of Medicine, PsycINFO and Sociological Abstracts. The primary search terms were *entrepreneurship*, *small business*, and *new ventures*. These terms were added to a set of secondary search terms: *learning*, *training*, *teaching*, *competencies*, and *education*. Databases were investigated combining each primary search term with each secondary search term. Articles were analyzed using content analysis procedures (Boyatzis, 1998) to identify relevant information about how entrepreneurship is taught. While doing the analysis, the author identified challenges that make entrepreneurship education hard to conceptualize and measure. The following sections present the results of the investigation.

## Teaching Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship teaching is "the process of providing individuals with the concepts and skills to recognize opportunities that others have overlooked and to have the insight, self-esteem,

Albornoz, C., & Rocco, T. S. (2009). Revisiting entrepreneurship education literature: Implications for learning and teaching entrepreneurship. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 2-7). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

and knowledge to act where others have hesitated" (McIntyre & Roche, 1999, p. 33). Entrepreneurship teaching aims to be a source of trigger-events aiming to inspire students, arouse emotions, and change mindsets (Al-Laham, Souitaris, & Zerbinati, 2007; Lüthje & Franke, 2003). In this section, a general depiction of the literature on teaching and Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) is provided.

Entrepreneurship pedagogical design can be differentiated into three basic activities: the creation and maintenance of (a) an entrepreneurial culture at the university as a whole, (b) degree granting programs and majors, and (c) specific non credit training programs (Garavan & O'Cinneide, 1994). A balanced entrepreneurship program should contain these four components: (a) lectures on business concepts, (b) business-planning practices including competitions and coaching, (c) interaction with practitioners and networking opportunities, and (d), university support such as market-research resources, meeting space, seed funding, patenting advice, etc. (Al-Laham, Souitaris, & Zerbinati, 2007). However, there is no substantive agreement about what entrepreneurship means in educational settings and the appropriate content of programs is under permanent discussion (Gibb, 2002). It is not clear what to teach (Garavan & O'Cinneide, 1994; Solomon, 2007) and there is a lack of detailed consideration of how entrepreneurs learn (Garavan & Cinneide, 1994; Young & Sexton, 1997).

Teaching outcomes in entrepreneurship programs are generally assessed (e.g. Galloway & Brown, 2002; Luthje & Franke, 2003; Zhao, Seibert, & Geralds, 2005) using TPB (Ajzen, 1991) as a framework. TPB assumes that human social behavior is reasoned, controlled, and planned. TPB views people as rational beings who utilize information at their disposal to judge, evaluate, and decide actions. Three attitudinal antecedents are necessary to trigger the action of starting a business: (a) the desire to start the business, (b) the belief that the business contributes to well being of the society, and (c) the conviction that success is possible (Ajzen, 1991).

One of the most promising ways to improve learning is to improve teaching (Angelo & Cross, 1993). To improve teaching effectiveness, teachers should make their goals explicit and assess the extent to which they are achieving those goals. Teaching goals are the set of knowledge, skills, and values that students will develop if they succeed in a given course (Angelo & Cross, 1993). Despite entrepreneurship programs having some basic features in common, educational activities seem not to share common teaching goals. A special effort needs to be made in order to achieve a common framework for learning outcomes among entrepreneurship educators.

## Entrepreneurial Learning

Entrepreneurial learning is defined as "a problem solving process centered on the acquisition, storage and use of entrepreneurial knowledge in long term memory" (Rae & Carswell, 2000, p. 221). Entrepreneurial learning has been studied using a variety of learning theories such as competency (Man, 2006; Mulder, Lans, Verstegen, Biemans, & Meijer, 2007), co-participation (Taylor & Thorpe, 2004), problem based learning (Tan & Ng, 2006), action learning (Taylor, Jones, & Boles 2004), and learning organizations as an orientation towards learning (Kropp, Lindsay, & Shoham, 2006). New conceptualizations of entrepreneurial learning have also been proposed such as the triadic model of entrepreneurial learning (Rae, 2005) and the negotiated narrative (Fletcher & Watson, 2007).

Entrepreneurial learning is commonly simplified as learning how to recognize an opportunity (e.g., Lumpkin & Lichtenstein, 2005; Politis, 2005; Rae, 2003; Venkataraman, 1997). Opportunity recognition has been defined as the ability to identify a good idea and transform it into a business concept that adds value and generates revenues (Lumpkin &

Lichtenstein, 2005). *Opportunity identification* is a trainable competency and individuals can create opportunities from nothing (DeTienne & Chandler, 2004). Contrary to the "market research" view, where the environment is the source of all opportunities, opportunities come from the mind of the entrepreneurs and are never independent of him/her (DeTienne & Chandler, 2004).

Entrepreneurs identify opportunities when they become familiar with an industry (Rae, 2004) and combine information to come up with product or services valuable for others (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Special interest knowledge, general industry knowledge, prior knowledge of markets, prior knowledge of customer problems, and knowledge of ways to serve a specific market will all increase the likelihood of opportunity recognition (Politis, 2005). The cognitive abilities to combine information are present in people who pay less attention to failure and focus more on maximizing success (Baron & Ward, 2004).

Rae (2003) proposed to focus entrepreneurship education on opportunity recognition, arguing that the identification of an opportunity is an act of learning itself and a source of motivation to learn entrepreneurship. Opportunity centered learning mirrors the natural process of learning because the discovery and pursuit of an opportunity is stimulated by natural human curiosity and motivation to complete what is incomplete (Rae, 2003).

In other approaches to produce entrepreneurial learning, Shepherd (2004) proposed educating students about managing emotions associated with failure in order to maximize learning from experience. Fletcher & Watson (2007) propose a technique called *negotiated narratives* to trigger entrepreneurial learning. The objective of *negotiated narratives* is to encourage students to utilize their full range of experiences in the world. The technique invited students to look into their stories, identity, and personal experience to find business ideas and recognize how business ideas tend to be developed. Attention is on developing ideas from the environment in relationship to the contextual world (Fletcher & Watson, 2007).

## Implications and Further Research Questions

The academic work about entrepreneurship is fragmented and controversial (Cunningham & Lischeron, 1991). In part, this is due to entrepreneurship education being in its infancy. Insights found in this literature review cover teaching, learning, and program establishment. First, entrepreneurship programs show uncertainly about what to teach and how to teach for best results. Second, most entrepreneurship research reports the actions of instructors without further reflection on pedagogical implications and without the use of literature on teaching and learning from education or psychology. Third, the conceptual framework inherited from traditional business education limits innovative conceptualizations of how students learn entrepreneurship, how entrepreneurs learn, and best practices in teaching. Fourth, as an emerging field, entrepreneurship shows uncertainty as to its role in higher education and its relationship to other fields.

Entrepreneurship professors propose radically different methods to teach entrepreneurship. This might be partially explained because they adopt different schools of thought and definitions of entrepreneurship. Some scholars propose the development of the ability to identify opportunities (DeTienne & Chandler, 2004), others the management of emotions associated with failure (Shepherd, 2004). Another group suggests that entrepreneurial skills can be fostered through experiential learning and reflective practice (Pittaway & Cope, 2007), while others choose to innovate through fictional dramas (Fletcher & Watson, 2007).

The perspective adopted while teaching strongly influences the content delivered and methods used by instructors (Pratt, 1998). However, in the work reviewed here, researchers did

not explicitly discuss the perspective they adopted, or the conceptual framework/philosophy that informed their work. Entrepreneurship professors usually limit themselves to reporting their educational activities in academic journals without further analysis from an educational standpoint.

The traditional paradigm of business education (Gibbs, 2002) was designed to introduce students to corporate techniques, overemphasizing quantitative data and preparing students for rigid schedules and repetitive work. Traditional business education is not helpful in understanding what entrepreneurship education should be and confounds researchers and practitioners when new domains of practice are described using old interpretative systems. Traditional business education views students and people as objective rational decision makers. Entrepreneurial learning demands a new conceptual corpus to define the human beings and their interaction with the world.

In this complex context, the role of entrepreneurship in higher education remains unclear. Further research is needed to clarify the educational outcomes expected from entrepreneurship education. Other disciplines, especially those concerned with adult education, training, learning, and human development, might contribute to conceptualize entrepreneurship education processes and outcomes. A clear conceptualization seems necessary for good measures and good measures are needed for good assessment and continuous improvement.

## References


Al-Laham, A. Souitaris, A. & Zerbinati, S. (2007). Do entrepreneurship programmes raise entrepreneurial intention of science and engineering students? The effect of learning, inspiration and resources. *Journal of Business Venturing, 22*(4), 566.

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behaviour. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*, 179-211

Angelo, T. A., & Cross, K. P. (1993*). Classroom assessment techniques: A handbook for teachers* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Carden, A. (2008). Making poor nations rich: Entrepreneurship and the process of economic development. In B. Powell (Ed.), *Review of Austrian economics* (pp. 355-359). Stanford, CA: Economics and Finance and the Independent Institute.

Baron, R. A., & Ward, T. B. (2004). Expanding entrepreneurial cognition's toolbox: Potential contributions from the field of cognitive science. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 28*(6), 553-573.

Boland, L. (1982). *Foundations of economic method*. London: George Allen & Unwin.

Boyatzis, R. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cone, J. (2008). Teaching entrepreneurship in colleges and universities: How (and why) a new academic field is being built. Kansas City: Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. Retrieved March 9, 2009, from http://www.kauffman.org/items.cfm?itemID=716.

Cooper, S., Bottomley, C., & Gordon, J. (2004). Stepping out of the classroom and up the ladder of learning: An experiential learning approach to entrepreneurship education. *Industry & Higher Education*, *18*(1), 11-22.

Corbett, A. C. (2007). Learning asymmetries and the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities. *Journal of Business Venturing, 22*, 97–118.

DeTienne, D. R., & Chandler, G. N. (2004). Opportunity identification and its role in the entrepreneurial classroom: A pedagogical approach and empirical test. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, *3*(3), 242–257.

Fletcher, D. E., & Watson, T. J. (2007). Entrepreneurship, management learning and negotiated narratives: Making it otherwise for us—otherwise for them. *Management Learning, 38*(1), 9–26.

Garavan, T., & O'Cinneide, B. (1994). Entrepreneurship education and training programmes: A review and evaluation - Part 1. *Journal of European Industrial Training, 18*(8), 3.

Galloway, L., & Brown W. (2002). Entrepreneurship education at university: A driver in the creation of high growth firms? *Education and Training, 44*(8), 398-405.

Gibb, A. (2002). In pursuit of a new enterprise and entrepreneurship paradigm for learning: creative destruction, new values, new ways of doing things and new combinations of knowledge. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 4*(3), 213-232.

Harper, D. A. (1996). *Entrepreneurship and the market process*. London and New York: Routledge.

Hostager, T. J., & Decker, R. L. (1999). The effects of an entrepreneurship program on achievement motivation. A preliminary study ed. SBIDA, San Francisco, CA: Small Business Institute Director's Association. Retrieved March 30, 2009, from http://www.sbaer.uca.edu/Research/1999/SBIDA/sbi28.htm.

Kropp, F., Lindsay, N. J., & Shoham, A. (2006). Entrepreneurial, market, and learning orientations and international entrepreneurial business venture performance in South African firms. *International Marketing Review, 23*(5), 504-523.

Lumpkin, G. T., & Lichtenstein, B. B. (2005). The role of organizational learning in the opportunity-recognition process. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 29*(4), 451-472.

Luthje, C., & Franke, N. (2003). The 'making' of an entrepreneur: Testing a model of entrepreneurial intent among engineering students at MIT. *R & D Management, 33*(2), 135-147.

McIntyre, J. R., & Roche, M. (1999). *University education for entrepreneurs in the United States: A critical and retrospective analysis of trends in the 1990s* (Working Paper Series 99/00-021). Atlanta: Georgia Institute of Technology, Center for International Business Education & Research.

Man, T. W. Y. (2006). Exploring the behavioural patterns of entrepreneurial learning: A competency approach. *Education and Training, 48*(5), 309-321.

Mulder, M., Lans, T., Verstegen, J., Biemans, H., & Meijer, Y. (2007). Competence development of entrepreneurs in innovative horticulture. *Journal of Workplace Learning, 19*(1), 32-44.

Pittaway, L., & Cope, J. (2007). Simulating entrepreneurial learning: Integrating experiential and collaborative approaches to learning. *Management Learning, 38*(2), 211-233.

Politis, D. (2005). The process of entrepreneurial learning: A conceptual framework. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice, 29*(4), 399-424.

Pratt, D. (1998). *Five perspectives on teaching in adult and higher education.* Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Rae, D. (2003). Opportunity centred learning: an innovation in enterprise education? *Education & Training, 45*(8/9), 542-549.

Rae, D. (2005). Entrepreneurial learning: a narrative-based conceptual model. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 12*(3), 323- 335.

Rae, D., & Carswell, M. (2000). Using a life-story approach in researching entrepreneurial learning: The development of a conceptual model and its implications in the design of learning experiences. *Education & Training, 42*(4/5), 220-228.

Shepherd, D. A. (2004). Educating entrepreneurship students about emotion and learning from failure. *Academy of Management Learning and Education, 3*(3), 274–287.

Shane, S., & Venkataraman, S. (2000). The promise of entrepreneurship as a field of research. Academy of Management. *The Academy of Management Review, 25*(1), 217-226.

Solomon, G. (2007). An examination of entrepreneurship education in the United States. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 14*(2), 168-182.

Tan, S. S., & Ng, C. K. F. (2006). A problem-based learning approach to entrepreneurship education. *Education & Training, 48*(6), 416-428.

Taylor, D. W., & Thorpe, R. (2004). Entrepreneurial learning: a process of co-participation. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 11*(2), 203-211.

Taylor, D. W., Jones, O., & Boles, K. (2004). Building social capital through action learning: An insight into the entrepreneur. *Education & Training, 46*(4/5) 226-235.

Torraco, R. J. (2005). Writing an integrative literature review: Guidelines and examples. *Human Resource Development Review, 4*(3), 356-367.

Venkataraman, S. (1997). The distinctive domain of entrepreneurship research: An editor's perspective. In J. Katz & R. Brockhaus (Eds.), *Advances in entrepreneurship, firm emergence and growth* (pp. 119–138). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Vesper, K. H., & Gartner, W. B. (1997). Measuring progress in entrepreneurship education. *Journal of Business Venturing, 12*(5), 403-421.

Whitlock, D. M., & Masters, R. J. (1996). Influences on business students' decisions to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities or traditional career paths. San Diego, CA: Small Business Institute Director's Association. Retrieved March 30, 2009, from http://www.sbaer.uca.edu/Research/1996/SBIDA/96sbi039.htm.

Young, J. E., & Sexton, D. L. (1997). Entrepreneurial learning: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Enterprising Culture, 5*(3), 223-248.

Zhao, H., Seibert, S., & Hills, G. (2005). The mediating role of self efficacy in the development of entrepreneurial intentions. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*(6), 1265-1272.

# Motivational Strategies to Increase Completion of Assignments in Mathematics Classes

Rebeca Alea
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to share the results of an 8-week study that focused on the effects of incorporating real-life applications and rewards to measure their impact on student motivation. The goal was to reduce the number of students unmotivated to complete their mathematics assignments satisfactorily.

There are many high school students who are not motivated to learn mathematics. Various reasons play a role, including students' perceptions about their own abilities, social factors, and lack of applicability and incentive to learn. Students need to practice math in order to succeed. Math is not a subject that can be memorized; it requires practice and comprehension. Mathematics teachers need to implement different strategies in the class to see which would lead to higher levels of engagement and motivation to succeed. This led me to the research question: Will using real-life applications and giving a reward improve students' motivation to increase completion of classroom assignments?

This study focused on 25 ninth-grade Algebra I students. They were all Hispanic students from Miami-Dade County in Florida. The study implemented real-life application problems related to the topic discussed in class by creating tangible scenarios the students could relate to in order to identify the importance of math, and modeling problems. Coupled with the real-life instructional technique, a reward was utilized at the end of each week. A homework pass was randomly rewarded to one student a week, who was selected from the pool of students who successfully finished their assignment.

## Literature Review

Students' motivation has always been an important topic for mathematics teachers. Many students are less motivated at the middle school and high school level to learn and practice mathematics than at the elementary level. Students' motivation affects the success of students in learning mathematics in school as well as mathematical abilities that are necessary for potential future jobs.

One of the studies that focused on motivation is the one conducted by Sullivan, Tobias, and McDonough (2006); they assumed that low motivation of students is the determinant of the apparent lack of engagement. They incorporated Hannula's (2004) definition of motivation as "the potential to direct behavior that is built into the emotion control mechanisms. This potential may be manifested in cognition, emotion, emotion and/or behavior" (Sullivan et al., 2006, p. 82).

Some of the studies focused on a specific activity to determine whether it improves the motivation of students to complete and learn mathematics. For example, target mathematical models (Zbiek & Conner, 2006), virtual manipulatives (Durmus & Karakirik, 2006), and peer-assisted learning (Kroeger & Kouche, 2006) have been studied to determine if they improve students' engagement in mathematics classes.

Mathematics is a class that needs practice; as a teacher, I have found that math cannot be learned through reading, memorization, and explanations only. Math requires active participation in the classroom and in the completion of assignments/projects in order to acquire and

Alea, R. (2009). Motivational strategies to increase completion of assignments in mathematics classes. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 8-14). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

successfully apply the skill sets. Therefore, student motivation is an important component of a math class. Students need to be engaged and to be active learners.

Many students at the high school level perceive themselves to be not good at math, which hinders their level of engagement in learning. This is confirmed by Sullivan et al. (2006) who reported in their article that school engagement of young adolescents declines compared to their engagement in elementary school.

*Motivation in Mathematics*

Some factors that may contribute to students' lack of motivation in mathematics classes during the adolescent years are lack of confidence, deficiency in skills, giving up easily, not being able to see the importance of math, or the feeling that they can be successful at school without putting in effort (Sullivan et al., 2006). In addition, peer pressure is also necessary to consider. Some students want to look cool, they want to be the center of attention, and they think that by not putting effort in class and not completing classroom activities they are going to be popular in the school. In the study done by Sullivan and colleagues (2006), when the students were asked why a student that was not good at mathematics will not try, half of the eighth-graders answered: to pass without trying; to be popular; not to get picked on, bullied, or teased; and it was not cool. This study, conducted with eighth graders in Australia from four different schools, concluded that motivation is related to socialization, trying to fit in social and cultural groups.

Sullivan et al. (2006) argued that positive student responses to school mathematics learning opportunities was not just remotely affected by factors such as lack of self awareness, lack of confidence, and lack of success. On the contrary, direct and indirect pressure by peers not to try hard in school may also be connected to students' needs. They concluded that "classroom culture may be a more important determinant of participation than curriculum, method of teaching, modes of assessment, teacher experience, level of resources, or anything else" (p. 97).

There are other factors that influence the students' engagement in completing assignments in a mathematics class. Often students are heard saying, "I used to be good at math, until high school" (Rothery, 2007, p. 526). Rothery argues that students who used to get As and Bs in math at the elementary level were doing their assignment and homework without putting in a lot of effort. At the high school level, math courses are more complex (higher level); more effort and practice is required to master a topic. Many students do not make the connection between putting in more effort and mastering a topic in mathematics. Rothery (2007) recommends helping students with strategies for note taking, completing homework, and test preparation.

Schwartz (2006) argued that learning mathematics takes attitude, perseverance, and courage. He said that "learning math is a two sided equation: one side is what the student brings to the process, the other side is the teacher" (p. 51). Teachers need to provide the students with great classes, but the students' engagement is also necessary to succeed in class. Schwartz (2006) talked about three aspects that he thinks are important. First, he mentioned the aspect of attitude—students should have a positive attitude about the class. Another aspect was perseverance, which is the ability to continue despite obstacles and failures. Students need to know that their effort is necessary and that it is the key point of their success in math. The last aspect he talked about was fearlessness; students need to know that making mistakes is part of learning math. Students should not be afraid of making mistakes and asking questions. When students are working on class assignments, they should have the opportunity to ask questions and be able to understand material that they did not understand during teacher's explanation.

*Activities to Improve Students' Motivation in Mathematics*

There are several studies on different activities that have been shown to increase students' engagement in mathematics classes. One of the activities is mathematical modeling, which is "a mathematizable situation, a mathematical object, a purpose or question that prompted the modeling activity, and the relationships between these things and the modeler" (Zbiek & Conner, 2006, p. 91). According to Zbiek and Conner (2006), mathematical modeling activity influences students learning through effects on motivation and through changes in understanding. Based on their study, they argued that mathematical modeling activities support three different types of motivation. The first type confirms that real world situations appeal to learners. The second type is the motivation to continue or not continue to study mathematics. The third type of motivation emerges when a student modeler embraces a purpose to add a new piece of knowledge or new connections among pieces of knowledge. Moreover, Zbiek and Conner (2006) concluded that modeling work provides opportunities to learn mathematics as well as to motivate to learn mathematics.

Padula (2005) suggested that literature should be included in mathematics, which is literature with mathematics as its major themes. These books provide the students with more explorations and real life applications. Padula notes that math fiction is also related to explorations in mathematics. Curiosity can develop the motivation to learn; by teaching math through stories, students may become more interested in the subject and may complete more assignments.

Another activity that research has shown to improve motivation is virtual manipulatives. Durmus and Karakirik (2006) claimed that the usage of manipulatives both increases students' conceptual understanding and problem solving skills and promotes their positive attitudes towards mathematics, because they provide concrete experiences that focus attention and increase motivation. Using manipulative materials in teaching mathematics will help students learn to (a) relate real world situations to mathematics symbolism, (b) work together cooperatively in solving problems, (c) discuss mathematical ideas and concepts, (d) verbalize their mathematics thinking, (e) make presentations in front of a large group, (f) solve problems in many different ways, (g) symbolize mathematics problems in many ways, and (h) solve mathematics problems without just following teachers' directions.

Another activity is Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS). PALS is a classwide peer tutoring approach that permits teachers to address challenging mathematics curriculum and attend to a wide diversity of math skills in the classroom. It supports the use of appropriate social skills. Kroeger and Kouche (2006) concluded from their study with 150 students that using PALS increased engagement and positive response to intervention, regardless of ability levels or past experiences or failures in math classes.

*Rewards*

Researchers have studied rewards and how they are effectively used in class to motivate students for many years. Schunk (1982) concluded that the anticipation of a reward consequence influences the students' perceptions of self-efficacy and achievement. Other studies confirm that rewards are beneficial for students' motivation in class (Cameron, Pierce, Banko, & Gear, 2005; Malala, Major, Maunez-Cuadra, & McCauley-Bell, 2007). For example, rewards impacted intrinsic motivation when students were rewarded for achievement while learning an activity (Malala et al., 2007). In addition, rewards in general are beneficial; however, the rewards should differ according to students' ages and population (Malala et al., 2007).

## Procedures

My third period Algebra I class was chosen for the focus of this study. This class is composed of twenty-five 14- to 16-year-old ninth graders. All students in this class are Hispanics. I selected this period because it is the period before lunch, and some students lack motivation to do classwork. During assignment time, I always walk around the class to help students and make sure that they are working and understanding what they are doing. For the majority of assignments, students worked individually and a few times in pairs. However, some students in this class do not work on their assignment until I pass by their desk; without my vigilance, they make no progress on their assignment. This is evidence of the lack of motivation to complete their work.

For this study, the class lectures and assignments were modified to incorporate more real-life applications of Algebra I. The real-life application problems were word problems that described scenarios of everyday life. Even though the scenarios were related to their everyday life, students needed to use their new knowledge of the lesson in order to solve them. Sometimes the given problems required a little exploration to solve the problems. In addition, at the end of each week, one student from the group that completed satisfactorily all the classwork for the week was selected at random and received a reward. In order to pick the students at random, the students' name were placed in a cup and one student picked a name from the cup without looking. The prize was a homework pass, which allowed him/her to skip one of the homework assignments and still receive an A for that assignment.

## Data Collection

Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in this study. The students were observed for 4 weeks without any type of intervention, and 4 weeks of intervention as they were working with their classroom routine. I recorded the number of times that each student did not complete the classroom assignments. During the 4 weeks of intervention, I also recorded the number of times that students did not complete the classroom assignments. During the 4 weeks without the intervention and the 4 weeks after the intervention, the students had the same number of assignments. In addition, I observed students and made notes both on their class participation during assignment time and their motivation to do the work during the 8 weeks.

## Data Analysis and Findings

There was a decrease in the number of class assignment that the students were not turning in after the intervention as shown in Figure 1. In Figure 1, series one represents the number of class assignments that students did not turn in during the first 4 weeks (without intervention). Series two represents the number of class assignments that students did not turn in during the last 4 weeks (intervention time). In addition, from the notes taken on students' participation in class and sharing with others, I saw an increase in the way students were engaged in class. They were asking more questions and trying to complete the assignment on their own. Out of 25 students in the class, 15 students (60%) decreased the amount of classwork not turned in by the end of the intervention. Nine out of the 25 students (36%) maintained the same amount or increased the number of missing assignments. Six of the 9 students who consistently had the same number of missing assignments never missed any assignments before or during intervention. The remaining 3 students were only missing one or two assignments. However, only one student increased the number of assignments not turned in by the end of the intervention. Without the intervention, the student was not missing any assignment, and by the end of the intervention, the student was

missing one assignment. After looking at the data, I am able to say that there was an

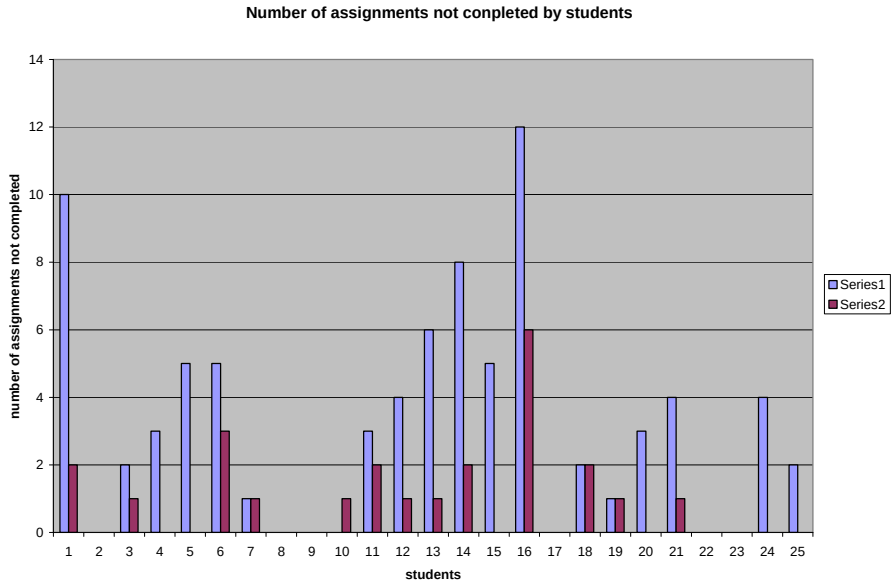



*Figure 1*. Bar graph of number of assignments not completed by students.

improvement in the reduction of assignments not turned in at the end of the intervention time. The pair sample t-test (Appendix) showed statistically significant results with a 95% confident interval. The study may not be effective with larger groups. However, for this study with a small group of students, there was an improvement in the class.

## Summary and Discussion

Teachers can not just wait for students to be motivated on their own. If students are not motivated, it is the job of the teacher to try to actively engage as many students as possible in the classroom activities. Also, teachers need to address students' perceptions of not being good at mathematics. Analyzing the research question related to using real-life applications and giving a reward improve students' motivation to increase completion of classroom assignments provided the following conclusion. The students were more motivated with the reward and real-life application than before it was provided, resulting in more students completing the class assignments.

This study confirms the results of Zbiek and Conner (2006), which indicated that real-world situations motivate students to learn mathematics. Students in the study were more engaged in the applications problems than in the drill and practice problems. Also, this study confirms that rewards are beneficial for students' class motivation, augmenting Schunk's (1982) findings that the anticipation of a reward consequence influences the students' perceptions of self-efficacy and achievement.

One of the limitations of this study was time. I would like to see how the results would vary if the study was conducted for a longer period of time, perhaps a school year. Also, there were two other external variables that could have altered the results. One was the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). FCAT testing was conducted towards the end of the intervention period. The FCAT preparation time also occurred during the middle of the research. Some of the topics that students were supposed to study were replaced with the FCAT review/ practice. FCAT material may have been easier for some students and could have influenced their motivation to complete assignments. The second was that the intervention period was closer to

the end of the grading period. Some students tend to do more work towards the end of the nine weeks since they want to improve their grade.

## Implications

For future research, it would be helpful to isolate the two systems—the use of more real-life applications and implementing rewards—to see which has the greatest effect on student motivation. The research could be divided into two parts. The first part would see whether students complete more assignment by using real-life application. The second part would use praise at the end of the week to see which variable was stronger in order to increase assignment completion satisfactorily.

## References


Cameron, J., Pierce, D., Banko, K., & Gear, A. (2005). Achievement-based rewards and intrinsic motivation: A test of cognitive mediators. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *97*(4), 642-655.

Durmus, S., & Karakirik, E. (2006). Virtual manipulatives in mathematics education: A theoretical framework. *The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology*, *5*, 12.

Hannula, M. Evans, J. Philippou, G., & Zan, R. (2004, July). *Affect in mathematics education-exploring theoretical frameworks*. Paper presented at the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education Research Forum. Bergen, Norway.

Kroeger, S. D., & Kouche, B. (2006). Using peer-assisted learning strategies to increase response to intervention in inclusive middle math settings. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *38*(5), 6-13.

Malala, J., Major, A., Maunez-Cuadra, J., & McCauley-Bell, P. (2007, March). *The use of rewards in instructional digital games: An application of positive reinforcement*. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the International Academy of Business Disciplines. Orlando, FL.

Padula, J. (2005). Mathematical fiction: its place in secondary-school mathematics learning. *Australian Mathematics Teachers*, *64*(4), 6-13.

Rothery, T. (2007). Stepping up your game. *Mathematics Teacher*, *100*(8), 526-528.

Schunk, D. H. (1982, March). *Progress-contingent rewards: Do they boost children's achievement?* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York.

Schwartz, A. (2006). Learning math takes attitude, perseverance, and courage. *Education Digest*, *71*(7), 50-54.

Sullivan, P. Tobias, S., & McDonough, A. (2006). Perhaps the decision of some students not to engage in learning mathematics in schools is deliberate. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, *62*(1), 81-99.

Zbiek, R. M., & Conner, A. (2006). Beyond motivation: Exploring mathematical modeling as a context for deepening students' understanding of curricular mathematics. *Educational Studies in Mathematics*, *63*(1), 89-112.

# Appendix

## T-Test

**Paired Samples Statistics**

| | | Mean | N | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | NCWPRE | 3.20 | 25 | 3.240 | .648 |
| | NCWPOST | .96 | 25 | 1.369 | .274 |

**Paired Samples Correlations**

| | | N | Correlation | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pair 1 | NCWPRE & NCWPOST | 25 | .697 | .000 |

**Paired Samples Test**

| | | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower | Upper | | | |
| Pair 1 | NCWPRE - NCWPOST | 2.24 | 2.488 | .498 | 1.21 | 3.27 | 4.502 | 24 | .000 |

# The Role of Leadership Style in Employee Engagement

Laura C. Batista-Taran, Michael Bradley Shuck, Cinthya C. Gutierrez, and Sofia Baralt
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** This paper explores the relationship between leadership styles and engagement in the workplace. The competitive global markets are forcing organizations to look past their products and the bottom line and move beyond just employee motivation and towards having an engaged workforce.

Due to globalization, companies are changing their structure and competing in a bigger arena. Most of these organizations used to think of capital simply as shares, cash, investments, or some sort of wealth. Over the years, these organizations have changed their views and have added employee development and performance management as a strategic business priority to set them apart from their competition. With this shift, organizations are adding more value to their employees and their employees' skill sets (Heger, 2007). Talent management has emerged as an area in which organizations, and especially human resource professionals, can spend time and resources to develop a workforce that gives them a competitive and strategic advantage.

Organization use talent management in order to achieve some of their goals, such as competitive advantage, retention, and increase productivity. For the purpose of this paper we will focus on one aspect of talent management, motivation, that leads to some of these desired organizational outcomes and take it a step further by approaching it through the engagement lens. Engagement impacts various organizational outcomes, such as retention and productivity. To accomplish their talent management goals, organizations must move beyond employee motivation strategies and towards increasing the levels of employee engagement. Having engaged employees has become crucial in a time where organizations look to their employees to take initiative, bring innovation, and be proactive with solutions to current needs. Organizational leaders are in the position to increase their employees' engagement levels and do more than just motivate them. The purpose of this paper is to explore what type of leadership style is more conducive to increasing the levels of employee engagement. First, employee engagement and leadership are discussed followed by an exploration of what leadership style is more conducive to increasing employee engagement levels. Lastly, implications and conclusions bring this paper to a close.

## Engagement

The term engagement refers to an "individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002, p. 269). Built on the work of Kahn (1990), engagement describes the intimate involvement with and framework of the work experience. When employees are engaged, they are emotionally connected to others and cognitively vigilant to the direction of the team (Harter et al., 2002). Engagement occurs when employees know what to expect, have the resources to complete their work, participate in opportunities for growth and feedback, and feel that they contribute significantly to the organization.

Although engaged employees have consistently shown to be more productive, profitable, safer, healthier, and less likely to leave their employer (Fleming & Asplund, 2007; Wagner & Harter, 2006), only 30% of the global workforce is estimated to be engaged (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Harter et al., 2002; Saks, 2006; Wagner & Harter, 2006); more than 60% of the

Batista-Taran, L. C., Shuck, M. B., Gutierrez, C. C., & Baralt, S. (2009). The role of leadership style in employee engagement. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 15-20). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

global workforce goes to work, at best, ambivalent and emotionally uninvolved with their work (Shuck & Wollard, 2008). It is estimated that this engagement gap cost the United States economy more than $300 billion dollars a year in lost productivity (Fornes, Rocco, & Wollard, 2008; Rath & Clifton, 2004). Unfortunately, employee engagement seems to be on a continued decline (Shuck & Wollard, 2008). Despite the low numbers of engaged employees, organizational leaders rate employee engagement among the top priorities of their organizations (The Ken Blanchard Companies, 2008; Ketter, 2008).

## Leadership

Leaders are the individuals in the organization who set the tone and culture. Northouse (2004) defines leadership as a process whereby one individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. An effective leader is able to influence his or her followers to reach the goals of the organization. There is a clear distinction between managers and leaders. While managers create order and consistency, leaders produce change and motivate their employees. Building the relationship between a leader and his/her followers requires an appreciation from the leader for the personal values of those who would be willing to give their energy and talents to accomplish shared objectives (Bass, 1985). Various leadership theories have evolved to define the characteristics, traits, and styles of various leaders and leadership styles (Bass, 1985). In the following paragraphs, transactional leadership, leader-member exchange theory, and transformational leadership are explored.

### *Transactional Leadership*

Transactional leaders use conventional reward and punishment to gain compliance from their followers (Burns, 1978). These leaders tend to be action oriented and results focused. Three characteristics define transactional leaders: contingent reward, management by exception, and laissez-faire (Bass, 1985). Contingent rewards refer to a practice where leaders provide rewards if they believe subordinates perform adequately and/or try hard enough. Consequently, if they do not believe that subordinates have tried hard enough, no reward is provided. Management by exception is a conservative approach whereby resources are applied in response to any event falling outside of established parameters. This characteristic of transactional leadership seeks to minimize the opportunity for exceptions by enforcing defensive management processes. Lastly, the laissez-faire characteristic where a leader only gets involved when there is a problem (Northouse, 2004). Team members can do little to improve their job satisfaction under transactional leadership.

### *Leader-Member Exchange*

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory focuses on the dyadic and quality of the relationship between leader and follower (Center for Leader Development, 2006). In this style, a successful leader is characterized by high LMX that refers to a high quality relationship where members feel a part of in-group. As a result, they have more responsibility, decision influence, higher satisfaction, and access to valuable resources. Reciprocally, when members feel in the out-group, this relationship is characterized by low LMX. Here, the leader offers low levels of support to the member, and the person has less responsibility and ability to influence decisions. Leader-member relationships emerge as the result of a series of exchanges and interactions during which these roles develop.

### *Transformational Leadership*

Burns (1978) defines transformational leadership as a process that occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. The four dimensions of transformational leadership are:

(a) idealized influence, which deals with building confidence and trust; (b) inspirational motivation, which deals with motivating the entire organization; (c) intellectual stimulation, which involves arousing and changing followers' awareness of problems and their capacity to solve those problems; and (d) individualized consideration, which involves responding to the specific, unique needs of followers to ensure they are included in the transformation process of the organization. These four dimensions enable leaders to behave as strong role models fostering followers' transformation into more successful and productive individuals (Hay, 1995).

Transformational leaders are often highly visible and known for their passion and energy in all aspects of their work. They spend most of their time communicating with others and looking for initiatives that add value to their teams' future. Transformational leaders motivate and empower their followers, often transcending short-term goals by focusing on higher order intrinsic needs (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

## Leadership and Engagement

Leaders impact organizational effectiveness through their followers. Leadership can have a great impact on engaging employees within the organization. However, transactional leadership limits the leader to using reward based behaviors in order to achieve higher performance from employees, which only have short-term effects. Additionally, LMX Theory (Center for Leader Development, 2006) supports the development of privileged groups in the workplace and appears unfair and discriminatory. LMX theory does not explain how to develop trust or how members can become part of the in-group. Transformational leadership emerges as a style that fosters the development of employee engagement. As Kaiser, Hogan, and Craig (2008) suggest,

> Transformational leadership changes the way followers see themselves-from isolated individuals to members of a larger group…When followers see themselves as members of a collective, they tend to endore group values and goals, and this enhances their motivation to contribute to the greater good. (p. 104)

Transformational leaders provide an inspiring vision of goals that can help overcome self-interest and narrow factionalism in organizations. They summon new and broader energies among followers. Bakker and Schaufeli (2008) found that employees who have positive interactions with their managers have increased levels of engagement. Additionally, Walumbwa, Orwa, Wang, and Lawler (2005) found that using a transformational leadership style leads to increased organizational commitment and job satisfaction, and still Cartwright and Holmes (2006) found that leaders who focus on relationship building and trust development increase engagement levels. Transformational leaders are not viewed as a power figure but as mutual support for a common purpose, the collective good of an organization. From this perspective, transformational leaders have the capacity to directly impact the engagement levels of their employees (Nohria, Groysberg, & Lee, 2008) and are able to meet the human and work needs of their employees, a dividend of a very unique and empowering style.

## Implications

Engagement is a complex process and organizations must take time to fully develop it. Organizations must begin utilizing all the tools available to them in order to increase the engagement level of their employees. The literature reviewed highlights leadership behaviors that are more conducive to increasing engagement in the workplace as well as those behaviors that detract from it. Leaders play an important role in the development of engagement by projecting the ideals and characteristics that are tied to engagement drivers, such as being supportive, and providing a vision to the employees that goes beyond short term goals but the

long term goals of the organization. Organizations such as Johnson and Johnson have begun developing training programs for leaders around transformational leadership and engagement related topics. Transformational leaders display behaviors that can potentially impact the level of engagement in their employees. As a human resource developing strategy, training programs for leaders should emphasize that this move towards developing transformational leadership skills is not merely a human resource initiative but an organizational development initiative that must be adopted on a daily basis (Catteeuw, Flynn, & Vonderhorst, 2007; Corace, 2007).

Organizations need to develop comprehensive strategies for executives that will provide them the tools to develop the skills for building trust, sharing their vision, and creating effective relationships between employees and the organization. Leaders who apply these skills are perceived more positively by their employees (Barling, Weber, & Kelloway, 1996). As a result, employees develop higher levels of organizational commitment and increase productivity levels. Leaders should understand the impact they have on employees and the importance of building a vision for the future with each employee. In addition, leaders that are confident and have higher levels of self-efficacy, such as transformational leaders, will be able to foster engagement in their employees more effectively than those with lower self-efficacy (Luthan & Peterson, 2001). Giving the employees a vision of the organization and how the employee fits within it, beyond just motivating them to complete the task at hand, will create a more productive workforce.

## Conclusion

The focus of this paper has been leadership and employee engagement. In today's competitive work environment, it is time for organizations to move beyond just motivating their employees and towards creating an environment of engagement. In our review of leadership styles, transformational leaders seem to be more self-confident to lead the way toward a culture of engagement. While Bass, Avolio, Jung, and Berson (2003) found that both transactional and transformational leadership are related to increased unit performance, transactional leaders needed to set structure where transformational leaders built on the structure that was already there and developed a more cohesive unit better prepared to face the challenges of a turbulent global market.

In a turbulent environment, many factors contribute towards the delivering of sustainable employee growth and organizational profitability. Knowing how to manage talent in order to increase engagement is a skill that human resource professionals are encouraging leaders at all levels to have. Knowing how to increase the level of engagement in your workforce is an important talent management skill in order to prevent having a disengaged workforce. Transformational leaders display the behaviors, such as supportive management, displaying a vision that is related to increasing employees' level of engagement. Bhatnagar (2007) found that one of the factors that increase engagement is supportive management, which is also another trait that transformational leaders have. In addition Wellins, Bernthal, and Phelps (n.d.) found that exceptional leaders (who demonstrate the same characteristics as transformational leaders) will create the environment that fosters engaged employees. Both of these findings with leadership styles and increasing levels of employee engagement depict characteristics of transformational leaders. Future research should further explore the relationship between transformational leaders and employee engagement and measure the level of engagement of employees with transformational leaders versus those employees that are under the direction of leaders with other leadership styles.

It has been said that with no customers there is no business. However, a disengaged workforce is costly to an organization in this competitive global market. An engaged workforce

has higher levels of commitment to the organization, lower levels of intentions to turnover, and higher rates of satisfaction. These elements are what we call engagement, the willingness and ability to contribute to company success by going above and beyond. Towers Perrin (2007-2008) survey found that employees that are engaged believe they can impact the organization bottom line, have higher productivity, and higher retention rates. This implies that organizations need to invest in employees on a continuous basis.

**References**


Bass, B. M. (1985). Leadership and performance beyond exceptions. New York: Free Press.

Bass, B. M., Avolio, B.J., Jung, D.I., & Berson, Y. (2003). Predicting unit performance by assessing transformational and transactional leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*, 207-218.

Bakker, A. B., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2008). Positive organizational behavior: Engaged employees in flourishing organizations. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 29*, 147-154.

Barling, J., Weber, T., & Kelloway, E. K. (1996). Effects of transformational leadership training on attitudinal and financial outcomes: A field experiment. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81*, 827-832.

Bhatnagar, J. (2007). Talent management strategy of employee engagement in India ITES employees: Key to retention. *Employee Relations, 29*, 640-663.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.

Cartwright, S., & Holmes, N. (2006). The meaning of work: The challenge of regaining employee engagement and reducing cynicism. *Human Resource Management Review, 16*, 199-208.

Catteeuw, F., Flynn, E., & Vonderhorst, J. (2007). Employee engagement: Boosting productivity in turbulent times. *Organizational Development Journal, 25*, 151-156.

Center for Leader Development. (2006). *Leader-member exchange theory*. Retrieved November 29, 2008, from http://wiki.centerforleaderdevelopment.com/mediawiki/index.php?title=Leader-member_exchange_%28LMX%29_theory

Corace, C. J. (2007). Engagement- enrolling the quiet majority. *Organizational Development Journal, 25*, 171-175.

Fleming, J. H., & Asplund, J. (2007). *Human sigma*. New York: Gallup Press.

Fornes, S. L., Rocco, T. S., & Wollard, K. K. (2008). Workplace commitment: A conceptual model developed from integrative review of the research connections. *Human Resource Development Review, 7*(3), 339-357.

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*, 268-279.

Hay, I. (1995). Transformational leadership: Characteristics and criticisms. *E-journal of Organizational Learning and Leadership.* Retrieved November 4, 2008, from http://www.leadingtoday.org/weleadinlearning/

Heger, B. K. (2007). Linking the employee value proposition (evp) to employee engagement and business outcomes: Preliminary findings for a linkage research pilot study. *Organizational Development Journal, 25*, 121-133.

Kahn, W. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal, 33*(4), 692-724.

Kaiser, R. B., Hogan, R., & Craig, S. B. (2008). Leadership and the fate of organizations. *American Psychologist, 63*, 96-110.

The Ken Blanchard Companies. (2008). *2008 corporate issues survey*. Guildford, United Kingdom: Author.

Ketter, P. (2008). What's the big deal about employee engagement? *Training and Development*, 44-49.

Luthan, F., & Peterson, S. J. (2001). Employee engagement and manager self-efficacy: Implications for managerial effectiveness and development. *Journal of Management Development, 21*, 376-387.

Meyer, J. P., & Allen, N. J. (1997). *Commitment in the workplace*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nohria, N., Groysberg, B., & Lee, L. (2008). Employee motivation: A powerful new model. *Harvard Business Review, 86*, 78-84.

Northouse, P. G. (2004) *Leadership theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rath, T., & Clifton, D. O. (2004). The power of praise and recognition. *The Gallup Management Journal*. Retrieved November 27, 2008, from http://gmj.gallup.com/content/12157/Power-Praise-Recognition.aspx.

Saks, A. M. (2006). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *21*(7), 600-619.

Shuck, B., & Wollard, K. (2008). Employee engagement: Motivating and connecting with tomorrow's workforce. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development*, *22*(1), 48-53.

Towers Perrin Global Workforce Study. (2007-2008). Closing the engagement gap: A road map for driving superior business performance. Retrieved November 10, 2008, from http://www.towersperrin.com/tp/showhtml.jsp?url=global/publications/gws/index.htm&country=global.

Wagner, R., & Harter, J. K. (2006). *12: The great elements of managing*. Washington, DC: The Gallup Organization.

Walumbwa, F. O., Orwa, B., Wang, P., & Lawler, J. J. (2005). Transformational leadership, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction: A comparative study of Kenyan and U.S. financial firms. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *16*, 235-256.

Wellins, R. S., Bernthal, P. B., & Phelps, M. (n.d.). *Employee engagement: The key to realizing a competitive advantage.* Pittsburg, PA: Development Dimensions International. Retrieved February 22, 2009 from http://www.ddiworld.com/pdf/ddi_employeeengagement_mg.pdf

# The Exclusion of Race From Mandated Continuing Legal Education Requirements: A Critical Race Theory Analysis

Lorenzo Bowman, University of Georgia, USA
Tonette S. Rocco, Florida International University, USA
Elizabeth Peterson, National Louis University, USA

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to critique the system of CLE using Critical Race Theory as an analytical lens in an effort to reveal possible reasons for the exclusion of bias and discrimination from CLE offerings in the legal profession.

A profession is characterized by individual preparation through a distinct pre-professional college curriculum, formal and informal learning required throughout working life, and the profession is regulated through a set of professional standards or codes, accreditation, and/or licensure (Queeney, 2000). These characteristics are predicated upon the belief that the profession's knowledge base is continually advancing and, to stay current, professionals such as attorneys must continue their education (Queeney, 2000). The need for continuing professional education (CPE) is often based on the desire to protect clients or society from ill-informed or poorly prepared professionals (van Loo & Rocco, 2006). The complex nature of our society dictates that professionals continue to learn in order to remain abreast of the ever changing knowledge in their field of expertise. CPE has become a key strategy in delivering information with the intent of securing and maintaining the quality of professional services. CPE may be defined as "the process of engaging in education pursuits with the goal of becoming up-to-date in the knowledge and skills of one's profession" (Weingand, 1999, p. 3). Both theory and practice surrounding CPE have been fragmented with programs being mandated seemingly at a whim rather than according to evidence of need. Effectiveness or producing a desired result is often used as the justification for a program without stating the criteria for evaluating effectiveness. Robertson, Umble, and Cervero (2003) found that CPE that is based on a needs assessment and is contextually relevant can produce outcomes such as improved knowledge, skills, and behavior. However these outcomes are context specific.

Members of the professions make up more that 25% of the workforce and are the primary decision makers for the major institutions and establishments of American society (Cervero, 1988). The special recognition given to members of the professions is a result of leadership roles derived from their technical knowledge and skills. The public has come to heavily rely on professionals to provide crucial services that are necessary to survive in today's global economy. Cervero (1988) maintains that because the public relies on professionals for crucial services, these professionals have a significant amount of control over the lives of people in our society.

CPE or as the legal profession calls it continuing legal education (CLE) helps to ensure quality of life for consumers of legal services in our society. CLE is mandated in 40 states. Among these 40 states, only 5 require coursework addressing bias and discrimination in the profession (Graber & Baca, 2004). The purpose of this paper is to critique the system of CLE using Critical Race Theory (CRT) as an analytical lens in an effort to reveal possible reasons for the exclusion of bias and discrimination from CLE offerings in the legal profession. The questions that guided this critique were: Why has the legal profession in most states chosen to

Bowman, L., Rocco, T. S., & Peterson, E. (2009). The exclusion of race from mandated continuing legal education requirements: A critical race theory analysis. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 21-26). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

exclude bias and discrimination from its mandated CLE offerings? In spite of statistics, which indicate that race is a significant issue in the legal system, why is race not addressed? How are race, discrimination, and bias addressed when included in CLE offerings? First we present an overview of CRT, then CLE and offerings on race, discrimination, and bias. This is followed by a critique of the CLE system using CRT. We close with our thoughts and suggestions for the future of CLE based on the analysis.

## Critical Race Theory

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first used CRT to theorize race to analyze school inequity. Then Ladson –Billings (1998) asked the question, "Just what is critical race theory and what is it doing in a nice field like education?" catching the attention of adult educators. In 1999, Peterson introduced CRT to the field of adult education informed by the work of Ladson-Billings (1998), Bell (1981), and Guinier (1998), observing "What is needed is a more thorough examination of racism in adult education" (p. 88). "Racism is any attitude, action, or institutional structure or any social policy that subordinates persons or groups because of their color. It is different from racial prejudice, hatred, or discrimination because it involves the *power* to carry out systematic discriminatory practices in a broad and continuing manner" (Sue, 2003, p. 31). Power is the foundation of racist structures and "*the ability to take life is the most effective form of* power" (Lenski, 1986, p. 243). Power becomes "identified with justice and the rule of right" (Lenski, 1986, p. 245) and is legitimatized through legislation and the building of consensus in educational, religious, and social institutions (Rocco & Gallagher, 2004). "By manipulating the law and consensus, the powerful shift the foundation of their power from force (or might) to justice (or right)" (Rocco & Gallagher, 2004, p. 34). Legitimatized power has the capacity to cause events and control resources (Clegg, 1989). In other words, legitimatized power creates a system of oppression "which prevent[s] some people from learning," from using effective interpersonal skills, from communicating with others, and interferes with the ability of others to listen (Young, 1990, p. 38). Oppression consists of processes that result in the replication of injustice in society (Young, 1990).

An analysis of the processes that replicate injustice and racism form the basis of CRT (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). For instance, one of the key themes of CRT is that racism is ordinary and pervasive. The ordinariness of racism means that all those who hold power or privilege (Rocco & Gallagher, 2004) are racists and do not acknowledge their views or actions as racist but normal, typical, and part of the status quo. The status quo is further reinforced by the interest convergence of "white elites (materially) and working-class people (psychically)" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001, p. 7) who work together by consensus to maintain the status quo. Interest convergence, as explained by critical race theorists, maintains that Whites are only willing to change the power differential when there is a clear benefit to the interests of Whites. The power held by the White elite results from their control of material resources and capital. Although the working class people do not share these resources, they derive psychic benefit from the existence of a subordinate racial group. The social construction of "race and races [which] are products of social thought and relations…[not] biological or genetic reality" (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001, p. 7) sustains a system of differential racialization. For instance, while African Americans are overrepresented in the penal system, Spanish speaking people are increasing in numbers because they too have been racialized and profiled by society. The third tenet is a critique of liberalism implying that liberalism focuses on deliberate, incremental change in the legal system and society while CRT demands radical, systemic change. Liberalism rejects the notion that traditions and social practices in and of themselves carry inherent value. Liberalism

argues that social practices and traditions must be constantly evaluated and adjusted for the benefit of society as a whole. Liberalism embraces that notion of universal dignity. As such, it argues that everyone should have access to the basic necessities of life (McGowan, 2007).

## Continuing Legal Education

The American Bar Association's standing committee on CLE and the commission on racial and ethnic diversity in the profession of law have noted that bias in the workplace and in the administration of justice is a current issue in the profession (Graber & Baca, 2004). The committee noted that at least 22 state task forces have found bias in the legal profession to be a serious problem. The perception of bias in the legal system has served to undermine its effectiveness. Courts and judges must not only be fair but also cultivate the perception of fairness. The public trust and confidence in the legal profession and the criminal justice system has been seriously eroded. Thus, it is crucial that judges and lawyers are conscious of their behaviors and work to ensure that fairness and equal justice are never compromised (Graber & Baca, 2004). Nevertheless, most state bar associations do not address racial bias in their CLE. Consider the following statistics that undeniably speak to the connection between race and the legal system:

- Half of all the prisoners in the U.S. (49.4% in 1996) are African American, although African Americans represent only 12% of the U.S. population (Walker, Sphon, & Delone, 2000).
- The incarceration rate for African American men is seven times the rate for White men (Walker et al., 2000).
- About 40% of the people currently on death row and 53% of all the people executed since 1930 are African American (Walker et al., 2000).
- African American and Hispanic jurors acquit more than White jurors (Markowitz & Jones-Brown, 2000).
- African American and Hispanic offenders receive harsher treatment than White offenders at every step of the justice system (United States Justice Department, 2000).
- Judges in many jurisdictions impose harsher sentences on racial minorities who murder or rape Whites, and more lenient sentences on racial minorities who victimize members of their own racial or ethnic group (Walker et al., 2000).

Only 5 of the 40 states that mandate CLE require coursework in the elimination of bias in the profession as part of their ethics and professionalism requirements. These states include California, Minnesota, Oregon, Washington, and West Virginia. California requires 25 hours of CLE every 36 months with at least 1 hour related to the elimination of bias in the legal profession based on but not limited to sex, color, race, religion, ancestry, national origin, blindness or physical disability, age, and sexual orientation. Minnesota mandates 45 hours of CLE every 3 years with at least 2 hours related to the elimination of bias. Oregon mandates 45 hours of CLE every 3 years with at least 9 hours devoted to professional responsibility. Professional responsibility is defined to include legal ethics and professionalism and educational activities related to the role of lawyers concerning racial and ethnic issues, gender fairness, disability issues, and access to justice. Washington mandates 45 CLE hours every 3 years with a minimum of 6 hours related to ethics. Ethics is broadly defined to include professionalism and professional responsibility, substance abuse, anti-bias, and diversity training. West Virginia mandates 24 hours of CLE each year with at least 3 hours in legal ethics, law enforcement management, substance abuse, or the elimination of bias in the legal profession (Graber & Baca,

2004). It is interesting to note that in those states where bias awareness is mandated in CLE, bias is so broadly defined so as to make it possible to fulfill the requirement without taking courses that address the issue of race in the profession and the criminal justice system. Thus, it can be concluded that practicing lawyers are not made aware of the significance of race in the criminal justice system and the profession of law in their mandatory CLE requirements. Given that the state bar controls the contents of mandated CLE, a state's bar has the power to at least begin to raise awareness of the reality of race in the legal system through the inclusion of the topic in its requirements.

## A Critical Race Theory Analysis

Consider the themes of Critical Race Theory and how they play out with regards to CLE: a) race and racism are ordinary, b) interest convergence, c) differential racialization, and d) liberalism. Race and racism are ordinary to everyday life in America. They are always present in our society. Indeed, the manifestations of racism within the criminal justice system reflect the ordinariness of race and racism in the greater American society. That which is ordinary does not stand out as an aberration; it is normal and expected. The state bars, along with most people, do not see the "injustices" now occurring in the criminal justice systems as problematic. Most people rationalize that those who are arrested and prosecuted deserve it – they are criminals who deserve their fate and race has very little (if anything) to do with their fate. As such, from the perspective of CLE program planners, there is no problematic issue here to address through CLE. This may explain the absence of a sense of urgency to address race in CLE and why the issue of bias is so broadly defined in those 5 states that mandate bias awareness in CLE.

Interest convergence would suggest that the White majority of the bar has something to gain by maintaining an unjust criminal justice system. Who benefits from the continual need for legal representation for the disenfranchised minority offenders? U.S. economy is primarily service sector with legal services accounting for a significant percentage provided to the market. The issue of interest convergence and the criminal justice system is probed by posing the following questions:

1. Does morality-based legislation strengthen solidarity for White believers and religious fanatics? Does it help draw lines between us and them – saved and unsaved?
2. Do the enormous profits in the privatized prison-building industry provide a partial reason?
3. Do felony convictions and disenfranchisement benefit the Republican Party by taking Black voters off the rolls?
4. Does Black imprisonment allow for the manipulation of the labor pool so that when the job market is weak and Whites fear competition for jobs, they can reduce some of the competition? (Delgado & Stefanic, 2005, p. 14)

In posing these questions, Delgado and Stefanic (2005) suggested that racism benefits the existing White power structure both economically and psychologically. Thus, there is no motivation to seriously address the issue of race within the legal system through CLE because to do so would threaten the interest of the White members of the bar.

CRT maintains that society has historically treated the races (Black, Native American, Hispanics, Asians, etc.) differently based on what was needed of the race at a given point in history. Similarly, the legal profession is now treating people of color differently based on what society does not want to see from them in the way of crime. In other words, the differential

treatment of people of color in the criminal justice system is used to control behavior. This explains the nature of the interactions between people of color, defense attorneys, and prosecutors that is frequently dismissive and condescending towards the client, offender, accused. This is why certain plea bargains are unacceptable while others are acceptable. Thus, the White members of the bar have no real motivation to address this issue because such differential treatment of people of color through the criminal justice system serves as a means to exact desired behavior.

CRT questions the liberalism that would presumably, on its face, be a friend in the fight for racial justice. CRT is suspect of liberalism because its effect has historically been to maintain the systems of oppression. For example, liberalism has unwavering faith in our adversarial legal system as a tool to guarantee racial fairness (Delgado & Stefanic, 2005). This faith extends to the ability of voir dire to eliminate biased jurors and in the ability of the criminal justice system to rehabilitate offenders. This liberal agenda separates the legal system from those who populate and control it and treats it as if it is a benign and benevolent actor – it is dangerously idealistic. Therefore, in those instances in which liberal bar members agree that CLE should address the issue of race, such support is limited to the rehabilitation of existing systems and the use of them to effectively address the issue. Thus, CLE programs developed with "liberal" support would address existing structures and their needed rehabilitative changes to improve their performance. Given the first CRT theme that racism is pervasive and ordinary, such an approach would not result in any real change.

## In Summary

Liberalism has raised the dilemma that exists between its stated goal of racial equality and its reluctance to confront white privilege (Taylor, 1999). "Adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that [CLE decision makers] will have to expose racism in [CLE] education and propose radical solutions for addressing it" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 27). Crenshaw (1988) suggests "the development of a distinct political strategy informed by the actual conditions of black people" (p. 1387). She contends that liberal ideology has visionary ideals that should be developed because more often than not triumph comes not from insurgency but from resistance and perseverance (Crenshaw, 1988). To do so, race, racism, and the historic and social context in which they operate should always be at the center of the debate. Adult education may lay the foundations for the achievement of educational equity by questioning its own assumptions and privileges, by critically examining the racial context in which it functions, and by resisting stereotyping and profiling within its realm. In summary, CRT would argue that the various state bar associations have not aggressively addressed the reality of race in the legal profession through CLE because the current state of the criminal justice system serves the needs of the dominant culture and of those who hold power in the bar associations.

## References

Bell, D. (1981). *Race, racism and the American law.* New York: Little Brown.

Cervero, R. (1988). *Effective continuing education for professionals*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Clegg, S. R. (1989). *Frameworks of power*. London: Sage.

Crenshaw, K. W. (1988). Race, reform, and retrenchment: Transformation and legitimation in antidiscrimination law. *Harvard Law Review, 101*(7), 1331-1387.

Delgado, R., & Stefanic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory*. New York: New York University Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefanic, J. (2005). *The role of critical race theory in understanding race, crime, and justice issues.* Unpublished manuscript.

Graber, S., & Baca, L. (2004). Report from the Standing Committee on Continuing Legal Education and the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession. Chicago: The American Bar Association.

Guinier, L. (1998). *Lift every voice*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what is it doing in a nice field like education? In L. Parker, D. Deyhle, & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is . . . race isn't: Critical race theories and qualitative studies in education* (pp. 7-30). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Ladson-Billings, G. J., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record, 97,* 47-68.

Lenski, G. (1986). Power and privilege. In S. Lukes (Ed.), *Power* (pp.243-252). New York: New York University Press. (Original work published 1966)

Markowitz, M., & Jones-Brown, D. (Eds.). (2000). *The system in black and white: Exploring the connections between race, crime, and justice.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing.

McGowan, J. (2007). American liberalism: An interpretation for our time. Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press.

Queeney, D. S. (2000). Continuing professional education. In A. L. Wilson & E. R. Hayes (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and continuing education* (pp. 376-377). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Peterson, E. (1999). Creating a culturally relevant dialogue for African American adult educators. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 82,* 79-91.

Robertson, M. K., Umble, K. E., & Cervero, R. M. (2003). Impact studies in continuing education for health professions: Update. *The Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions, 23,* 146-156.

Rocco, T. S., & Gallagher, S. (2004). Discriminative justice: Can discrimination be just? In L. G. Martin & E. E. Rogers (Eds.), *Crossing borders: Adult education in an urban context* (pp. 29-42). In S. Imel (Ed. in Chief) New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education No. 101. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sue, D. W. (2003). *Overcoming our racism: The journey to liberation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Taylor, E. (1999). Critical race theory and interest convergence in the desegregation of higher education. In L. Parker, D. Deyhle, & S. Villenas (Eds.), *Race is . . . race isn't: Critical race theories and qualitative studies in education* (pp. 181-204). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

United States Justice Department. (2000). *Bureau of Justice statistics: Prison statistics*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved March 23, 2009, from http://usdoj.gov/bjs/correct.htm

van Loo, J., & Rocco, T. S. (2006). Differentiating CPE from training: Reconsidering terms, boundaries, and economic factors. *Human Resource Development Review, 5*(2), 202-227.

Walker, S., Sphon, C., & Delone, M. (2000). *The color of justice: Race, ethnicity, and crime in America*. Princeton, NJ: The Princeton University Press.

Weingand, D. E. (1999). *Describing the elephant: What is continuing professional education.* Paper presented at the 65th IFLA Council and General Conference, Bangkok, Thailand.

Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the politics of difference*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

# The Effect of Using Portfolios on Student-Parent and Parent-Teacher Communication

Joel Davis
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** This action research project studied how portfolios enhance the communication between students, parents, and the teacher. While using portfolios in my class, students experienced more dialogue with their parents regarding their effort, the topics being taught, and explanations requiring communication with mathematical reasoning.

A good educator clearly communicates with his or her students. As a teacher, I feel I have made great strides in teaching my students a subject I love. However, I not only desire to communicate effectively with my students, but their parents as well. I believe that students who have consistent accountability from their teachers and parents have a significant advantage. I find it extremely helpful if teachers, students, and parents are open and honest with each other. Ideally, students would go home and tell their parents how they are doing in class, what they are struggling with, and so forth. There are numerous instances where sufficient communication has not happened—perhaps the parents were too busy, or the student was not truthful with his or her parents, or I failed to notify the parents that a problem needed to be addressed.

Providing vast amounts of information to parents does not necessarily qualify as effective communication. In the past 2 years, my school has used Edline, a resource for teachers to post the assignments and grades for their students. As long as the site is frequently updated by the teacher, students *and* parents can access the child's current grades and assignments. However, a typical report card (or assignments with grades) is often an incomplete picture of the child's progress (Cruz & Peterson, 2002). While there are benefits of using a program like Edline, I feel that I have received too many e-mails and phone messages from parents throughout the semester requesting explanations for the grades their children have earned. Did they not turn in the assignment? Are they not working hard? What content are you teaching right now? With what are they struggling?

Due to these frequent questions, I decided that many of the questions could be answered if my students brought home a portfolio to their parents at regular intervals. A portfolio can be defined as a purposeful collection of student work that demonstrates the student's efforts, progress, and achievement in one or more areas (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991). For a portfolio to help communication be more effective, it needs to be shared frequently and lead to a discussion of the work included. So, not only is the *quantity* of communications between students and parents important, but the *quality* of the resulting conversations. A portfolio gives parents an opportunity to look over their child's homework assignments, quizzes, projects, group class work, and tests. My hope was that a portfolio would give parents more specifics to the student's strengths and weaknesses, interests, and the applications of the content being studied.

I am a high school math teacher at a private school in Miami, Florida. I teach Advanced Placement (AP) Statistics and three sections of Analysis of Functions (a fourth-year math course). I decided to target one of my Analysis of Functions classes for my action research because I assumed that my non-AP students, on average, were in need of more accountability

Davis, J. (2009). The effect of using portfolios on student-parent and parent-teacher communication. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 27-32). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

than my AP Statistics students. I chose my third-period Analysis of Functions class, which consisted of 11 students—6 girls and 5 boys. This class of juniors and seniors had a lower class average (C) and a higher proportion of students with documented learning disabilities than my other classes.

I would have liked to utilize a portfolio in my class for the duration of the whole semester. However, due to time constraints, I was limited to a mere 6 weeks. Another possible drawback I perceived was that, for some students and parents, a portfolio may not reveal anything new if they already had a very healthy, open dialogue with each other; perhaps parents were already looking at their child's work as a regular practice before my action research started.

Despite these possible issues, I was excited to implement the portfolio. I felt there was a good chance that many parent misconceptions about their child's performance would be corrected. Although I was not opposed to answering parents' questions about their child, I hoped that the parents would get more answers directly from their child rather than me. More of the responsibility was now given to the students and parents to discuss what problems existed. I wanted to initiate clearer communication between the students and parents that desperately needed it. I also hypothesized that some of my students would not approve of the portfolio. With Edline already enabling parents to access to their child's current grades, giving parents access to their child's work added another layer of accountability.

## Literature Review

Data gathered from interviews, surveys, and observations indicate that a large majority of teachers, parents, and students report that the use of portfolios for multiple purposes is effective (Johnson, 1996; Juniewicz, 2003). Because my action research consisted of a communication portfolio, my goal was to enhance communication in what I would call the "student-parent-teacher" triangle.

As a mathematics teacher that embraces the Principles and Standards suggested by the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM, 2000), it is a focus of my pedagogy that my students are able to communicate their ideas both verbally and in written form. A past study suggests that portfolios with communication as its purpose do lead to more academic discussion between students and parents and, as a result, give children more opportunities to explain their work (Johnson, 1996). I wanted to give my students an opportunity to communicate what were learning in the classroom *and* at home.

Teachers want to have the support of their administration, colleagues, and especially, parents. Portfolios give an opportunity for regular communication between teachers and parents. In the current state of my class, the main measure of their child's progress was the grade. However, parents want evidence that their children are achieving and a portfolio shows parents that tests are not the only way to measure the progress of a child (Hoerr, 1997).

Parental involvement in school is associated with more positive academic performance (Keith et al., 1998). Of course, a portfolio is merely one way to encourage involvement by a parent with their child's progress, but that is an educator's goal—to provide opportunities for their students to grow and achieve. Students using portfolios have been shown to be more accountable and more likely to take ownership of their learning (Conderman, Hatcher, & Ikan, 1998). There is the potential of a communication device (like a portfolio) to lead to mediating variables (like accountability and better communication with parents), which in turn could lead to higher student achievement. However, while I hoped that my students experienced increased achievement due to the portfolio, my focus of my study was simply, "How effective are portfolios in enhancing student-parent and parent-teacher communication?"

In order to achieve this, I followed the principles outlined in the study reported by Seitz and Bartholomew (2008), who suggested that the portfolios process contain three ideas: collect, select, and reflect. Students were required to keep track of their assignments (collect), select and organize the appropriate documents, and then, through sharing their portfolio with their parents, reflect on their work via discussions and later, in a survey.

## Plan of Action

Parents and students of my third-period class were informed of my intent to implement a portfolio so that students could bring home their organized portfolios so that their parents could look it over. Before starting the portfolio, both students and parents completed a survey. The purpose of the qualitative survey was to help me gauge the state of communication between the student and parent prior to the usage of the portfolio. How often did they talk about academics? Did the parents and students find the talks helpful? What specific topics came up in their conversations? The similarity of questions to both groups ensured data triangulation. To ensure more cooperation among the parents, they were e-mailed the survey in addition to their child bringing home a copy of the survey.

Following the return of the surveys, the students were told to start compiling their portfolios. The process consisted of organizing notes they took in class and any graded work they performed in or out of class: homework, group class work, quizzes, and tests. After roughly seven or eight class periods of meeting together, a significant amount of work had been collected and organized by the students. They were then instructed to take it home, get each assignment within the portfolio initialed by a parent, and bring it back in a timely fashion. Throughout the duration of the action research, parents had three opportunities to look over their child's portfolio of work.

After the parents had their third opportunity to look over their child's portfolio, the students and parents filled out one more survey. The intent of the open-ended questions on this survey was to gauge the effect that the portfolios had on the student-parent communication. Students and parents also answered this question: "I found the portfolio helpful (circle one)." They were then given five choices: "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Neutral", "Disagree", or "Strongly disagree."

The parents cooperated, giving consent for their child to participate in my action research, and were eager to help. They were given multiple chances to see their child's work, potentially leading to academic conversations with them. The triangulation of data through the student and parent surveys was necessary to confirm the state of communication prior to and at the end of the implementation of the portfolio. In addition to the surveys, I also received qualitative data from unsolicited e-mails from some parents about their child's progress throughout the use of the portfolio.

## Data Analysis

Results from the first survey to the students and parents were informative to the state of communication at home. Most striking were the responses regarding how involved the parents were. According to the students and parents alike, prior to the portfolio there were many discussions regarding academics at home. Nine of the eleven students responded that discussions with parents were "very frequent" or "frequent", while all of the parents said that their talks were "very frequent" or "frequent." The survey also showed from the responses of both students and parents that the majority of parents often checked Edline to see their child's grades. However, two parents made it a point *not* to check their child's grades due to their desire for their child to be more independent.

The first survey also revealed that there were divergent views as to how the parent-student discussions were perceived. A slight majority of the parents (6 out of 11) stated that their talks were helpful, while only two of the students remarked that they were beneficial. The students' perceptions of their dialogue with their parents regarding academics were not encouraging. It appeared that most of them regarded communicating with their parents as a detriment and a nuisance.

Finally, the first survey also revealed what topics came up frequently in conversations between the two parties. The two topics recorded by students that often were discussed with their parents were (a) grades and (b) upcoming assignments. The parents' top two were (a) grades and (b) how they could help their child. The students' study habits were also mentioned multiple times by both groups.

The results of the second survey revealed that, as a result of the portfolio, parents and students spent more time discussing *why* the child received a particular grade. Four of the parents and five of the students confirmed through the survey that discussions and explanations regarding the students' work resulted from the portfolio check. While four of the students reported no significant change in the way they communicated with their parents, several others reported that their effort was a topic of discussion because their parents were able to see their class work. Three parents mentioned that effort was discussed with their child. One of the parents remarked that he was able to praise his daughter for the evidence of her hard work and perseverance.

All but one of the parents found the portfolio helpful, according to the final survey. In addition, I also received e-mails from three different parents regarding the portfolio. Two of the e-mails were received just after the consent form was sent home and showed appreciation for the chance to look over their child's work. One e-mail at the end of the study mentioned that the parent was having more fruitful dialogue with the child due to the specifics of the portfolio. While the response of the parents was largely positive, the response of the students was less positive, but still positive. Seven of the eleven students said they found the portfolio helpful. As to why they found it helpful, some mentioned that it forced them to work harder, knowing they would have to explain their work later to their mother or father. One student mentioned that he did *not* like the portfolio for that same reason. Some mentioned that the portfolio helped them be more organized and two mentioned that they felt the portfolio helped increase their grade.

Due to the triangulation of the surveys I was confident that the data collected was mostly credible. The differences in opinion had to do with the students' and parents' perception of their communication and whether the portfolio was helpful. I was encouraged to hear of progress in some of the discussions between the students and parents. Parents not only knew their children's grades, but were able to initiate dialogue with their children regarding the specifics of their effort, the topic being taught, and explanations of specific problems, requiring the children to communicate their reasoning.

## Summary and Discussion

I sympathize with the high school seniors who do not want their work scrutinized by their parents. A senior moving on to an institute of higher learning should be independent and responsible. Nonetheless, parents have the right to know how their children are doing and their strengths and weaknesses. One of the conclusions I came to following the action research is that students who use a portfolio can really take pride in their work. An artist can create a portfolio of their best work, and that is what I want my students to do. While not all my students viewed the

portfolio that way, I feel that several started to realize the importance of doing quality work and being held to a higher standard.

My action research was not without its problems. As mentioned I believe a detriment to the study is the length. While the action research was at least a moderate success in the time we had, I wonder what would have happened if I had more time. Over a longer period of time, perhaps my students would become more at ease with making mathematical explanations by being given opportunities to explain their work to their parents. Or, perhaps given more time, I would see an eventual decrease in effective communication. It is possible that this study is an example of the Hawthorne effect (Yates, Moore, & Starnes, 2008)—many changes in an environment have a short-term increase in effectiveness. It is possible that if a portfolio designed for communication had a lengthier trial period, the participants (students and parents) would tire of it.

Also, I questioned the validity of a couple of my questions created for the surveys. I believe a question on the final survey should have read, "I found the portfolio _____" and the participants should have been given the choices "Extremely helpful", "Helpful", "Neutral", "Not helpful" or "Extremely not helpful", rather than the original leading question, "I found the portfolio helpful (circle one)." In addition, due to the parents' and students' willingness to help me in my action research, I felt they may have been more likely to give an affirmative response, thus introducing bias into the study. A question at the beginning of the survey should also have been reworded to read, "I find my conversations with my child regarding academics _____" rather than the leading statement, "I find my conversations with my child helpful (circle one)."

While the majority of the participants were very supportive and candid in their responses, there was a minority that was not as revealing or specific. I am sure there were times when parents did not have time to look over the portfolio methodically and ask questions. When I do this again, I would like to, if possible, add a short parent-student-teacher conference. This would give an opportunity for the child to present their portfolio and for face-to-face feedback. I would also like to introduce more non-traditional assignments like projects and short papers that would give the portfolio more variety and encourage more writing skills.

Due to the specific context of my class, transferability of the results of this action research is limited. Realizing that this group of students as a whole already experienced consistent communication, the subsequent results would not be generalized to a group of students with much less parental involvement. Also, a group of juniors and seniors may have different perceptions of parental communication than would a group of freshmen or middle school students, so results would not necessarily mirror what would happen in a different age group. More studies involving portfolios as a communication device should be done across many age brackets, socio-economic levels, and other subjects as well.

Other teachers already use portfolios for many reasons (such as a form of assessment) and they should continue to do so. While my class was blessed in that many of the parents were active in their education, not all classes are this way. Teachers need to continue to look for opportunities to get parents excited about their child's learning. This action research has shown me the worth of even flawed ideas. As it always is in the profession of teaching, educators are trying new things and some work, some do not. I am inspired to keep trying, revising, and revisiting the idea of communication between students, parents, and teachers.

## References

Conderman, G., Hatcher, R., & Ikan, P. (1998). Why student-led conferences work. *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 34*(4), 132-134.

Cruz, L., & Petersen, S. (2002). Reporting assessment results to parents. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation, & Dance, 73*(8), 20-24, 31.

Hoerr, T. (1997). Frog ballets and musical fractions. *Educational Leadership, 55*, 43-46.

Johnson, P. (1996). Sharing portfolios with parents. *Principal, 76*, 44-45.

Juniewicz, K. (2003). Student portfolios with a purpose. *The Clearing House, 77*(2), 73-77.

Keith, T., Keith, P., Quirk, K., Sperduto, J., Santillo, S., & Killings, S. (1998). Longitudinal effects of parental involvement in high school grades: Similarities and differences across gender and ethnic groups. *Journal of School Psychology, 36*(3), 335-363.

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (2000). *Principles and standards for school mathematics.* Reston, VA: Author.

Paulson, F., Paulson, P., & Meyer C. (1991). What makes a portfolio a portfolio? *Educational Leadership, 48*, 60-63.

Seitz, H., & Bartholomew, C. (2008). Powerful portfolios for young children. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 36*(1), 63-68.

Yates, D., Moore, D., & Starnes, D. (2008). *The Practice of Statistics.* New York: Freeman.

# Can Executive Skills Help Underachieving Bilingual Students? Pedagogical Implications

Lianhong Gao
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** The author explores solutions for bilingual students' underachievement by embedding elements of executive functioning into bilingual education. Based on analysis of theoretical perspectives, the author recommends teaching executive functions to bilingual students. Implications indicate the importance of embedding executive functions in curriculum development, textbook compiling, and instruction.

Bilingualism and bilingual education are part of a complex system involving education, politics, cognitive development, economics, and anthropology. Bilingual education is common across disciplines and gaining more and more attention among researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, especially concerning the issue of underachievement exhibited by a large number of bilingual students. Currently, almost five million bilingual Limited English Proficient (LEP) and English Language Learners (ELL) students are enrolled in American public schools. Since 1992, this number has increased approximately 85 % (Kindler, 2002), indicating that only 18.7% of ELL students met state norms for reading in English. ELLs also exhibit higher drop-out rates and the highest rate of academic failure and more frequent placement in lower ability groups compared to native speakers (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2002; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2005). Thus, educators and the researchers are attempting to answer the question: What are the causes for the high drop-out rates and underachievement of bilingual students?

The purpose of this paper is to explore solutions for bilingual students' underachievement by means of embedding the elements of executive functioning into bilingual education. After investigating into the extensive literature resulting from research in the fields of cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and bilingual education, the author recommends that executive functions be taught to the bilingual students. Implications are summarized indicating the importance of embedding executive functions in curriculum development, textbook compiling, and educators' instruction.

## Causes of Achievement Gap

Underachievement of bilingual students has been addressed in research by two groups.

*Cognitive Factors*

For one group, academic failure is attributed to the child's bilingualism which might make confusions in cognitive development (Hakuta, Ferdman, & Diaz, 1986), while another group asserts that bilingualism does not have detrimental effects, but rather can sharpen the brain. Elizabeth Peal and Wallace Lambert at McGill University in Montreal conducted their important study (published in 1962**)** on the relationship between bilingualism and intelligence. They found that balanced bilinguals outscored their monolingual counterparts on IQ tests (Peal & Lambert, 1962), based on assumptions that a bilingual child whose wider experiences in two cultures have given him advantages which a monolingual does not enjoy. In *Proust and the Squid, The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*, Wolf and Stoodley (2007) summarize the findings about

Gao, L. (2009). Can executive skills help underachieving bilingual students? Pedagogical implications. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 33-38). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

bilingualism and learning. As cognitive neuroscientists, they reiterate that having a bilingual brain is a good thing, and that an early exposed bilingual brain appears to have certain cognitive advantages over a monolingual brain in terms of linguistic flexibility and multitasking. In other words, the early bilinguals learn to flexibly manage different tasks at the same time from their own learning experience of two linguistic systems.

*Environmental Factors*

Another cause for the underachievement is shifts to the environment (e.g., family environment, social environment, and school environment). These three educational contexts have an impact to various extents: (a) Family is the closest and earliest; (b) social environment is indirect and unconscious; and (c) school is formal and systematic. Besides genetic inheritance, these three kinds of environment account for academic achievement.

Brisk (2006) lists five external factors that influence the effectiveness of bilingual education, among which two are concerned with family: family's amount of language use and family's involvement in school education. Other factors can be categorized from a social education perspective: political attitudes towards immigrants and language diversity; and the size and cohesiveness of the language community.

School education is supposed to be formal, systematic, detailed, and scientific. These four features warrant the critical attention given to school education. Though family and society factors are indicators, Tomlinson (1989) asserted that "stressing social and economic disadvantage as a major cause of educational underachievement can seem to absolve educators from their professional duty to educate all pupils effectively" (p. 26).

Combined with changes in the world political situation and academic advancement, bilingual education has become diversified and better qualified, from compensatory to quality schooling. Recommendations were provided in school administration, curriculum development, and classroom instructions (Brisk, 2006). In curriculum development, Brisk (2006) suggests that a comprehensive curriculum is supposed to aim at thinking skills development and learning strategy training. Freeman et al. (2002) recommends the improvement of bilingual students' academic achievement by learning strategies. Given the significance of independent learning, teaching the bilingual students how to study should be given priority over others.

## A New Perspective to Approach the Underachievement Problem

A retrospective investigation reveals that researchers and educators are putting a larger burden on bilingual students. When new programs are started, bilingual students are provided additional training of strategies and skills, and the curriculum is enriched by adding more culture-related information. In other words, bilingual students are asked to learn more than their native peers. Bilingual students have to simultaneously deal with two linguistic systems. Thus, they must remain much more engaged than their monolingual counterparts. Therefore, how to help bilingual students plan and manage different tasks with efficiency emerges as a priority. Psychological research findings suggest that executive skills are the ones that people need to plan, manage, evaluate, and to maintain control. In this section, the definition of executive skills is provided first followed by the development of executive skills and the importance of executive skills for academic achievement.

*Definition of Executive Skills*

Executive skills are defined as "a collection of higher order cognitive capabilities including planning, organization, time management, working memory, and meta-cognition, all of which support the development of response inhibition, self-regulation of affect, task initiation, flexibility, and goal-directed persistence" (Grier, 2005, p. 450). They are the skills we need both

to choose the tasks which deserve our attention and to be devoted to accomplishing (Hart & Jacobs, 1993). Dawson and Guare (2004) further specified them as 10 skills: planning, organization, time management, working memory, meta-cognition**,** response inhibition, self-regulation of affect, task initiation, flexibility, and goal-directed persistence. The first five are the basic executive skills to reach a goal, paving the path to the goal; but in order to reach the goal, the latter five are needed to guide or modify people's behavior as they are pushing along the path.

*Development of Executive Skills*

Researchers have found that the development of the brain parallels the "development of the child's ability to act, think, and feel" (Dawson & Guare, 2004, p. 3). Further, different areas of the brain have been associated with various abilities, and the frontal lobes are most often linked to the executive function (Goldberg, 2001, p. ix). The frontal lobes are necessary for "all higher-order purposeful behavior—identifying the objectives, projecting the goal, forging plans to reach it, organizing the means by which such plans can be carried out, monitoring and judging the consequences to see that all is accomplished as intended" (Goldberg, 2001, p. ix.) In order to play the executive function, the frontal lobes have to depend on other brain areas for input (Cooke, 2005). According to Dawson and Guare (2004), although the groundwork for developing executive skills is formed before birth, scientists believe that the skills follow a gradual development "in a clear procession through the first two decades of life" (p. vii). As children grow and develop, they are better able to regulate their behavior. Their ability to plan, set goals, and respond to their environment develops gradually from simple to complex (Dawson & Guare, 2004).

*The Importance of Executive Skills for Academic Achievement*

Blair (2002) and Zimmerman & Schunk (1989) assert that in schools, the academic success of students is largely influenced by the degree to which students self-regulate their own study. Being aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, effectively allocating their time and energy, and selecting the most appropriate learning strategies for themselves are skills that may lead successful independent learning. Nevertheless, some hard-working students seem to always perform poorly on exams, especially the important ones. Additionally, some students with high IQs do not obtain comparably high academic achievement grades. These phenomena were confounding until associated with executive deficiency (Meltzer, Roditi, Steinberg, Rafter, & Taber, 2006). This is important for students who do not know how to study (e.g., how to prioritize, how to prepare for exams, how to manage time efficiently, how to establish goals and persist in working towards these goals). Many researchers working on the effects of learning strategies on students' academic achievements found that students making good use of effective learning strategies tend to be more successful (Meltzer et al., 2006).

The importance of executive skills for ESLs is threefold. First, they may benefit bilingual students who tend to have to deal with multiple learning tasks (e.g., two language systems, two languages to learn subject areas, two cultures, multiple ways of thinking in different cultures) concurrently. Second, some other issues bilingual students face include cultural identity and cultural as well as economic inferiority, which require bilingual students to learn to disregard the distractions caused by these issues and pursue their goals with persistence and confidence, and most of all, with the right strategies. Additionally, bilingual students tend to think in more divergent ways. Thus, more possibilities can be produced, but creativity will not result unless convergent ways of thinking are integrated to find associations among those possibilities. Such executive functions as global assessment, summarization, and metacognition can make divergent minds convergent to achieve integration in ways of thinking. Executive functions are not only

needed for the purpose of academic achievement but for achieving goals in human life. What should be stressed is that school education is the preparation for one's future career. In other words, executive functions refined at school may better equip students for the future.

## Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogical implications from research findings related to the study of executive functions (Gaskins, Satlow, & Pressley, 2007; Graham, Harris, & Olinghouse, 2007; Meltzer,1992; Meltzer et al., 2006, Meltzer, Pollica, & Barzillai, 2007; Roditi & Steinberg, 2007; Rose & Rose, 2007) have been proposed as follows.

### *Curriculum Development: Including Executive Functions as the Cognitive Objectives*

A school's general education curriculum provides guidance for instruction, teaching, and learning. It "identifies the goals for instruction and the means for achieving those goals—the materials and methods that can be used, the sequence of instruction, and the ways progress can be measured" (Rose & Rose, 2007 p. 288). Cognitive development is one of the goals of curriculum, but cognitive goals usually refer to the skills to reason, speculate, infer, deduce, and analyze (Eisner & Vallance, 1974) Considering the importance of executive skills supports the author's recommendation to include and highlight them in school curriculum goals.

### *Textbook Compiling: Prioritizing the Disciplinary Framework*

Textbooks tend to be getting thicker and heavier, which is very likely to be distracting. No matter how refined students' executive skills are, it is impossible to hold so much information in memory. Admittedly, some textbooks are interesting and specific, but at the cost of interesting and specific, main points are lost in the vast pool of specifics. This is especially true for science and technology, which are rich in principles and formulae. Interesting and specific components should be entrusted to instructors to deliver during lectures or to print in the handbook. As a result, textbooks can fulfill the task of highlighting the framework of designated important knowledge—patterns for the students to memorize. As for students, it becomes easier for them to recognize the priority or the patterns and master them. For ESLs, limitations lie in the English language. A thicker textbook raises the difficulty level for ESL. Executive functions could be embedded into exercises in the textbook, arranged from basic to complicated, primary to derivative, and compulsory to elective to ensure that the first thing read is always the most important or primary thing for students to memorize or process in their brain.

### *Teacher's Instruction in the Classroom: Introducing Strategy Instruction into the Classroom*

Teachers' instruction in the classroom actualizes cognitive objectives of the curriculum and reinforces the effects of the textbooks' implicit elements of executive functions. To a large extent, it is the teachers who put all these expectations into effect. Meltzer et al. (2007) proposed four principles of effective strategy instruction, which can be adjusted and expanded as follows, based on the characteristics of the executive skills already mentioned and empirical observations. (Considering the effects of executive functions, the following principles are listed according to priority):

1. The aim of strategy instruction is to facilitate solving problems and overcome learning difficulties, but the difficulty lies in being able to generalize these skills since executive skills are context-sensitive. Therefore, it is advisable to stress that the aim of strategy instruction is to solve learning problems in specific contexts.
2. Strategy instruction should be conducted step-by-step, from basic to complex. Take examination preparation as an example. Students should be guided to make use of executive skills to prepare several examinations concurrently. Such skills as time management and self-evaluation are not as hard to digest as the complicated ones.

Rewarding experiences pave the road for confronting more complicated executive functions.

3. Detailed instructions are needed to explain what (what is the skill), why (why it is facilitated in this situation), and how (how to exercise the skill). Accumulated experiences are what the teachers need in order to make professional judgments.
4. The last principle is that goal-directed persistence should be the skill stressed for every problem solving. Persistence can also be interpreted as the state of mind to play with different options until the final solution comes out. Under such a pleasure-seeking mentality, the students' executive skills will be in full play.

Meltzer and colleagues (2006) summarized three keys to student success: positive self-concept, effective strategy use, and focused efforts. To put it in another way, in the classroom, teachers are encouraged to hold high expectations for all students, including the underachieving ones, and then teach them the strategies. In the end, focused efforts may be made by the students to achieve their goals.

## Conclusion

When bilingual students' underachievement is examined, faults are often found with extrinsic factors, such as family, community, and school. As with other underachieving students, bilingual students' underachievement may be due to their weakness in executive functions. Problems may be more challenging, considering their bilingualism. This calls for bilingual students to be aware of the executive functions and refine them while exercising them during the process of learning. They can also benefit from executive functions through their road of life, from students to professionals, and from children to adults.

## References

Blair, C. (2002). School readiness: Integrating cognition and emotion in a neurobiological conceptualization of children's functioning at school entry. *American Psychologist, 57*(2), 111-127.

Brisk, M. E. (2006). *Bilingual education: From compensatory to quality schooling*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Dawson, P., & Guare, R. (2004). *Executive skills in children and adolescents: A practical guide to assessment and intervention*. New York: Guilford Press.

Eisner, E. W., & Vallance, E. (1974). *Conflicting conceptions of curriculum*. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

Gaskins, I. W., Satlow, E., & Pressley, M. (2007). Executive control of reading comprehension. In L. Meltzer (Ed.), *Executive function in education: From theory to practice* (pp. 194-215). New York: Guilford Press.

Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W., & Christian, D. (2005). English language learners in U.S. schools: An overview of research findings. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 10*(4), 363-386.

Goldberg, E. (2001). *The executive brain: Frontal lobes and the civilized mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Olinghouse, N. (2007). Addressing executive function problems in writing. In L. Meltzer (Ed.), *Executive function in education: From theory to practice* (pp. 216-236). New York: Guilford Press.

Grier, C. E. (2005). Book review: Executive skills in children and adolescents: A practical guide to assessment and intervention. *Psychology in the Schools, 42*(4), 450-451.

Hakuta, K., Ferdman, B., M., & Diaz, R. M. (1986). *Bilingualism and cognitive development: Three perspectives and methodological implications*. Los Angeles: University of California, Center for Language Education and Research.

Hart, T., & Jacobs, H. (1993). Rehabilitation and management of behavioral disturbances following frontal lobe injury. *Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation, 8,* 1-12.

Kindler, A. L. (2002). *Survey of the L.E.P. students and available educational programs and services, 2000-2001 Survey Report.* Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs. Retrieved October 18, 2008, from http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/ policy/ states/reports/seareports/0001/ sea0001.pdf

Meltzer, L. (1992). *Strategy assessment and instruction for students with learning disabilities: From theory to practice.* Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Meltzer, L., Pollica, L. S., & Barzillai, M. (2007). Executive function in the classroom. In L. Meltzer (Ed.), *Executive function in education: From theory to practice* (pp. 165-193). New York: Guilford Press.

Meltzer, L. J., Roditi, B. N., Steinberg, J. L., Rafter, B. K., & Taber, S. E. (2006). *Strategies for success: Classroom teaching techniques for students with learning differences* (2nd ed.). Austin, TX: Pro-Ed.

Oakley, L. (2004). *Cognitive development*. *Routledge modular psychology*. London: Routledge.

Peal, E., & Lambert, W. E. (1962). The relation of bilingualism to intelligence. *Psychological Monographs, 76*(27), 1-23.

Roditi, B. N., & Steinberg, J. (2007). The strategic math classroom: Executive function processes and mathematics learning. In L. Meltzer (Ed.), *Executive function in education: From theory to practice* (pp. 237-260). New York: Guilford Press.

Rose, D., & Rose, K. (2007). Deficits in executive function processes: A curriculum-based intervention. In L. Meltzer (Ed.), *Executive function in education: From theory to practice* (pp. 287-308). New York: Guilford Press.

Tomlinson, S. (1989). Ethnicity and educational achievement in England. In D. Van, L. Berg-Eldering, & J. Kloprogge (Eds.), *Different cultures*: *Same schools* (pp. 15-38). Amsterdam: Swets and Zeitlinger.

Freeman, Y. S., Freeman, D. E., & Mercuri, S. P. (2002). *Closing the achievement gap: How to reach limited-formal-schooling and long-term English learners*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Wolf, M., & Stoodley, C. J. (2007). *Proust and the squid: The story and science of the reading brain*. New York: Harper Collins.

Zimmerman, B. J., & Schunk, D. H. (Eds.). (1989). *Self-regulated learning and academic achievement: Theory, research, and practice.* New York: Springerverlag.

# Integrating Technology in a Statistics Course for a Special Program at Florida International University

Ramon Gomez
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** A special undergraduate program for selected biology majors was recently inaugurated at Florida International University. The curriculum emphasizes science, mathematics, and statistics. A statistics course was implemented for this program integrating PowerPoint, statistical software (SPSS), and data from biological/biomedical studies. This didactic experience is discussed here.

Statistics is often a difficult subject for many undergraduates taking introductory courses at college. Cobb (2005) considered that although the previous twenty five years had seen an extraordinary level of research activity focused on how students learn statistics and how teachers can be more effective in helping them to learn, today's challenges are far greater than before. Thus, statistics education can still be viewed as a new and emerging discipline when compared to other areas of study (Garfield & Ben-Zvi, 2007).

Among the principles of learning statistics, Garfield (1995) includes the active involvement of students in educational activities as well as learning by practicing. Using technology can make college teaching of statistics more effective as it improves the quality of instruction, encourages students' active learning, and provides them with psychological incentives (Garfield, 1995; Higazi, 2002). In this regard, the use of PowerPoint and statistical software has been previously reported by Lock (2005) as a facilitator of learning statistics.

The traditional approach to teaching statistics at the college level consists of using a board during lectures, a textbook as a reference, and supplementary material posted on a website. This present paper describes an observational study discussing whether the integration of technology resources that included the use of PowerPoint presentations and a personal computer based statistical software (SPSS) would increase student performance and satisfaction in an introductory statistics course.

## Method

Students enrolled in this introductory statistics course were undergraduates from a special program in the biological sciences implemented at Florida International University (FIU) in the fall of 2007. This program will be described below, along with the Statistics I course used for this study.

### *Quantifying Biology in the Classroom (QBIC)*

Quantifying Biology in the Classroom (QBIC) emphasizes the use of mathematics and statistics for analyses of biological/biomedical data. The inaugural class consisted of twenty five selected students, most of them Biology majors. The selection criteria included students' SAT scores, high school GPAs, and letters of recommendation. The average SAT score, Mathematics and English combined, for these QBIC students was 1240 (Tashakkori, Reio, & Rincon, 2008).

QBIC is a pilot program that intends to expose students to a more rigorous curriculum that is both interdisciplinary and quantitative in nature. The program integrates mathematics, statistics, and computing such that: (a) data generated in biology labs are used to illustrate

Gomez, R. (2009). Integrating technology in a statistics course for a special program at Florida International University. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 39-43). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

statistical concepts and teach statistical software, and (b) biological processes are modeled using mathematical techniques (Tashakkori et al., 2008).

In 2006, representatives from the Mathematics, Statistics, and Biology Departments at FIU started to design the QBIC program. Two Statistics courses were included in the program's curriculum. Sam Shapiro, now retired and Emeritus Professor at FIU, served as the representative from the Statistics Department working on the design of the QBIC project. He established the guidelines for the Statistics courses as well as a general description of their contents.

My collaboration with Shapiro and the QBIC team began in January 2007. After participating in preliminary meetings, I started working on the statistical design of several biological experiments in collaboration with Tanya Simms from the Biology Department. Simms was the instructor designated to teach Biology labs for the inaugural class in the fall of 2007. The statistically designed biological experiments were part of her course. Data generated by the QBIC students in the lab sessions would be used later during their sophomore year to teach the statistical concepts and software (SPSS).

*Statistics I: Course Design*

The present author was the designated instructor for the Statistics I course. During 2007 and part of 2008, I selected the textbook and prepared the detailed course description, objectives, and syllabus. Also, problems for the SPSS assignments were chosen, including data from the biology lab experiments and text exercises. The course included traditional resources and technology resources.

*Traditional resources.* The following traditional resources were used in the course: (a) textbook and (b) instructor's Website. The textbook, *Biostatistics: A foundation for Analysis in Health Sciences, 8th edition*, by Wayne Daniel, is intended for advanced undergraduate students. It requires mid level mathematical prerequisites and includes real data from the health sciences. This type of textbook makes the study of statistics a more enjoyable and meaningful experience. Contents from chapters 1 to 7 were covered. Handouts were prepared by the instructor for a few topics not included in the textbook such as the hypergeometric and exponential probability distributions.

Additional material posted on the instructor's Website provided valuable information to the students. The following list describes the online content: (a) course description and objectives, (b) syllabus, (c) recommended text exercises, (d) supplementary exercises, (e) SPSS assignments, and (f) vocabulary. Supplementary exercises were comprehensive in nature and also developed by the instructor. These exercises were meant to integrate different topics from the same chapter. The vocabulary file, organized by chapter, included a complete list of definitions and concepts.

A list of additional topics covered in this QBIC course, grouped by subject, is as follows: (a) descriptive statistics such as trimmed means and full discussion of the five number summary, box plots, skewness, and identification of outliers; (b) probability subjects including Bayes's rule, clinical sensitivity and specificity, clinical predictive values, Poisson, hypergeometric, and exponential distributions; and (c) tests of hypothesis about means using two samples. These topics are not included in our traditional Statistics I course at FIU and provide a more solid background to QBIC students for their Statistics II course as well as future biomedical classes.

*Technology resources.* The two primary additions to the traditional approach were the daily use of PowerPoint presentations for lectures as well as the statistical software SPSS for data computations and analyses. Students used SPSS during classes for statistical computation

and analyses of the following course subjects: (a) descriptive statistics, (b) sampling distributions, (c) estimation with confidence intervals, and (d) hypothesis testing. SPSS was also required for solving take-home assignments. The PowerPoint presentations, created by the instructor for this course, included: (a) definitions, concepts, formulas, examples and exercises, (b) tables and graphs, (c) SPSS instructions, and (d) SPSS output.

*Course Organization*

The Statistics I course started in August 2008 during QBIC students' sophomore year. It included twenty eight class meetings, two per week, for seventy five minutes each. The classroom setting consisted of a fully equipped computer lab with twenty five seats. Out of the twenty five freshman students from the inaugural class, eighteen remained in the QBIC program for the sophomore year. Each of these eighteen students had access to a desktop personal computer and the QBIC program provided flash memory drives for data storage. SPSS data files from textbook exercises and biology labs were loaded into the students' flash memory drives. A computer connected projector and an eighty inch screen were used for the PowerPoint presentations. A dry erase board was also used as a supplement for class discussions.

Students were required to bring the text book to class as well as a folder including the vocabulary and supplementary exercises from the instructor's Website. Hence, limited notes were needed during classes, allowing students to focus on the discussion of statistical concepts, exercises, and SPSS execution.

*Course Assessment*

Student evaluations consisted of three tests (300 points), three SPSS take-home assignments (100 points), and a cumulative final exam (100 points), for a total of 500 points. Approximately 30% of the content of partial tests and the final exam was directly related to the use of SPSS. The inclusion of statistical software in the evaluation system, as reported by Higazi (2002), was expected to contribute to the success of this technology based teaching-learning model.

Student progress was monitored and discussed during biweekly multidisciplinary faculty meetings. A journal, developed along the course by the instructor, detailed the students' learning process and the use of various didactic resources, lecture by lecture. This information was intended for future refinement of the course. A short questionnaire developed by the instructor was also given to the students at the end of the course asking them to share their views regarding different components of the teaching-learning model used. Opinions were quantified using a Likert scale with ratings between 1 and 5, with higher values indicating greater levels of helpfulness in learning the material.

## Results

*QBIC Students' Performance*

Table 1 shows grouped statistics summarizing the QBIC students' performance for this course. The results are expressed as percentages of the 500 points, covering the totality of evaluations. Since the passing result was established as 70 in the syllabus, the table indicates that 100% of the eighteen students passed the class. The median and mean results were 90 and 88 respectively, with nine students in the range of 90 or above.

Table 1
*QBIC Students' Performance*

| Score Interval | No. of students | % of students |
|---|---|---|
| 90.0 or above | 9 | 50.0% |
| 80.0 - 89.9 | 5 | 27.8% |
| 70.0 – 79.9 | 4 | 22.2% |
| Below 70.0 | 0 | 0.0% |
| Total | 18 | 100.0% |

*Performance Comparison*

It may be useful to compare the QBIC students' performance against a traditional Statistics I class, taught simultaneously by the present author during the fall of 2008. This traditional course incorporated only typical non-technology resources, such as a textbook, online material and a board for lectures. Given the nature of this study, the traditional Statistics class cannot be considered a true control group; however, it is used here as a valuable comparative reference. Table 2 presents the comparison of several relevant parameters.

Table 2
*Performance Comparison*

| Parameter | QBIC Statistics I | Traditional Statistics I |
|---|---|---|
| Students enrolled | 18 | 50 |
| Passing rate | 100% | 84% |
| Median score | 90.1 | 84.3 |
| Mean score | 87.9 | 81.7 |
| Standard deviation | 8.4 | 14.2 |

A statistical comparison of the two groups, with the understanding of its limitations, showed that QBIC students had a higher passing rate (p-value = .0354) and mean score (p-value = .0165) than the traditional Statistics I students. The less powerful Wilcoxon test for a comparison of the medians revealed a one-tailed p-value of .0605.

*QBIC Students' Opinions*

Table 3 shows grouped statistics summarizing the opinions of QBIC students about the helpfulness of different components of the teaching-learning model used.

## Discussion

Measured by any standards, the QBIC students' performance, shown in Table 1, can be considered outstanding for a first-level university statistics course. Even though there was no baseline or true control group available for a more reliable comparison, the results of Table 2 support the success of technology integration into the traditional teaching-learning model for this type of course. Furthermore, the use of technology was identified by the QBIC students as a very positive factor in their learning process, as shown in Table 3. More than 50% of them gave the

Table 3
*QBIC Students' Opinions*

| Component | Avg. Rate | No. of students rating 4 or 5 | No. of students rating 5 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Textbook | 3.44 | 11 | 3 |
| Instructor's Website | 4.50 | 16 | 11 |
| SPSS | 4.00 | 12 | 10 |
| PowerPoint | 4.39 | 15 | 12 |

highest rating of helpfulness to the use of SPSS and PowerPoint, with an average rating of at least 4.00 for both technology resources out a maximum of five. QBIC students' satisfaction was also reflected in the FIU student assessment of instruction where 100% of them rated the instructor's job as excellent or very good with average of 3.88 out of a maximum of four.

While using the teaching-learning model described here, QBIC students were able to learn statistics more quickly and effectively. This was evidenced by the number of extra topics covered, the acquired knowledge of statistical software, and the students' overall performance, all of this with high student satisfaction. This study suggests that the integration of technology into other traditional resources provides a more effective teaching-learning model for this type of introductory statistics course.

## References

Cobb, G. W. (2005). Foreword. *Innovations in teaching statistics*, MAA Notes #65.

Daniel, W. W. (2005). *Biostatistics. A foundation for analysis in the health sciences* (8th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Garfield, J. B. (1995). How students learn statistics. *International Statistics Review, 63*, 25-34.

Garfield, J. B., & Ben-Zvi, D. (2007). How students learn statistics revisited: A current review of research on teaching and learning statistics. *International Statistics Review, 75*, 372-376.

Higazi, S. M. (2002). Teaching statistics using technology. *ICOTS6 Proceedings*.

Lock, R. (2005). Teaching a technology-enhanced course in a liberal arts environment. *Innovations in teaching statistics*, MAA Notes #65, 31-38.

Tashakkori, A., Reio, T. G., & Rincon, D. (2008). *Quantifying biology in the classroom: An innovative program that integrates the biological sciences, physical sciences, mathematics, and statistics* (Evaluation report). Miami: Florida International University.

# The Role of Forgiveness in Adult Learning and Education

Jerry Griffin
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** Adverse experiences can initiate angry and negative emotions and if not addressed and resolved have the ability to impede learning. Forgiveness counseling gives learners and educators a way to extinguish the power of these hindering emotions and thereby enhance learning.

From the first birthing cry to the last drawn breath, humans are bathed in emotion. Emotions first appear in the prenatal setting. For example, babies in utero will suck their thumbs or umbilical cords for solace (deMause, 1997). A loud noise will frighten the unborn causing them to react with a jump or a kick. Learning begins in unprotected emotional innocence, an exercise of curiously exploring the environment, seeking comfort, and avoiding discomfort. In a perfect world, children are nurtured and encouraged to satisfy this primal curiosity in a safe learning environment. If this happens, learning becomes a challenging adventure, where risks may be taken and ideas tried and tested (Dirkx, 2006; Perry, 2006). A lack of success is not seen as failure but is encouraged as a learning experience. It is in an emotional setting that most learning occurs (Dirkx, 2001, 2006; Dirkx, Mezirow, & Cranton 2006; Wolfe, 2006).

When encouragement is lacking or has been non-existent, either in the family or in educational settings, learning becomes black and white, a matter of right and wrong. Failure then leads to judgment. Not knowing the correct answer and being made to feel stupid can change learning into a stressful and shameful experience (Perry, 2006; Wolfe, 2006). The shame, psychological pain, or trauma caused by these events can leave learners feeling angry and resentful, believing that they are inadequate or stupid (Perry, 2006). These feelings can continue long after the initial anger experience (Fitzgibbons, 1998; Perry, 2006; Reed & Enright, 2006; Sukhodolsky, Golub & Cromwell, 2001). Anger is then carried into adulthood and, if not recognized and resolved, can be displaced and manifested as underachieving or disruptive learners (Dirkx, 2006; Enright, Knutson, Holter, Baskin, & Knutson, 2007; Fizgibbons, 1998; Perry, 2006). The result is often an angry, negative and/or fearful adult learner, which leads to the resistance or rejection of learning and the educational process (Britzman, 1998; Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007).

Forgiveness counseling is an effective tool for breaking the cycle of anger, anxiety, resentment, and depression in adult samples (Enright et al., 2007; Fitzgibbons, 1998; Gambaro, Enright, Baskin, & Klatt, 2008; Lin, Mack, Enright, Kran, & Baskin, 2004; Reed & Enright, 2006). Fitzgibbons (1998) reported in his practice that “the psychotherapeutic uses of forgiveness have resulted in a significant diminishment in the emotional, mental, and physical suffering” (p. 63) with reported benefits of a sense of freedom, a reduction of stress, resentment, and anger, along with a sense of physical and psychological well-being (Fitzgibbons, 1998; Coyle & Enright, 1998; McCoulough, 2000; Reed & Enright, 2006; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). This reduction of stress, resentment, and anger can have a positive impact on the student’s affect and motivation to learn (Dirkx, 2001; Gambaro et al., 2008; Knutson, Enright, & Garbers, 2008).

The purpose of this paper is to explore the ways in which learning about forgiveness and forgiveness interventions might contribute to, and enhance, the adult learning experience. To do this, the ways in which emotions, primarily anger and resentment, can impact learning are

Griffin, J. (2009). The role of forgiveness in adult learning and education. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 44-49). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

described. Second, the concept of forgiveness is presented—what it is and what it is not. Finally, implications for teaching and learning, as well as suggestions for further research are explored.

## Emotions and Learning

Much of learning occurs in a powerfully emotional context which can inhibit or stimulate learning (Dirkx, 2006). Educators have long known that students with a negative affect, who react with anger or resentment, are poor learners. Fitzgibbons (1998) found that anger is established in early childhood, and is "a natural response of the failure of others to meet one's needs for love, praise, acceptance, and justice, and it is experienced daily in the home, school, community, and place of employment" (p. 64). Essentially, anger is dealt with in three ways: "conscious or unconscious denial; active- or passive- aggression; and forgiveness" (p.64). The usual method of dealing with anger in early childhood is denial. The result is that most people bring a significant amount of unconscious anger into adulthood.

The following story illustrates how internalized anger and resentment can impact learning.

Al, a 65-year-old gentleman, spoke of a grade school experience. He had raised his hand and was called on to read in class. As he stumbled over the words, the class erupted in snickers and laughs. His reading became worse as his embarrassment escalated. Finally, his teacher put a stop to this torture by having him sit in the corner, his back to the class, wearing a pointed paper cap with "dunce" written on it . . . where his agony continued until recess. While Al was relating the story, he got up from his chair and started pacing the floor in anger. His breathing increased to the point that it was audible and his pulse could be seen beating at his neck and temples. Even though he now enjoys reading and is a voracious reader, he said that he never again raised his hand or read aloud in class. As a result, even though his teachers in junior high and high school encouraged him to further his education, Al never went to college.

In the military, Al refused an opportunity for officer candidate school because he believed that he "did not have the study skills to go to school" (Al, personal communication, November 23, 2008). Al is now a project superintendent on a multi-million dollar construction project, but he was well into his 50's before he obtained the confidence to leave the psychologically safe position of the workforce for a role in management. He observed, "I could have been a hell of a good Architectural-Engineer, but I never had any encouragement . . . I will never give anyone the chance to humiliate me like that again" (Al, personal communication, November, 23, 2008). Al's physical reaction, while relating the story, provides a glimpse into his *window* to see the power and strength of his anger and resentment 56 years later.

Anger can give rise to resentment, guilt, or retaliation which might be transferred to another person, or setting, either immediately, or long after the initial offense (Dirkx, 2006; Fitzgibbons, 1998; Huang & Enright, 2000; Perry 2006; Wolfe 2006). Fitzgibbons (1998) defines anger as "a strong feeling of displeasure and antagonism aroused by a sense of injury or wrong" (p. 64). If these feelings are not resolved they can internalize and fester. This may create a negative affect, anger rumination, and diminished feelings of self-esteem and self-worth in the learner. Sukhokolsky et al., (2001) identify anger rumination as "unintentional and recurrent cognitive processes that emerge during and continue after an episode of anger experience" (p. 690). Al's history demonstrates how unresolved anger and anger rumination can direct a life and impact one's future education. Educators are battling the psychological baggage, the thorn of anger and resentment, brought by learners into the educational arena. Until a way is found to dispose of this baggage and remove the thorn, learners will never be able to reach their true learning potential. Not only is the joy of learning impaired, irreparable harm occurs to learners in lost opportunities for themselves, their families, and their community.

## The Concept of Forgiveness

Although the concept of forgiveness is ancient, it has not been systematically studied until recently. By 1997, only 58 empirical research studies on forgiveness had been done (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Since that time, a deluge of attention has been paid to the subject, as evidenced by the number of lectures given, papers written, research performed, and self-help books published. Forgiveness is just now finding its way into educational literature. Baskin and Enright (2004) define forgiveness "as the willful giving up of resentment in the face of another's considerable injustice and responding with beneficence to the offender even though the offender has no right to the forgiver's moral goodness" (p. 80). Forgiveness does not forget or excuse an unfair action. That action is still viewed as wrong (Enright, 1999), and the one forgiving does not necessarily give up their right to justice (Knutson et al., 2008). Rather, the act of forgiveness responds to the perpetrator with diminished anger or resentment, and with increasingly positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors even though the offender has no right to forgiveness (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Enright, 2001; Worthington, 2001; Knutson, et al., 2008). When forgiveness occurs, it is the person, and not the action, who is forgiven (Enright, 1999; Malcolm, Warwar & Greenberg, 2005). Forgiveness is an act of mercy to the offending person, and the gift of liberation to the one who has been wronged. Forgiveness comes from a position of strength; it is empowering. Forgiveness can start whenever the forgiver wishes, can be unconditional, releases the one wronged from the burden of anger and resentment, and may be given with or without reconciliation (Enright, 1999; Enright et al., 2007).

### *Antecedents and Consequences of Forgiveness*

One antecedent to forgiveness is the offensive act itself and the commitment to forgive that action. The commitment to forgive has been identified as the most important and the most difficult step toward forgiveness (Knutson et al., 2008). A second is that the transgression is perceived as offensive (Newburg, d'Aquili, Newburg, & deMarici, 2000). A man sleeping with a woman who is not his wife could be perceived as a joke and laughed off unless this same act is seen by his wife. Then, it is an offense. Last, the offense must be remembered (Enright, 1999; 2001; Worthington 2005). For example, a driver who steals a parking place that you have been waiting for might produce thoughts of, "How rude!" The incident would then be forgotten as plans for the day are made; hence, no injury or need of forgiveness. Reported consequences of forgiveness include a sense of freedom and a reduction of stress, along with a sense of physical and psychological well-being (Fitzgibbons, 1998; Coyle & Enright; McCoullough, 2000; Reed & Enright, 2006; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Forgiveness has been shown to improve the quality of life (Fitzgibbons, 1998; Temoshok & Wald, 2005), and reduce anger and anger rumination (Coyle & Enright, 1997; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001.

### *Critical Attributes of Forgiveness*

When an offense occurs, the tendency is to see the offender as the action itself. Reframing is the process of changing the way the offender is viewed (Enright, 1999; Knutson et al. 2008; Worthington, 1998). Instead of seeing the offender as the offensive and damaging action, through reframing, the offender is seen as someone of worth. The critical attribute of respect is twofold. First, the person forgiving must respect him or herself and acknowledge that he or she has the right to not live under a cloud of anger, bitterness, or resentment. Second, the offender is seen as a human being worthy of respect, even though he or she has not earned that right (Enright, 1999; Malcolm et al., 2005). When the cognitive insights of reframing and respect have been mastered, it can lead to feelings of compassion (Enright, 1999, Enright et al., 2007). Compassion is what allows us to have feelings for others and to understand their misery and

suffering (Stratton & Hayes, 1998). Compassion is offered in spite of the offense, and not because of it. Caution should be taken so that feelings of compassion do not excuse the offender's faults. This could place the forgiving person in the role of victim, which would allow abusive action to continue. Empathy is an emotional feeling of understanding and unity with another (Stratton & Hayes, 1998). According to their study on resolutions of past emotional injuries, Malcolm et al. (2005) found that empathy is essential to successful forgiveness. An important and often neglected part of forgiveness is the ability to forgive oneself. Holding onto an angry memory plays an important part of the inability to forgive oneself, so that individuals "who find it hard to forgive themselves will continue to hold angry memories" (Barber, Maltby & Macaskill, 2005, p. 259). People who still get angry while ruminating about events that may have happened long ago do so because of mistakes they have made and, therefore, are unable to forgive themselves. Barber et al. (2005) felt that addressing thoughts of revenge are crucial to forgiving others. McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick and Johnson (2001) concur that people who seek revenge are less forgiving.

## Implications for Forgiveness and Learning

Enright et al. (2007) conducted a series of studies to find if classroom teachers, instructed and supported by psychologists, could lead forgiveness programs to help reduce anger in students exposed to poverty and violence. The teachers attended a one-day, five-hour workshop with a licensed psychologist. A forgiveness manual, books and related materials were distributed. Although two-thirds of the interventional curricula focused on learning about forgiveness rather than forgiving a specific person, the studies revealed a successful and a significant change in the level of student anger. Gambaro et al. (2008) investigated the effectiveness of a school-based, manualized forgiveness program on the psychosocial functioning and academic performance of students with high levels of Trait Anger. Trait Anger is the generalized belief of being treated unfairly by others and is accompanied by frequent feelings of anger and frustration (Stratton & Hayes, 1998). The results showed that after intervention, participants demonstrated a substantial improvement in forgiveness, and perceptions of self, as well as in their interpersonal relationships in general. Interestingly, grades in English, math, and social studies also improved across the board along with a reduction in detentions and one-day, in-school suspensions. All businesses must address the bottom line; the business of education is no exception. Historically, education has struggled for every dollar to fund programs. The question arises, "Can we afford to finance forgiveness counseling in the educational arena?" The author counters with, "Can we afford not to?" A patient with an abscess might receive the best of medical care. The wound will be lanced, drained, and appropriate antibiotics administered, but until the thorn, the original cause of the abscess, is removed the wound will never heal. The author believes that forgiveness can be the instrument used to remove the thorn of offense and allow the abscess of anger, resentment, and guilt to heal, and thus enhance learning potential.

## Suggestions for Future Research

Research with adult samples have shown that forgiveness interventions are effective in reducing anger and related emotional difficulties (Enright et al., 2007; Lin et al., 2004; Reed & Enright, 2006). Given the encouraging results in child and adolescent education, along with the improvement shown not only academically but in behavior and social interactions, more research on forgiveness interventions is suggested in the adult educational arena. Dirkx (2006a) wrote, "At various times in my own teaching, I have felt annoyed, irritated, angered, or even threatened by what students said in class" (p. 28). This statement suggests an interesting, and possibly

productive direction for future research, as unresolved anger can be displaced and erupt later (Fitzgibbons, 1998). Therefore, forgiveness counseling of faculty and the resolution of their own anger may have a beneficial impact on student learning and academic achievement.

**References**


Barber, L., Maltby, J., & Macaskill, A. (2005). Angry memories and thoughts of revenge: The relationship between forgiveness and anger rumination. *Personality and Individual Differences, 39,* 253-262.

Baskin, T. W., & Enright, R. D. (2004). Intervention studies on forgiveness: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 82*(1), 79-90.

Britzman, D. P. (1998). *Lost subjects, contested objects: Toward a psychoanalytic inquiry of learning*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

Coyle, C. T., & Enright, R. D. (1998). Forgiveness education with adult learners. In T. Pourchot, & M. C. Smith (Eds.), *Adult learning and development: Perspectives from educational psychology*. Mahawah, NJ: L. Erivaum.

deMause, L. (1997). Restaging fetal traumas in war and social violence (Part 3). *Pre- and Perinatal Psychology Journal, 11*(4), Retrieved December 2, 2008, from http://www.geocities.com/kidhistory/ldfetal3.htm

Dirkx, J. M. (2001). The power of feelings: Emotion, imagination, and the construction of meaning in adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 89,* 63-72.

Dirkx, J. M. (2006). Engaging emotions in adult learning: A Jungian perspective on emotion and transformative learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 109,* 15-26.

Dirkx, J. M. (2006 a). Authenticity and imagination. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 111,* 27-39.

Dirkx, J. M., Mezirow, J., & Cranton, P. (2006). Musings and reflections on the meaning, contest, and process of transformative learning: A dialogue between John M. Dirkx and Jack Mezirow. *Journal of Transformative Education, 4*(2), 123-139.

Enright, R. D. (1999). Forgiveness. In D. Levinson, J. J. Ponzetti, Jr., & P. F. Jorgenson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of human emotions.* New York: Macmillan.

Enright, R. D. (2001). *Forgiveness is a choice: A step-by-step process for resolving anger and restoring hope.* Washington, DC: APA Life Tools.

Enright, R. D., Knutson, J. A., Holter, A. C., Baskin, T., & Knutson, C. (2007). Waging peace through forgiveness in Belfast, Northern Ireland II: Educational programs for mental health improvement of children. *Journal of Research in Education, 17,* 63-78.

Fitzgibbons, R. (1998). Anger and the healing power of forgiveness: A psychiatrist's view. In R. D. Enright & J. North (Eds.), *Exploring forgiveness* (pp. 63-74). Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Gambaro, M. E., Enright, R. D., Baskin, T. A., & Klatt, J. (2008). Can school-based forgiveness counseling improve conduct and academic achievement in academically at-risk adolescents? *Journal of Research in Education, 18,* 16-27.

Huang, S-T. T., & Enright, R. D. (2000). Forgiveness and anger-related emotions in Taiwan: Implications for therapy. *Psychotherapy, 37*(1), 71-79.

Knutson, J., Enright, R. D., & Garbers, B. (2008). Validating the developmental pathway of forgiveness. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 86,* 193-199.

Lin, W. F., Mack, D., Enright, R. D., Kran, D., & Baskin, T. (2004). Effects of forgiveness therapy on anger, mood, and vulnerability to substance use among inpatient substance-dependent clients. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 72*(6), 1114-1121.

Malcolm, W., Warwar, S., & Greenberg, L. (2005). Facilitating forgiveness in individual therapy as an approach to resolving interpersonal injuries. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of forgiveness* (pp. 379-393). New York: Routledge.

Merriam, S. B., Caffarella, R. S., & Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McCullough, M. E. (2000). Forgiveness as human strength: Theory, measurement, and links to well-being. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 19*(1), 43-55.

McCullough, M. E., Bellah, C. G., Kilpatrick, S. D., & Johnson, J. L. (2001). Vengefulness: Relationships with forgiveness, rumination, well-being, and the big five. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 27*(5), 601-610.

Newburg, A. B., d'Aquili, E. G., Newburg, S. K., & deMarici, V. (2000). The neuropsychological correlates of forgiveness. In M. E. McCullough, K. I. Pargament, & C. E. Thoresen (Eds.), *Forgiveness: Theory, research, and practice* (pp. 91-110). NY: Guilford Press.

Perry, B. D. (2006). Fear and learning: Trauma related factors in adult learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 110,* 21-27.

Reed, G., & Enright, R. D. (2006). The effects of forgiveness therapy on depression anxiety, and post-traumatic stress for women after spousal emotional abuse. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 74*, 920-929.

Stratton, P., & Hayes, N. (1998). *A student's dictionary of psychology.* New York: Edward Arnold.

Sukhodolsky, D. G., Golub, A., & Cromwell, E. N. (2001). Development and validation of the anger rumination scale. *Personality and Individual Differences, 31,* 689-700.

Temoshok, L. R., & Wald, R. L. (2005). Forgiveness and health in persons living with HIV/AIDS. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of forgiveness* (pp. 335-348). New York: Routledge.

Toussant, L., & Webb, J. R. (2005). Theoretical and empirical connections between forgiveness, mental health, and well-being. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of forgiveness* (pp. 349-362). New York: Routledge.

Wolfe, P. (2006). The role of meaning and emotion in learning. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 110,* 35-41.

Worthington, E. L., Jr. (1998). Empirical research in forgiveness: Looking backward, looking forward. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Dimension of forgiveness* (pp. 261-294). Radnor, PA: Templeton Foundation Press.

Worthington, E. L. (2001). *Five steps to forgiveness*. New York: Crown.

Worthington, E. L. (2005). Initial questions about the art and science of forgiving. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of forgiveness* (pp. 1-14). New York: Routledge.

Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Scherer, M. (2004). Forgiveness is an emotion-focused coping strategy that can reduce health risks and promote health resilience: Theory, review, and hypotheses. *Psychology and Health, 19*(3), 385-405.

# Can the Undocumented Student Speak?

Eduardo Hernandez
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** The author argues that evolving issues of immigration law, free speech, skills and values education, and the nationalization of curricula are affecting the university and silencing the voices of undocumented immigrant students. A Freirean analysis is used to examine these issues and offers solutions.

Educators are concerned with empowering a diversity of voices through many avenues. Through postmodernism, educators seek to open dialogue in the classroom through speech, text, images, and pedagogy (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991). Multicultural education has been retheorized to promote voice in the classroom (Nieto, Bode, Kang, & Raible, 2008). The use of multimodality, multiliteracies, and the new literacy can also create changes in a classroom (Carey, 2008).

How education is carried out, however, may silence voices in a multitude of ways. For example, modernism in the classroom encourages teachers to use Western centric and accountability-based curriculum, texts that are limited in scope and interpretation, and practices that do not include images and role models (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991). Distortion of the image of education as well as the practice of education via manufactured crises over testing and pedagogy can also be a challenge (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). Adding to these issues are systematic pressures put on the university system by various forces. The government promotes accountability and policy making. Society, as a result, may be affected by a policy-making culture and its limited focus (Heineman, 2001). Conflicting notions of utopianism and doubt in education also add to a context of reform, creating periods of change that can be incremental at times and dysfunctional at other times (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

The university can be a forum for transforming society through systematic change. Systematic change in the lower levels of public education system has been explored in the past (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1990). The university system, however, presents different challenges in recognizing what voices are silenced and what structures promote this silence. Many of these voices do not ever enter the university campus. One such voice is that of students who are the children of undocumented immigrant parents or who are undocumented themselves whose educational career may end in the K-12 public school system. If awareness of these systematic issues is not raised and addressed, the situation may become potentially worse. An exploration of these students' voicelessness at the university level may raise awareness to the systematic issues affecting the university and point towards their resolution.

## Problem Statement

In a classic argument on subaltern theory, Spivak (1988) asks the question of whether the subaltern can speak. The doomed Bengali woman Spivak speaks of is a figure lost to patriarchy, economic inequality, and to others who are also the oppressed. Society keeps the Bengali woman at the margin. She is not listened to, written about, or spoken to; thus, it is as if she does not exist. Spivak argues for ways in which intellectuals and Westerners may find this woman's voice even if it is not easily available to the researcher. This discovery process helps maintain her status even if she herself speaks collectively with other subalterns (Spivak, 1988). The Bengali woman is a figure of the recent past. In the current context, however, there are many people whose voice is

Hernandez, E. (2009). Can the undocumented student speak? In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 50-55). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

not heard in the U.S., especially in academia. Immigration is one such issue that creates a voiceless class. In this paper, the author asks: Can the undocumented student speak? To answer this question, the author looks at the university and the forces that can silence a student. Specifically, how, through awareness, can the university (a) help to speak for undocumented students; (b) allow undocumented students to speak for themselves; and (c) improve undocumented students' condition?

## The Issues

A gathering storm of issues, including immigration law, free speech, skills and values education, and nationalizing of the curriculum, can affect the higher education system. These seemingly unrelated issues interconnect and support each other but are typically addressed in isolation from each other. Furthermore, the elements of these issues are growing with each passing day and are garnering strength that can make them much harder to deal with in the future. The author argues that these issues can foreclose an undocumented student's future before it begins. Many of these issues enter the K-12 system and slowly creep their way into the university system in various ways. The focus of this paper is on the university system, primarily on the disciplines of Education and Law. However, this is a problem that affects the entire university system, and individuals in the university system must collectively search for a solution. The implications are not just for the university, its disciplines, or its students but for society as a whole.

These four issues intersect and strengthen each other in many ways creating a perfect storm of possible damage to the university's mission in the long run. While free speech is limited at the university, government speech can grow and a national curriculum can become government speech (protected speech). The skills- and values-based education that does not promote free thought and the way immigration laws are geared toward keeping undocumented students either silent in or absent from the university helps keep opposing views from manifesting at the university level. The status quo of power and culture is maintained and even strengthened.

### *Immigration Law*

Denial of the American dream for undocumented high school students is the product of several legal cases and laws that have developed over the years from public schools controversies in Texas to a nationwide movement. The nationwide movement is a legacy of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) and the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). The product of this movement is that both work together to hinder the lives of undocumented immigrant students who were brought into the country illegally by their parents and by no fault of their own (Alfred, 2003). Students in college, for example, can not document that they are in-state residents and, thus, cannot be given a lower tuition rate in some states. Those who are allowed to pay out-of-state tuition can not apply for financial aid, thus, making it more economically viable not to attend college. The issue is often tied to stopping the flow of immigrants and the high costs of providing public services, such as education, although no link between the denial of education and stopping illegal immigration has been proven. On the contrary, changing the law may bring more money to the university (Salinas, 2006).

### *Free Speech*

Free speech is at the center of a movement and counter-movement of several cases over the last few decades as they relate to education. The Hazelwood case (a simple controversy over what appeared in a school newspaper) set forth various other cases, rulings, and theories that have been built upon to limit how free speech is used in public K-12 schools through a broadening

literature of arguments and evolving legal precedents (Waldman, 2008). The situation has spilled over to the university and has been addressed by scholars who fear a looming threat (Fugate, 1998). For example, teachers' free speech in communicating the curriculum (i.e. teaching at the university) is not fully subject to constitutional protection depending on the context and may, in fact, be subject to other regulations (Buss, 1999). Regulation of free speech affects a broad section of people, but more so for undocumented students.

*Skills and Values*

The problem with accountability and a skills and values mentality has been the subject of debate in the discipline of Education inside the nation's public and private k-12 schools, because it limits the kind of knowledge that is learned. This focus in education, however, has not spread to other disciplines or to active awareness and coalition across the university. Research has shown, for instance, that legal education like much of education in general is moving towards a more skills-based mentality. Students leave college with an education, but both they and their employers often complain that what they have learned in school is not relevant to what they do in the day-to-day routine of practicing law. Since the McCrate Report (Matasur, 2003), the development of law schools has been towards the notion of more courses based on legal skills and values. These courses promote the need for better research skills (Matasur, 2003). Lack of peer review, social science methods, and research strategies can make law literature seem too limited for tackling larger social goals (Chambliss, 2008).

*Nationalizing the Curriculum*

A national curriculum is slowly developing in K-12 schools and to some extent the effects of this are affecting the nature of education at the university. According to Apple (1993), a national curriculum can be monocultural. An informal national curriculum existed before the drive to make it formal in recent years, and its primary manifestation was through the content of flawed textbooks (Apple, 1993). The university system can, in turn, get caught in an informal national curriculum through the flawed textbooks that pervade its curriculum. Students of today who experience a limited curriculum and flawed educational system may become both the college students of tomorrow and the faculty. The possibility exists that students of today may trap students of tomorrow in a vicious circle of *limitations to thought* if the university does not resolve the matter in the present.

## Theoretical Framework

Freire's (1970) banking theory of education suggests that dehumanizing power lies in the humanitarians and their false generosity (i.e. the teacher and the pedagogy). Students are sometimes viewed as a tabla rasa devoid of culture, humanity, and identity who are subject to information (knowledge that is legitimated) being imputed or deposited into them. According to Freire, banking education has several characteristics including the following. The teachers teach and the students are taught, the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing, the teacher thinks and the students are thought about, and the teacher is the subject of the learning process while pupils are mere objects. The students can be educated in a sense but not liberated from the power that controls them until they challenge this form of education through the generation of their own codes, constructions, knowledge, and pedagogy. They must become aware of the conditions of their oppression and how they themselves are oppressors (Freire, 1970).

## Method and Analysis

Keyword searches with various terms such as *undocumented student* and *university* were used to explore the related literature in various databases and search engines including

HeinOnline and Google Scholar. Using Friere's insights, an analysis of the systematic problems with the university is examined from the perspective of an undocumented student. Immigration law, free speech, skills and values, and nationalizing of the curriculum are explored to show how an undocumented student is disempowered.

*Immigration Law*

The specter of deportation and family separation distracts from study and puts pressures and limits on education. Students cannot link their story to a lesson on the law to promote learning without risking exposure. Neither can they participate in university events that demand documentation such as travel abroad programs or international conferences. Education course discussions may falsely focus on safer topics.

*Free Speech*

Students do not speak up for fear of drawing attention to their own status. A lifetime spent promoting this behavior can make it an unconscious act. Consequently, many opportunities to speak in the classroom and throughout the campus are lost. They must lie about their family background to protect their family or avoid shame and cannot challenge anti-immigrant voices on or off campus. More complex activism is stalled.

*Skills and Values*

The product of skills- and values-based education can have many consequences in the professional world. It can affect how a discipline is put into practice. This, in turn, can affect the status of the undocumented. In the law, two practice styles (mega-lawyering versus ordinary lawyering) have been explored. Mega-lawyering is more legalistic, firm based, and less political; ordinary lawyering is more individualistic, public, and political (Bloom, 2008). A student more focused on the mechanics of the law can enter into mega-lawyering and become less successful in their advocacy for an undocumented student while an ordinary lawyer can tackle the issue in various ways beyond courtroom mechanics because they have been taught in a more multidimensional way.

*Nationalizing the Curriculum*

The various tests and materials used in education are biased to certain cultures (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). The informal national curriculum of textbooks denies the values of minority cultures (Apple, 1993). This provides an environment that starts in the K-12 system and extends into the university through its curriculum of creating learning and pedagogy that deny the existence of the undocumented student's voice. These students can not see themselves in print, images or discourse.

The net result is that the university becomes a site for a kind of banking education for undocumented students. The teachers teach, and the students are taught. The teacher knows everything that is valued, and the students know nothing that is valued. The teacher thinks, and the students are thought about because they are either absent from campus or do not feel free to express their thoughts. The teacher is the subject of the learning process as reflected by the culture they share with the informal curriculum and other facets of a biased education while pupils are mere objects. Students may become fatalistic and fail or not even appear in college.

## Possible Solutions

The university in conjunction with students should confront these problems. Changing residency requirements for tuition purposes so that undocumented students can find alternative ways to prove that they have been in the country without revealing their status can mitigate the negative effects of immigration law. However, political and legal pressure to be stricter against immigrants prevails. Various solutions have been offered to improve free speech in education,

such as sliding rule solutions to free speech (Waldman, 2008); extending viewpoint neutrality regulations (Tobin, 2004; Wright, 2007); and public forum analysis (Golby, 2006). These ideas basically mean giving a certain kind of disclaimer to avoid a legal free speech case or interpreting acceptable free speech differently once a case is underway so that new precedents are set.

The skills and values approach in education can be fought through legislation, policy making, and legal maneuverings as well as through education by promoting more of a social science mentality into disciplines such as law to improve legal literature (Chambliss, 2008). While the government promotes accountability and policy making that affects the whole society, the promotion of social science can also affect everything in a society including the government and the court system when it is tied to judicial activism (Heineman, 2001). Promoting a lawyer who is able to look beyond skills and values to a bigger picture may be important in fighting cases and promoting legislation (Bloom, 2008). At the university, a national curriculum can be curtailed by challenging the dependence on textbooks and their content. On a larger level, change on various fronts must address all these issues. Awareness must be promoted. The university may even have to speak when the undocumented can not speak for themselves.

On a larger level, a multidimensional problem demands multidimensional action. Specifically, the disciplines of education and law can (a) identify, promote, and model the various solutions needed; (b) conduct mixed methods and mixed design multidisciplinary projects on this theme; (c) promote awareness of these issues via lessons, presentations, town hall meetings, service learning, and case work projects; (d) reach out to the rest of the university community to join in; and (e) recognize the current and historical contributions of undocumented students on and off campus.

## Conclusion

Fullan argues that systematic change is accomplished through individual and systematic meaning making. An entire culture has to change (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1990). At the university, this may mean that everyone has to work together to change the culture. The end of subaltern status may be more preferable than giving voice to it. It may not be about speaking for the undocumented student or having them speak, but helping change their status. Undocumented students should speak, learn, and contribute.

## References

Alfred, J. (2003). Denial of the American dream: The plight of undocumented high school students within the U.S. educational system. *New York Law School Journal of Human Rights, XIX*(2), 615-650.

Apple, M. W. (1993). The politics of official knowledge: Does a national curriculum make sense? *Teachers College Record, 95*(2), 222-241.

Aronowitz, S., & Giroux, H. (1991). *Postmodern education: Politics, culture and social criticism.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Berliner, D., & Biddle, B. (1995). *The manufactured crisis: Myths, fraud and the attack on America's public schools.* New York: Addison-Wesley.

Bloom, A. (2008). Practice style and successful legal mobilization. *Law & Contemporary Problems, 71*(2), 1-16.

Buss, W. G. (1999). Academic freedom and freedom of speech: Communicating the curriculum. *The Journal of Gender, Race, and Justice, 2*, 213-278.

Chambliss, E. (2008). When do facts persuade? Some thoughts on the market for empirical legal studies. *Law and Contemporary Problems, 71*(2), 17-39.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* New York: Continuum.

Fugate, R. E. (1998). Choppy waters are forecast for academic free speech. *Florida State University Law Review, 26,* 187-217.

Fullan, M. G., & Stiegelbauer, S. (1990). *The new meaning of educational change* (2nd ed.). New York: Teachers College Press.

Golby, J. (2006). The case against extending Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier's public forum analysis to the regulation of university student speech. *Washington University Law Review, 84*(5), 1263-1286.

Heineman, R. (2001). *The world of the policy analyst: Rationality, values, and politics.* Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

Jewitt, C. (2008). Multimodality and literacy in school classrooms. *Review of Research in Education, 32,* 241-267.

Matasur, R. A. (2003). Skills and values education: Debate about the continuum continues. *New York Law School Journal of Human Rights, 19*(1), 25-58.

Nieto, S., Bode, P., Kang, E., & Raible, J. (2008). *Identity, community, and diversity: Retheorizing multicultural curriculum for the postmodern era.* In M. F. Connelly (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 176-197). Los Angeles: Sage.

Salinas, V. J. (2006).You can be whatever you want to be when you grow up, unless your parents brought you here illegally: The struggle to bring in-state tuition to undocumented immigrant students. *Houston Law Review, 30*(3), 847-878.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271-313). Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Tobin, S. B. (2004). Divining Hazelwood: The need for a viewpoint neutrality requirement in school speech cases. *Harvard Civil Rights-Civil Liberties Law Review, 39,* 218-265.

Tyack, D., & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering toward utopia. A century of public schools reform.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Waldman, E. G. (2008). Returning to Hazelwood's core: A new approach to restrictions on school-sponsored speech. *Florida Law Review, 60*(1), 163-124.

Wright, R. G. (2007). School-sponsored speech and the surprising case for viewpoint-based regulations. *Southern Illinois University Law Journal, 31,* 175- 216.

# The University as a Genre and Activity System

Eduardo Hernandez
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** The author explores the challenges graduate students face preparing for a dissertation through university events. Autoethnography using notes, observation, and journal writing and framed by genre and activity system theory highlight university system conflicts with the culture of the student.

Pursuing a dissertation topic is a critical step in an academic career. Therefore, the university offers various events, activities, and experiences that can help students find a dissertation topic. Systems theory is based on the idea that everything could be classified as a system of elements from the realm of biology to all other sciences (Bertalanffy, 1950). Systems theory has developed over the years in various forms as a kind of illustration and criticism of how individuals, institutions, and other elements work together (Graham, 1999). The university can be considered a system, and the various events, activities, and experiences that can be helpful for a student working on a research paper can be elements in that system (Russell, 1997). Despite various events and activities offered at a university, students go from experience to experience and yet struggle to understand the system, find their dissertation topic, and successfully complete their doctorate. The system in turn has trouble understanding what is happening to these students. The dissertation topic search is a personal struggle played out in public. The inner workings of this struggle, however, remain private. Students' perceptions of the university system can be mysterious. Insight into how the university works or does not work for these students can be gained by students' self-examinations via autoethnography. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to give a personal account through autoethnography of how the university works or does not through the lens of a form of the systems theory that focuses on texts, such as dissertations and the activities, and conflicts they inspire.

## Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based on the genre and activity system work of Russell (1997). A text is a discursive tool (i.e., something students can use to enable a conversation and interactions between individuals or groups or other entities). The script to Hamlet, a grocery list, or a research paper is an example. A genre is a way a text is or has been used repeatedly over time. Hamlet is traditionally used as a script for acting, for example. An activity system is the various social actions one can do or not do related to the creation or use of a text. Writing a research paper promotes taking notes and going to school as well as the actual research paper, for example. Activity systems can have motives and objects. The object is the focus on something and the motive is the how and why something is done. The object of a research paper, for example, can be on literature, but the motive could be to address an issue to get a grade. Genre systems can be a text with multiple genres that allows the user to interact with various activity systems. The script to Hamlet can be read for literary analysis and performed linking the activities of a class with a play (Russell, 1997).

Genre and activity systems create identities for their users. A person who analyzes a script becomes a student and a person who performs it is an actor for example. Genre and activity systems can also create power relations. The student who can master the genre of a research paper is graded better than the one who can not and thus is given more power by the

Hernandez, E. (2009). The university as a genre and activity system. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 56-61). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

instructor. Russell used the concept of genre and activity systems to discuss how the writing of a research paper as a genre system in a cell biology class at a university can affect a student and the university in terms of its activity systems. Several issues were brought up including the idea of a student experiencing a double bind. A double bind is when the contradictions between one activity system and another related through a genre system create conflict for the student. An example of a double bind is that the culture of the school can conflict with the one the students seek to help outside of it; however, if they do not stay in school, they can not help change the culture of the school. In another example of a double bind, students study a discipline at the university to help people, but the demands of going to school keeps them from immediately helping people in the short term. If they stop going to school, however, they lose the power that can be gained from an advanced degree to help people in the long term (Russell, 1997).

## Method

Autoethnography is highly personalized accounts often told in the first person and sometimes in a story form where researchers put their own experiences at the forefront of research to explore a particular culture, discipline, event, or issue. It is highly controversial, and peer reviewed journals have turned down manuscripts by doctoral students seeking to use it (Holt, 2003). This debate between the students and the reviewers can even in turn become part of the autoethnographic writing story. Ironically, an autoethnography on learning about autoethnography suggests resistance to autoethnography in academia is tied to traditional ideas about objectivity. Much about how to conduct an autoethnography can be learned through the few recent examples (Wall, 2006). Autoethnography and higher education in particular has been the focus of several studies. Issues of biases among graduate students and their faculty have been explored with autoethnography (Hughes, 2008). A university proctor used autoethnography to discuss his experience at Oxford (Walford, 2004). The university has also been the site of a very literary, often funny essay on the sociology of the academy through autoethnography (Pelias, 2003). Finally, Florida International University (FIU) has specifically been the focus of autoethnographies with researchers exploring how experiences shaped their identities as adult learners and adult educators. They noted the various conflicts between their experiences and class and cultural issues (Plakhotnik, Delgado, & Seepersad, 2006).

Using the genre and activity system work of Russell (1997) as a guide, a mapping out of the university system is done with the focus on everything that is related directly or indirectly to the dissertation genre. The system at FIU includes such event categories as (a) workshops, lectures, and presentations; (b) dissertation proposals and defenses; (c) graduate student network meetings; (d) meeting with professors; (e) course work and classroom discussions; (f) writing groups; (g) research; (h) informal channels; (i) other events; and (j) work, profession, community, and home. During the course of 2007-2008 academic year, the researcher attended all of these events in one form or another. The researcher took notes during each event and observed them as an active participant. The notes were put according to the aforementioned event categories. The researcher then looked over his notes and made journal entries about these event categories using the broad themes of the conceptual framework as a guide to understanding the system (i.e., issues about a double bind). Finally, this work was summarized as an autoethnographic essay.

## Discussion

The following is discussion summaries of the results for each category.

*Workshops, Presentations, and Lectures*

At a presentation, a professor suggested that I should write an autoethnography on trying to write a dissertation in my graduate program for a conference. Because I am always attending events at the university related to this and taking notes, she presented it as an easy idea. I had heard of autoethnography, but I actually began to learn about it in earnest at this point by reading several articles about it. Some examples of it read like new journalism to me. Some read just a story about something that was happening to an author and others took on the shape of scholarly writing with familiar headings such as “methods”. I was quickly lost while working on this paper. My first draft had to be substantially rewritten.

The presentation was on creating an academic resume, but it put a conference paper topic on my lap, and potentially a direction for larger research such as a dissertation. It has put me squarely at the center of the tensions in the field over autoethnography. I faced several double binds. This conference paper does not directly help my dissertation pursuit but helps the resume a dissertation may be a part of. However if I do not complete a dissertation, the resume is harmed. If potentially this topic becomes part of my dissertation, I enter into a process that is complicated by the fact that many scholars potentially may not know what it is, may not respect it as they do other ideas, and that this line of scholarship is developing. On the other hand, if I do not take it on, I do not learn anything new. The fact that autoethnography often appears as essays is also an attraction because it can open my voice to a more popular audience than scholars although some scholars can see it as a distraction. I realize that part of my problem with autoethnography and my issues with the dissertation process is negotiating the language and culture of what I perceive to be scholarly work. The presentation also quickly sets up the complexity of genre and activity systems. Everything I do or write at the university, be it a note or research paper or essay, can become something else like a conference paper or a dissertation.

*Dissertation and Proposal Defenses*

Most of the time, I find myself to be the only student watching a dissertation proposal or defense. At one of them, I was joined by a fully uniformed police officer prepared to leave for work and another student who was minutes away from working at the university itself. The fact that I was a substitute teacher and was not called in that day is the only reason I could catch this event, which means I was in a select group of educators who could actually take advantage of an event like this at a school that prepares educators. In a way, the profession seems unfairly punished by not having these events after public school hours. These events give me exposure to the bringing to life of a dissertation and topic ideas and how they are constructed and reconstructed. You can feel the nervousness of a student who is presenting and you get a feel for how faculty think. When I can prepare for these events by reading the dissertation documents, I can feel the anguish or relief while watching their idea unfold at the presentation. My dissertation topic search now incorporates a sense of getting through the gauntlet of this event.

*Graduate Student Network Meetings*

This is the best venue for handling issues related to university problems. The people here are often few, but they are sharp and active participants at what is going on. The conflict here is to struggle politically within the school to make it better knowing that much of what happens may be enjoyed by people long after we are done. This is where a lot of inside baseball happens with dissertation issues. We learn what is going on and who is doing what here, but these

meetings do not happen all the time. I often have to pit participation in this with school work and school work usually wins.

*Meetings with Professors*

I get a lot sometimes by being in the hallway and listening to students who are further along in the process discussing their work with faculty. Faculty have been helpful in the topic process, making suggestions, motivating me into a direction, and noting things that usually I would not be privy to such as a new book on the topic I mention or how the school is addressing the issue. I was recruited to help a professor create a course that may be taught in the future. At best, an article, piece of instructional material, or idea I found may be used in this course at some point in the future. Learning materials I found may be read by students, used in their teaching, or inspire something else. Potentially, this small contribution I have made by happenstance may be the most important thing that I did all year at the university.

This is counterbalanced at times by the dissertation topic process that can be both the most important thing in the world and totally perfunctory and meaningless too. Although many people create work inspired by their dissertation, I get the feeling that dissertations and the work they inspire never gets much further than the conferring of the doctoral degree. I can ask people about recent work at the department and get quizzical looks. I constantly think about what I could be doing if the dissertation was not in the way. My sequential thinking is also at odds with professors. They discuss the long term goal partly because they have already gone through the process but part of me thinks in terms of sequences. I can not put my full thought on a dissertation until I get through the week and then the class and then the coursework, and then the comprehensive exams and so on and so forth through the chain that leads to the dissertation.

*Course Work and Classroom Discussions*

Dissertations are always brought up in discussions. It becomes a matter of what becomes contributed to the discussion and by whom. It becomes evident sometimes in class discussions who are the active classroom teachers and who are not. Many of the active teachers to me still seem to have the distraction of work in their thought processes. They are slightly late with work or hyper organized to keep from being late with work. Papers may be short on information or full of too much information in a way to compensate for a lack of quality time focused on the university. Those who are not in the classroom have to be explained basic terms, issues, and slang used in the classroom. Teachers not active in research have to be explained basic ideas and terms in that culture. Discussions and dissertation ideas are sometimes tempered by this reality.

I am in the middle of this because I do not always work as a teacher. I suspect that if I was a full time teacher, the quality of my school work would begin to suffer because I would have in the back of my head the residual angst of the troublesome fourth period class I would have to face again tomorrow or the concern for the students with larger issues that I can do little about as a teacher anyway. The big issue with discussions is the fact that they can easily turn into complaint sessions and not important discussions. The need to vent supersedes the need to think. Layered on this is the fact the teaching discussed at the university is often different from the reality and there is a sense that the university does not change or value what happens in the field.

*Writing Groups*

The writing group I participate in promotes discussions on the challenges of writing for publication. It meets on weekends and, hence, goes against weekend work or free time for me.

*Research*

Involving oneself in an existing research project at the school and using it as a dissertation topic is the ideal, but one has to be really into it to figure out what it really is

sometimes. A researcher can influence one's own work. My research is mostly influenced by scholarship I read on my own, but I feel pressure at times to take a professor's research advice.

*Informal Channels*

I was at an apartment complex and with a friend from FIU who graduated from the business school and was 40 thousand dollars in debt. He was showing me his new work truck. On top of the same bartending job he had before school, he was taking odd jobs pressure cleaning. He felt that school was a waste of time, money, and energy. He was not going to be working in what he studied or use the textbooks he bought. We have some similarities because I too do odd jobs on the side so he wondered how I could make ends meet and deal with school and he could not. He lacks some survival skills in the real world I gained from being poor like fixing a used vehicle instead financing a new one. I told him that if I do not have the cash for tuition, I just do not go to school. I am not a role model either but I feel he is emblematic of what happens at FIU. The pursuit of a dissertation is tempered by all this negativity about education and the whole system around it. I have to be positive to people like him, ignore the pity party, and move on or I lose focus on my dissertation. I am surrounded by people like this.

*Other Events*

I was at a town hall meeting FIU had proposed for discussing budget cuts. The university system itself was physically embodied by the people around me. The custodians were in row. The deans and students were in others. The media was paying close attention. Administration was either on camera or nearby. There was a lot of talking about the mission of the school and political strategy. Through out the presentation, the numbers that struck me were those tied to tuition. If they raise tuition, it gets harder to get through school and to eventually get to the dissertation topic. The double binds of the system are evident for me. I feel for the economic crisis the region is in, but tuition and other costs make me question the pursuit of the dissertation for me or for anyone. The school's focus on certain concepts and departments (such as environmentalism) make me both wonder if I should gear a dissertation topic around the favored ideas of the school and also angry that a university does such a thing. The talk of political strategy is both honest and corrosive of the school environment. The administration has pushed numbers on the deans so that they can make cuts, therefore shifting the weight of blame on the higher level administration to people below them. The end result is the possibility that faculty is cut and that could mean another dissertation interrupted. Furthermore, the meeting hides as much as it reveals. It is hard to question the numbers from the higher ups passed to the deans without research, and it is hard to tell what goes on in each department and how it ties to the bigger picture. The need to be a political activist supersedes my identity as student at moments like this, but it takes me a while to formulate my ideas and I do not say a word at the meeting. Meanwhile, the dissertation is waiting and time is money.

*Work, Profession, Home, and Community*

Many teachers at the school I teach in do not have graduate degrees or dissertation topics. We talk to students about doing the best job in the world, and yet few in the profession have a doctorate or have done hard graduate level research work. I would feel better as a role model if I had the best degree I could even though many educational leaders I know do not have one. There is no community of researchers at the school. There are just a few teachers who go quietly to graduate school. Once, I saw a research survey being passed out in a classroom by another teacher. Students asked me about school and I explained the process. It is hard for them to grasp.

At an Amnesty International meeting, I was struck by the precarious budget and small number of people involved in the local chapter. The people in it including FIU students are

extraordinary people willing to spend time, money, and energy on various events. I constantly get emails about people whose lives can be saved. Comparing it to the theoretical discussions about the power of education and the fact that a dissertation may not even be read, or the debates on less important matters, I get the feeling if my dissertation topic can not change the world, then it is not worth pursuing. Yet, we are warned all the time not to try to change the world with the dissertation but to get it done. At home or with family or friends, the dissertation is simply an abstract unreal thing only I worry about. You have a degree or not. It is kept a silent struggle because the awe of taking many classes or the unimportance of education as a career is exaggerated by other people and their remarks throw off my focus.

## Implications and Importance

The illustration of the university as a genre and activity system is purely conceptual in the work of Russell (1997) when it comes to students and their interactions with the school lacking the thick description of a personal account. The aim of this study was to flesh out the double bind issue in the concept of genre and activity systems through the use of an autoethnography of a graduate student in the College of Education at FIU. This autoethnography adds a thicker personal description to what is learned about a university while acknowledging a larger context in the society the individual interacts with. Thus this study is important because it focuses on a relatively rarely used variation of the systems theory and not only adds to the body of literature in the systems theory but also to the literature of autoethnography and to the small body of autoethnography specific to the context of FIU. Finally, because the researcher is a public school teacher and a graduate student at the College of Education, this study gives added insight to the issues that arise related to the discipline, its professional context, and its community.

## References

Bertalanffy, L. V. (1950). An outline of general system theory. *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science, 1*(2), 134-165.

Graham, P. (1999). Critical systems theory: A political economy of language, thought, and technology. *Communication Research, 26*(4), 482-507.

Holt, N. L. (2003). Representation, legitimation, and autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 2*(1), Article 2. Retrieved November, 23, 2008, from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2_1final/html/holt.html

Hughes, S. A. (2008). Toward “good enough methods” for autoethnography in a graduate education course: Trying to resist the matrix with another promising red pill. *Educational Studies, 43*(2), 125 -143.

Pelias, R. J. (2003). The academic tourist: An autoethnography. *Qualitative Inquiry, 9*(3), 369-373.

Plakhotnik, M. S., Delgado, A., & Seepersad, R. (2006). Autobiographical exploration of selves as adult learners and adult educators. In E. P. Isaac (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 25th Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference in Adult, Continuing, and Community Education* (pp. 163-168). St. Louis: University of Missouri.

Russell, D. R. (1997) Rethinking genre in school and society: An activity theory analysis. *Written Communication, 14*(4), 504-554.

Walford, G. (2004) Finding the limits: Autoethnography and being an Oxford University Proctor. *Qualitative Research, 4*(3), 403-417.

Wall, S. (2006). An autoethnography on learning about autoethnography. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(2), Article 9. Retrieved November, 23, 2008, from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/5_2/pdf/wall.pdf

# The Effects of Proper Implementation of Bilingual Programs in Elementary Schools in the United States

Elvia M. Hernandez
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** Americans' support of bilingual education has been closely linked with the immigration sentiments of the times. Current anti-immigrant feelings on bilingualism have intensified its negative connotation and effectiveness in English language acquisition. Improper implementation of bilingual programs has also fueled this misconception. This literature will challenge these misconceptions.

The following literature review shows the historical trends towards bilingualism in the United States. It also reviews both quantitative and qualitative studies to discuss the types of bilingual programs, the benefits of these programs, and the contribution of their proper implementation in elementary schools across the country to students' success in standardized tests.

## Historical Trends Towards Bilingualism in the United States

Since its beginnings, the United States has always been a melting pot of different languages and cultures. The American Revolution brought with it the no official language policy. "Evidence suggests that the framers of the U.S. Constitution believed that in a democracy, government should leave language choices up to the people" (Crawford, 1999, p. 22). However, from 1790 to 1815 the English language usage continued to expand. Military conflicts in Europe and a higher effort to check emigration let to a decline of colonial languages (French, Dutch, and German). By the mid 1830s, new waves of European immigrants let to a new wave of bilingual education as "bilingual education was likely to be accepted in areas where language minority groups had influence" (Crawford, 1999, p. 23). By the late 19th century, nationalism let to a decline once more of bilingual education in the country. As Italian, Jewish, and Slav immigrants arrived, anti-immigrants sentiments grew. These new immigrants were viewed negatively because of their different manners and ways of life. In 1906, the first federal language law was passed requiring English for naturalization purposes. Bilingual education continued to decline as the United States entered World War I and states began to pass laws for English as the basic language of instruction. Despite the fact that by 1923 legislation for English only laws started to decline, U.S. public opinion had already experienced a dramatic change. "Learning in language other than English…seemed less than patriotic…minority tongues were devalued in the eyes of younger generations" (Crawford, 1999, p. 29). Nonetheless, Bilingual education was revived by the Cubans who immigrated to Miami after the 1959 revolution in their home country. The Federal Cuban Refugee Program provided subsidies, which enabled the Dade County Public School System to provide English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction. In1961, it created the Spanish for Spanish speaker classes. In 1963, Dade County Public School System created the first Bilingual Program, Coral Way Model, in the United States since 1920. Although, the federal and state aid to the program was viewed as a relief poverty measure, it showed the feasibility of bilingual education. Schools around the country started to implement some variations of the Coral Way Model. The U.S. government decision to view the program as a poverty aid rather

Hernandez, E. M. (2009). The effects of proper implementation of bilingual programs in elementary schools in the United States. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 62-68). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

than as a language instruction program would lead to controversy and debates about the implementation of such programs (Crawford, 1999).

In recent years, new anti-immigrants sentiments and English only movements have let to an attack on bilingualism in the United States once again. Bilingual education is experiencing rejection at all levels of society (Weber, 2006). Bilingual states, such as California and Arizona, with multicultural populations that speak different languages have implemented anti-bilingual laws, such as Proposition 227 and Proposition 203 respectively in order to eliminate bilingual programs from elementary schools. Other states like Florida have proposed initiatives to reduce reading teachers' training hours in English for Speakers of Other Languages. In addition to anti-immigrant feelings, another reason for this negative trend towards bilingualism is the lack of awareness of the American public and legislators about the benefits of speaking more than one language. Furthermore, government policies, such as the No Child Left Behind Act require English Language Learners (ELLs) to be included in statewide-standardized tests making the proper implementation of bilingual programs at the elementary level even more necessary. Although, this policy requires accommodations for ELLs at the time of the test, the overall curriculum and instruction is still provided in English. Bilingual programs, if implemented properly, alleviate these burdens and thus help improve performance in standardize tests.

Furthermore, most Americans are unaware of the importance that bilingualism plays in shaping the culture of the United States. In many cases, Americans view bilingualism as a threat to the English language. One of the myths about bilingualism in this country is that "bilingual education prevents children from acquiring English" (Krashen, 2006, p. 3). While some bilingual programs do encourage development of a student's native language after English has been mastered, the major goal of bilingual education is the rapid acquisition of English and the mastery of academic subjects. Besides viewing bilingual education as a threat to the English language, most Americans do not understand the literal meaning of bilingualism, which is "an instructional approach that uses the child's native language (L1) to make instruction of second language (L2) meaningful" (Lopez & Tashakkori, 2006, p. 124). For example, some Americans believe that bilingual programs teach only the native language. On the contrary, in properly organized bilingual programs, English is introduced immediately. Additionally, "scientific" theories, such as the *off-balance theory*, which states that "the more a person learns of one language, the less knowledge he or she can hold of another" (Chipongian, 2000, p. 1), further support these myths against bilingualism.

On the other hand, recent studies "generally conclude that, over the long term, non English speaking children placed in bilingual programs in the early elementary grades perform as well as or better than children not placed in these programs" (Garcia, 2005, p. 160). Therefore, these students perform better in standardized tests in upper grades. Their literacy in L1 strongly influences their acquisition of L2. It is important to note that the success of bilingual programs in elementary schools is strongly linked to the way that the bilingual program is implemented in that particular school. Besides, "recent research has demonstrated that positive cognitive gains are associated with learning a second language in childhood" (Chipongian, 2000, p. 1), which supports once again the implementation of bilingual programs in elementary schools.

## Types of Bilingual Programs

There are different types of bilingual programs. Two of the most widely implemented bilingual programs are the Two-Way Bilingual programs (TWBE) or Two-Way Immersion and the Transitional Bilingual programs (TBE). In the TWBE program, students receive instruction in both languages throughout their elementary school years, while in TBE programs, instruction

in the native language ends once the students achieve a level 3 English proficiency. TWBE has different program designs, but two of the most common are 90/10 and the 50/50. "In the 90/10 students receive their instruction in L1 until third grade when English literacy is introduced. Students in a 50/50 model receive their literacy instruction simultaneously in both languages" (De Jong, 2002, p. 2). In other words, in the 90/10 model, 90% of the instruction is received in the minority native language until third grade when the 10% instruction in English is introduced. In the 50/50 model, on the other hand, 50% of the literacy instruction is received in the minority language and 50% is received in English.

## Quantitative and Qualitative Research and the Success of Bilingualism in Elementary Schools

One of the most studied schools that successfully implement the TWBE program is the Oyster School in Washington, D.C. According to a research study done in 2000 by Hornberger and Skilton-Silvester, it is important to value the knowledge and values that students from different educational, sociolinguistic, and socioeconomic class bring to school. Therefore, Oyster's bilingual program has succeeded because as Freeman's research showed, it values students with different perspectives and experiences (Garcia, 2005). In addition, their follow up of the students, who transition from the program, show the students' academic success in later years. Further research of this particular school also indicates that schools that do not follow the dual bilingual program may produce students who experience difficulties in mainstream classes because they do not share the values and knowledge of the mainstream students (Garcia, 2005).

Research "shows that a good foundation in the child's first language, both at home and at school may be more important for long term success in the second language than an early start in the second language itself" (Lightbown & Spada, 2006, p. 186), which is the key element of implementing bilingual programs at the elementary level rather than total immersion programs. The sooner students are exposed to dual-language programs, the higher their success rate at upper grades and, thus, at standardized tests. In light of this theory, Lopez and Tashakkori (2006) did a quantitative study of six bilingual schools using both the TWBE and the TBE model designs for literacy instruction. The study was conducted over a 1-year period and involved 553 fifth grade students. The students were classified as ESOL and as non-ESOL within the bilingual programs. The main aim of this study was to determine the long-term effect of the two bilingual programs in the ESOL students' academic performance and attitudes. As Table 1 clearly shows, ESOL level 3 students enrolled in TWBE programs outperformed non-ESOL students enrolled in the same program in the FCAT (Florida Comprehension Assessment Test) Reading section.

Table 1
*Academic Achievement as Measure by the FCAT*

| | FCAT Reading (%) | | FCAT Math (%) | | FCAT Science (%) | | Sample Size | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | TWBE | TBE | TWBE | TBE | TWBE | TBE | TWBE | TBE |
| ESOL Level 3 | 51.3 | 46.16 | 55.97 | 32.84 | 52.05 | 54.90 | 39 | 20 |
| ESOL Level 4 | 43.10 | 54.90 | 56.91 | 41.77 | 50.73 | 34.17 | 31 | 82 |
| Non ESOL | 50.27 | 49.88 | 49.88 | 47.58 | 55.25 | 43.78 | 106 | 259 |

*Note:* ESOL levels are from 1-4 (for simplification purposes only levels 3 and 4 were stated). Adapted from "Differential Outcomes of Two Bilingual Education Programs on English Language Learners," by Lopez and Tashakkori, 2006, *Bilingual Research Journal, 30, p. 132.*

In addition, ESOL TWBE students in levels 3 and 4 also outperformed non-ESOL students in the FCAT Math section. The table also shows that TBE ESOL students in level 3 scored almost 10 percent higher in science than non-ESOL students. The proper implementation of both programs has contributed to a reduction of the gap between ESOL and non-ESOL students in academic achievement. Overall, Lopez and Tashakkori (2006) concluded that, "L1 instruction accelerated the rate of L2 acquisition in the L2, while facilitating the maintenance and development of literacy skills in the L1" (p. 138).

Other researchers, such as Ester J. De Jong (2002) from the University of Florida, also show the success of bilingual students in standardized tests. In her study, the unit of analysis is the Barbieri School Bilingual program located in Framingham, MA. In this particular school, the TWBE program enrolls 128 English speakers and 130 Spanish native speakers from K-5. One of the key characteristics of this particular study is that the Barbieri bilingual program implements both systems of TWBE programs.

> At the beginning grades, native Spanish speakers receive all instruction in Spanish except for specials (music, art, and physical education) and the native English speakers receive about 40% of their instruction in Spanish. In this way, Spanish instruction is reinforced for both groups. The emphasis on literacy and math reduces the amount of time spent in the second language in grades 1 and 2 to around 30% for each group. As of third grade, all students receive 50% of their instruction in their native language and 50% in their second language. (De Jong, 2002, p. 3)

The results of this program's implementation were astounding. In the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Systems Test, which is an equivalent of Florida's FCAT examination, Barbieri's fourth grade students' average scores for Language Arts are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
*Average Scale Scores on the Fourth Grade MCAS for the Year 2000 in Language Arts*

| | Barbieri | | District | | State | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Points | % | Points | % | Points | % |
| English Speakers | 236 | 56 | 247 | 58 | 234 | 55 |
| Spanish Speakers | 228 | 54 | 223 | 53 | 221 | 53 |

*Note:* Adapted from "Effective Bilingual Education: From Theory to Academic Achievement in a Two-Way Bilingual Program," by De Jong, 2002, *Bilingual Research Journal*, *26*, p. 14.

As the table 2 clearly shows, in 2000 Barbieri's English speakers outperformed the state's schools. Spanish speakers also outperformed the state and district students in Language Arts. This example once again illustrates how the proper implementation of bilingual programs translates into effective practices and increases students' achievement. Although it may be argued that Spanish speakers still performed at a lower level compared to their English speaker counterparts, the gap between them is minimal compared to ELLs in a regular non-bilingual program. For example, research studies show that "recent meta-analysis of 17 studies of K-12 program effectiveness with ELL students…found no advantage for all-English instruction" (Barnett et al., 2007, p. 278).

The importance of this particular study lies in the fact that "the Barbieri TWBE program operates in a context that values bilingualism and benefits from longevity and stability, well-

trained and certified teaching and support staff, clear curriculum guidelines, and explicit academic, linguistic, and socio-cultural goals" (De Jong, 2000, p. 16). Similar to Barbieri's bilingual program in Massachusetts, Davis Bilingual Magnet School in Tucson, Arizona, is another clear example of the proper implementation of bilingual programs and their contribution to the success of ELLs in standardized tests. At Davis Bilingual Magnet Schools, students receive instruction only in Spanish for the first two years (K-1). The use of English increases in subsequent years, but never exceeds a 30% rate as language of instruction. The effectiveness of the DLI model at Davis school was clearly seen in the 1999 Stanford 9 standardized achievement test results. These results showed that the first generation of Davis students under this program, from Kindergarten to fifth grade, scored at or above the national averages in all the categories (Moll & Gonzalez, 2000). Moreover, regardless of the fact that 70% of Davis third grade students' instruction is in Spanish, they met or exceeded the state standards in English reading on the Arizona Instrument for Measuring Standards. A current analysis for recent data is underway (Smith et al., 2002).

Alternatively, qualitative data shows that the elimination of bilingual programs can be detrimental to the acquisition process of ELLs. For example, in Arizona, with the implementation of Proposition 203, many bilingual programs have been eliminated. This elimination has led to a reduction in the quality of bilingual education and improper implementation of bilingual programs. In their study of the impact of the implementation of Proposition 203 in Arizona, Wright and Choi (2002) noted that prior to Proposition 203, 27 schools offered bilingual education. Today raw data shows that nine schools offer bilingual education. However, out of these nine schools, only four offer "bilingual education," in the traditional sense (substantial content area and literacy in the students' native language). In addition, the ones that offer bilingual education in the traditional sense do not offer enough instruction in the students' native language because they are required to offer English language arts curriculum and prepare students for English only high stakes tests. Therefore, these classrooms are "not serving ELL students with low levels of English proficiency" (i.e., the ones for whom bilingual education was intended) (p. 21).

Moreover, in their research study, Wright and Choi (2002) stated that high stakes English-only testing has not improved the education of ELLs in Arizona. On the contrary, "Math and Reading scores have declined statewide for ELLs as a group, the gap between ELL students and their English-fluent peers has not narrowed" (Wright & Choi, 2002, p. 45). It is important to emphasize that according to research, assessing should be done in the children's stronger language to avoid misdiagnosis and misplacements of students. Due to the feasibility and availability of high stakes tests in English, bilingual children are assessed in their weakest language (English). Therefore, their learning abilities and capabilities are underestimated and they are constantly misplaced (Baker, 2006). This leads to a traditional misplacement of bilingual students.

In his study, Solórzano (2008) clearly stated the importance of defining the purpose of high stakes achievement tests for ELLs and creating adequate programs tailored to benefit ELLs instruction in the English language. "In many cases, standardized tests for this student population are used for multiple purposes. One in particular is to diagnose English language proficiency. And this is problematic" (Solórzano, 2008, p. 285). According to Solórzano, high stakes tests used to diagnose English language proficiency can be misleading because they do not take into account the special needs of ELLs and their language proficiency levels. He recommends that the validity of these results should be re-evaluated to measure adequately ELLs performance.

Besides helping ELLs succeed in high stakes tests, research has also shown that bilingual programs also help students "to add English to their linguistic repertoire…while promoting tolerance and cultural pluralism" (Fitts, 2006, p. 339). In his study, Fitts used data collected for a year at the Secular Bilingual Pine Mountain in Colorado, which implements a well-established bilingual program. Unlike previous studies, Fitts studied the socio-cultural aspects of bilingualism and how it promotes and perpetuates diversity among students and teachers. Fitts (2006) also noted the misconception in mainstream America of the definition of bilingualism when he stated that in Colorado "the popular imagination, bilingual means monolingual Spanish speaking, and a bilingual school is a place to teach native Spanish speakers English" (p. 347).

## Conclusion and Future Research

Researchers have approached the study of bilingualism in different ways, but their studies all show the important role that bilingualism plays in the educational system of the United States. Bilingualism helps students succeed not only in high stakes tests, but also in their daily life. It is imperative that teachers, legislators, and the public arrive at an understanding about bilingualism and how it helps all students in their performance on high stakes tests. Bilingualism is an asset, not a weakness. As Leistyna (2002) states, "it is important for educators to understand and explore psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects of language acquisition and cultural identity" (p. 224). Many teachers are not aware of all the different bilingual programs available. Moreover, native speaker students do not understand the meaning of bilingualism. As noted by Butler and Gutierrez (2003) in their study about students' perception of bilingualism, "notably, the majority of our native readers did not know what 'bilingual' meant, so the interviewer had to explain this term" (p. 178). Future research needs to focus on providing students and teachers opportunities to learn about all the different applications of bilingualism, as well as, to provide them with the resources necessary to help the implementation of bilingual programs succeed.

## References


Baker, C. (2006). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (4th ed.). New York: Multilingual Matters.

Barnett, S., Yarosz, D, Thomas, J., Jung, K., & Blanco, D. (2007). Two-way and monolingual immersion in pre-school education: An experimental comparison. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly, 22,* 277-293.

Buttler, G. Y., & Gutierrez, B. M. (2003). Learning climates for English language learners in California: A case of fourth grade students in California. *Bilingual Research Journal,* 27, 171-194.

Chester, M D. (2008). *MCAS Summery of State Results.* Malden, MA: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Retrieved: February 27, 2009 from: http://www.doe.mass.edu/mcas/2008/results/summary.doc

Chipongian, L. (2008). The cognitive advantages of balanced bilingualism. *Brain Connection Journal,* 1-2.

De Jong, E. J. (2002). Effective bilingual education: From theory to academic achievement in a two-way bilingual program. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *26,* 2-20.

Fitts, S. (2006). Reconstructing the status quo: Linguistic interaction in a dual language school. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *29,* 337-365.

Garcia, E. (2005). *Teaching and learning in two languages: Bilingualism and schooling in the United States*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Krashen, S. (2006). Six myths about bilingual education. Fairfax, VA: *Cox, Mathews, & Associates.*

Leystina, P. (2003). Scapegoating bilingual education. *Bilingual Research Journal, 26,* 213-239.

Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2006). *How languages are learned* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ovando, C. (2003). Bilingual education in the United States: Historical development and current issues. *Bilingual Research Journal, 27,* 1-24.

Smith, P. H., Arnot-Hopffer, E., Murphy, E., Valle, A., Gonzalez, N., & Poveda, A. (2002). Raise a child not a test score: Perspectives on bilingual education at Davis Bilingual Magnet School. *Bilingual Research Journal,* 26, 1-19.

Solorzano, R. W. (2008). High stakes testing: Issues, implications, and remedies for English Language Learners. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(2), 260-329

Weber, R. L. (2006). Something to talk about: English only laws are restricting more than just what's being said. NEAtoday *(National Education Association), 6,* 1-2.

Wright, W. E., & Choi, D. (2006). The impact of language and high stakes testing policies on elementary school English language learners in Arizona. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 14*(13), 1-75.

# The Effects of Repeated Readings on Reading Abilities of English Language Learners with Specific Learning Disabilities

Katrina Landa and Patricia Barbetta
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** This study evaluates the effects of repeated readings on the reading fluency and comprehension of 4 third through fifth grade English Language Learners (ELLs) with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). The results indicate gains in fluency, a decrease in errors, and an increase in correct answers to literal comprehension questions.

Students who read well are able to easily access information both in school and beyond school (Rasinski, 2000). Students who do not read well find school challenging and are at risk of facing negative consequences both in and outside of school. English language learners (ELLs) and students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) are both at risk of not reading well (Bernhard et al., 2006; Osborn et al., 2007). ELLs are students who are less fluent in English than in their first language. Students with SLD have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, which may lead to difficulties in listening, processing, speaking, writing, spelling, or doing mathematical calculations (U.S. Department of Education (DOE), 2003).

At the intersection of these two groups are students who are ELLs with SLD. ELLs with SLD often struggle to keep up with their native English speaking peers in the area of reading in English (Denton, Anthony, Parker, & Hasbrouck, 2004). Their limited reading fluency and comprehension in English is a problem in other subjects which use reading as a means to access information (Rasinski, 2000). In addition to challenges in reading, these students often face multiple issues related to language, culture, disabilities, and mastering content areas (Tam, Heward, & Heng, 2006).

Approximately 56% of ELLs with disabilities are diagnosed with SLD (U.S. DOE, 2003). ELLs with SLD often exhibit characteristics similar to native English speakers with SLD. These students frequently read below grade level in English, have difficulties with comprehension, and misbehave or withdraw as a result of reading difficulties (McCardle, Mele-McCarthy, & Leos, 2005). Although there are studies examining ELLs and students with SLD, little is known about the process of English reading acquisition in students who are ELLs with SLD (Tam et al., 2006). The question remains as to what interventions can improve reading fluency and comprehension so that ELLs with SLD can succeed in the classroom and beyond.

## Literature Review

One promising approach is repeated readings (Chard, Vaughn, & Tayler, 2002; Nelson, Alber, & Gordy, 2004; Therrien & Kubina, 2006; Weinstein & Cooke, 1992). Repeated readings is an intervention that targets reading fluency by having the reader repeatedly read a passage of no more than 200 words (Samuels, 1979; Stahl & Heubach, 2005; Therrien & Kubina, 2006). The assumption is that once a participant is fluent in reading, more attention can be focused on comprehension (Samuels, 1979). Repeated readings has been successful with elementary and secondary students (e.g., Begeny, Daly, & Valleley, 2006; Freeland, Skinner, Jackson, McDaniel, & Smith, 2000), students reading below grade level (e.g., Stoddard, Valcante,

Landa, K., & Barbetta, P. (2009). The effects of repeated readings on reading abilities of English language learners with specific learning disabilities. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 69-79). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

Sindelar, O'Shea, & Algozzine, 1993; Tam et al., 2006), students at or above grade level (Bryant et al., 2000), and students with visual impairments (e.g., Pattillo, Heller, & Smith, 2004).

Limited research exists pertaining to the use of repeated readings with ELLs with SLD. Only two studies were found that examined the effects of repeated readings on ELLs. One of them included ELL participants identified as "at risk," but not as SLD; participants made significant gains in oral reading fluency and passage comprehension following a repeated reading readings intervention (Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, Hickman-Davis, & Kouzekanani, 2003). The second study included five ELLs; however, only two were ELLs with SLD; participants improved their reading fluency and comprehension following a repeated readings intervention (Tam et al., 2006). That study was preliminary, with only five participants; the needs of ELLs vary from learner to learner.

## Purpose

More research is needed to examine the effects of repeated readings on ELLs with SLD, as there are increasing numbers of ELLs with SLD experiencing reading challenges in U.S. schools (U.S. DOE, 2003). Although ELLs with SLD are prevalent in many large urban school districts, there is an absence of research related to strategies for improving their reading fluency and comprehension (Tam et al., 2006). The population of ELLs with SLD has been projected to grow, particularly in states with high percentages of annual immigration (Case & Taylor, 2005).

Research has demonstrated positive outcomes when repeated readings is employed with other types of learners (Bryant et al., 2000; Freeland et al., 2000; Pattillo et al., 2004; Stoddard et al., 1993). However, the research on this method and ELLs with SLD is limited (i.e., Tam et al., 2006). Subsequently, this study fills a gap in the research base by investigating the effects of repeated readings on a new population: ELLs with SLD.

## Research Questions

This study examined the effects of a repeated readings intervention on the number of words read per minute, number of errors made per minute, and answers to comprehension questions in ELLs with SLD who are struggling with reading in English in an urban elementary school. Additionally, this study examined maintenance and generalization of potential gains in reading skills. With regard to these ELLs with SLD, who are struggling readers in an urban elementary school, the research questions were as follows: (a) Will repeated readings result in a change in reading fluency as measured by the number of correct words read aloud per minute? (b) Will repeated readings result in a change in the number of reading errors read aloud per minute? (c) Will repeated readings result in a change in the number of literal comprehension questions answered aloud correctly? (d) Will repeated readings result in generalization of the number of correct words read aloud per minute, errors and types of errors read aloud per minute, and literal comprehension questions answered aloud correctly with untaught similar passages? (e) Will repeated readings result in a maintenance of the number of correct words read aloud per minute, errors and types of errors read aloud per minute, and literal comprehension questions answered aloud correctly 2, 4, and 6 weeks after the intervention?

## Experimental Design

A single subject design called multiple probe baseline design across subjects was used in this study. In this design, once steady state responding (a pattern of responding that exhibits relatively little variation) is reached under baseline probes, the intervention is applied to one participant while the other participants remain in baseline (Barger-Anderson, Domaracki, Kearney-Vakulick, & Kubina, 2004; Cooper et al., 2007; Horner & Baer, 1978). When steady state is reached in intervention for the first participant, the intervention is applied to next

participant and so on. In a multiple probe baseline design, periodic measures are taken until a few days prior to implementation of the intervention, at which time continuous measures are taken.

## Procedure

All sessions were conducted one on one with the participants in a quiet classroom. The materials selected were in the participants' instructional reading level, or the level at which the participant could read with assistance. The sessions were digitally recorded. Sessions were categorized as Multiple Probe Baseline Condition, Repeated Readings Intervention Condition, Generalization Probes, or Maintenance Probes. The differences in procedures during each of these four conditions are explained below.

### *Multiple Probe Baseline Condition*

The researcher used flashcards to determine whether the participant knew the meaning of three to five challenging words that would appear in the passage for that day. Then, the participant read the passage of approximately 100 words (range 100-105 words) aloud. During this reading, a whole word error correction strategy was employed (Barbetta, Heward & Bradley, 1993). When the participant made an error, the researcher immediately read the word correctly aloud. Then, the participant repeated the word aloud. After this, the participant read aloud the sentence containing that word again and the words that were initially stated incorrectly were repeated aloud again by the participant in isolation. Finally, the participant read the passage aloud from the beginning to assess the number of correct words and errors read per minute. Five literal comprehension questions were asked (Tam et al., 2006). The participant had 5 seconds to respond; correct answers were followed by a "yes" or "correct." Incorrect answers were followed by a "no" and the correct answer.

### *Repeated Readings Intervention Condition*

The repeated readings intervention condition began with vocabulary instruction and a reading of the passage as described above. Afterward, the participant read the passage two more times (for a total of three readings). These two additional readings did not contain the error correction procedures described above. The three readings were followed by the fluency and literal comprehension question assessments.

### *Generalization Probes*

Immediately following approximately 25% of the sessions, a new passage of approximately 100 words at the same level; 80% of the same words previously used were taken out. The participant read the passage once aloud. This reading did not contain the error correction procedures. Fluency and literal comprehension question assessments followed this reading.

### *Maintenance Probes*

Two, 4, and 6 weeks after the last repeated readings intervention session, the participant read aloud a previously read passage once. This reading did not contain the error correction procedures. Fluency and literal comprehension question assessments followed this reading.

## Treatment Fidelity

A treatment fidelity measure was gathered daily by the researcher. Monitoring treatment fidelity allowed for a record of consistency, served as a routine review of procedures, and determined problems in implementation. A checklist was used to record the daily occurrence and nonoccurrence of the planned procedures. Checklists were also completed for 25% of the sessions by independent raters. Checklists completed by the raters and by the researcher were consistent.

## Data Collection

Data were collected on five dependent variables. First, to determine reading fluency, the number of words read aloud correctly per minute (without prompting within 3 seconds) were counted and recorded. To assess the second variable, the total number of errors read aloud during a one-minute reading was counted and recorded (Tam et al., 2006). For assessing the third variable, five literal comprehension questions were asked aloud; the participant had 5 seconds to answer them aloud. For determining the fourth variable, participants were assessed on generalization of skills to untaught passages similar to those being used in experimental sessions. The same dependent variables were measured to determine generalization of gains. For assessing the fifth variable, maintenance of performance after 2, 4, and 6 weeks after the study was concluded. The same dependent variables were measured to determine maintenance. In addition, an interobserver agreement measure was collected.

Two independent raters listened to the recorded sessions and counted the number of correct words read per minute and the number of errors read per minute. This rater also listened to the responses to the literal comprehension questions and scored them as correct or incorrect in accordance with a key. The raters were graduate students enrolled in an elementary education program at Florida International University. Throughout the study, approximately 25% of randomly selected audio recordings were scored by the independent raters. IOA data was taken from the baseline intervention, generalization, and maintenance conditions. Agreements and disagreements between the researcher and the independent raters were counted using a word-by-word examination of the data sheets. IOA was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the number of agreements plus disagreements and multiplying by 100.

## Data Analysis

In a multiple probe baseline design, data analysis is accomplished through the visual inspection of graphed data in which performance during the intervention is compared to baseline. Predictions based on one participant's behavior are verified by the performance of the other participants, and replication of effect is dependent on the performance of other participants. Verification is evident if the data path changes in a predictable manner through a condition change, as from baseline to intervention for each participant. Replication of this prediction and verification may occur when the data paths of the other participants follow patterns similar to the first participant. A functional relation is identified when baseline behaviors are stable and change only when the intervention is applied. Experimental control is demonstrated by replicating the effects with another participant (Cooper et al., 2007).

## Findings to Existing Theory

Repeated readings grew out of the Automaticity Theory (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974; Samuels & Flor, 1997) which states that a fluent reader can decode text without focusing on the process of reading, leaving attention free to dedicate to comprehension (Samuels, 1979). Beginning readers need to focus on letters and sounds, but as they become more fluent, they can focus on phrases, sentences, and meaning. The practice provided in repeated readings makes the decoding necessary for reading automatic, leading to better comprehension (Samuels, 1979).

Data indicated that all four participants experienced reading gains in the intervention phase. The gains were particularly high in fluency (see Figure 1). During baseline, the mean number of words per minute was 39.46 wpm (range 6-76). When repeated readings was introduced, the mean number of words per minute increased to a mean of 75.7 (range 38-100). Overall, the mean number of words per minute was highest during the repeated readings intervention, with a mean increase of 36.11 wpm more than baseline. During baseline, the mean

number of errors per minute was 9.16 (range 4-18). When repeated readings was introduced, the mean number of errors per minute decreased to 5.57 (range 2-11). Overall, the mean number of errors per minute was lowest during the repeated readings intervention, with a mean decrease of 3.59 errors per minute than baseline (See Figure 2). During baseline, the mean number of correct answers to literal comprehension questions was 2.88 (range 1-5). When repeated readings was introduced, the mean number of correct answers to literal comprehension questions increased to 3.94 (range 2-5). Overall, the mean number of correct answers to literal comprehension questions was highest during the repeated readings intervention, with a mean increase of 1.21 more correct answers over baseline (see Figure 3). Generalization probes indicated that the dependent variables did not return to baseline levels in untaught passages. Maintenance data was varied.

The most dramatic gains were made in reading fluency, which indicated that repeated readings were valuable to the participants. Tam et al. (2006) also found an increase in oral reading fluency following a repeated readings intervention. During the second condition, 4 of 5 participants (2 participants were identified as ELLs with SLD) reached the predetermined fluency criterion of 100 correct words per minute. The mean number of comprehension questions answered correctly per session in the Tam et al. (2006) study was notably higher during both intervention conditions than during baseline.

## Implications and Recommendations

Although outcomes have varied for individual participants (See Figure 1), data demonstrate that repeated readings have had a positive impact on participant reading skills as measured by the dependent variables. The results suggest that for ELLs with SLD, repeated readings increased reading fluency, decreased the number of errors, and increased the number of correct literal comprehension questions related to the reading.

The results of this study have implications for classroom practice. Teachers of ELLs with SLD should consider repeated readings as a strategy to improve reading fluency and comprehension. Teachers may implement this method one on one, or they may train paraprofessionals or competent students to do it. Teachers may also encourage students to repeatedly read a passage before attempting reading assessments. Additionally, teachers may assign shorter passages to ELLs with SLD to allow for repeated readings during class time.

This study examined the use of repeated readings and students who were ELLs with SLD; however, there is a need for additional research. No known previous study has specifically targeted ELLs with SLD using the methods in this study. The sample size is small by the nature of the design and therefore limits the generalization of its findings. Future studies should target students who are ELLs with SLD. Additional research may focus on ELLs with SLD from varying backgrounds. Although this study targeted students reading at least one year below grade level, future studies could examine ELLs with SLD at various stages of reading acquisition and various stages of their English language acquisition. Additionally, more research is needed in the area of repeated readings and the number of readings that is optimal for ELLs with SLD.

## References

Barbetta, P. M., Heward, W. L., & Bradley, D. M. (1993). Relative effects of whole-word and phonetic-prompt error correction on the acquisition and maintenance of sight words by students. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 26*, 99-110.

Barger-Anderson, R., Domaracki, J. W., Kearny-Vakulick, & Kubina, R. M. (2004). Multiple baseline designs. *Reading Improvement, 41*, 217-225.

Begeny, J. C., Daly, E. J., III, & Valleley, R. J. (2006). Improving oral reading fluency through response opportunities. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 15*(4), 229-235.

Bernhard, J. K., Cummins, J., Campoy, F. I., Ada, A. F., Winsler, A., & Bleiker, C. (2006). Identity texts and literacy development. *Teachers College Record, 108*(23), 80-2405.

Bryant, D. P., Vaughn, S., Linan-Thompson, S., Ugel, N., Hamff, A., & Hougen, M. (2000). Reading outcomes for students. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 23*, 238-252.

Case, R. E., & Taylor, S. S. (2005). Language difference or learning? *Clearing House, 78*, 127.

Chard, D. J., Vaughn, S., & Tyler, B. (2002). A synthesis of research on effective interventions. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 35*, 386-406.

Cooper, J., Heron, T., & Heward, W. (2007). *Applied behavior analysis* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill-Prentice Hall.

Denton, C. A., Anthony, J. L., Parker, R., & Hasbrouck, J. E. (2004). Effects of two tutoring programs. *The Elementary School Journal, 104*, 289.

Freeland, J. T., Skinner, C. H., Jackson, B., McDaniel, C. E., & Smith, S. (2000). Measuring and increasing silent reading comprehension rates. *Psychology in the Schools, 37*, 415-429.

Horner, R. D., & Baer, D. M. (1978). Multiple-probe technique: A variation of the multiple baseline. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 11*(1), 189-196.

LaBerge, D., & Samuels, S. J. (1974). Toward a theory. *Cognitive Psychology, 6*, 293-323.

Linan-Thompson, S., Vaughn, S., Hickman-Davis, P., & Kouzekanani, K. (2003). Effectiveness of supplemental reading instruction. *Elementary School Journal, 103*, 221-238.

McCardle, P., Mele-McCarthy, J., & Leos, K. (2005). English language learners and learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 20*, 68-78.

Nelson, J. S., Alber, S. R., & Gordy, A. (2004). Effects of systematic error correction and repeated readings. *Education & Treatment of Children, 27*, 186-198.

Osborn, J., Freeman, A., Burley, M., Wilson, R., Jones, E., & Rychener, S. (2007). Effect of tutoring. *Education & Training in Developmental Disabilities, 42*, 467-474.

Pattillo, S. T., Heller, K. W., & Smith, M. (2004). The impact of a modified repeated-reading strategy. *Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness, 98*, 28-46.

Rasinski, T. V. (2000). Speed does matter in reading. *Reading Teacher, 54*, 146-151.

Samuels, S. J. (1979). The method of repeated readings. *The Reading Teacher, 32*, 403-408.

Samuels, S. J., & Flor, R. F. (1997). The importance of automaticity for developing expertise in reading. *Reading and Writing Quarterly, 13*, 107-121.

Stahl, S. A., & Heubach, K. M. (2005). Fluency-oriented reading instruction. *Journal of Literacy Research, 37*, 25-60.

Stoddard, K., Valcante, G., Sindelar, P. T., O'Shea, L., & Algozzine, B. (1993). Increasing reading rate and comprehension. *Reading Research and Instruction, 32*, 53-65.

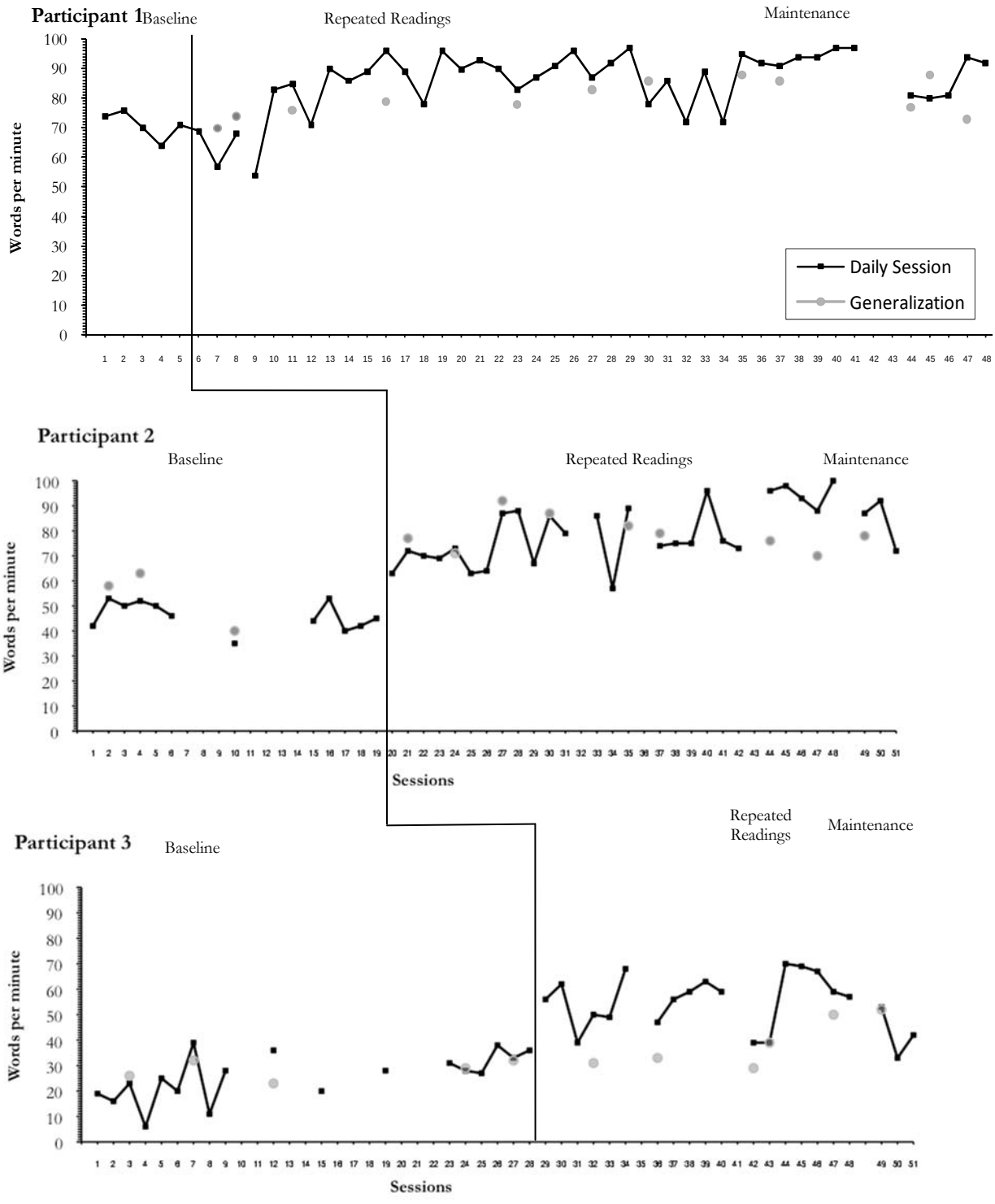
Tam, K. Y., Heward, W. L., & Heng, M. A. (2006). A reading instruction intervention program. *The Journal of Special Education, 40*, 79-93.

Therrien, W. J., & Kubina, R. M. (2006). Developing reading fluency with repeated reading. *Intervention in School & Clinic, 41*, 156-160.

U.S. Department of Education. (2003). *National symposium on learning disabilities in English language learners.* Retrieved February 13, 2008, from http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/oela/2003symposium_proceedings.pdf

Weinstein, G., & Cooke, N. L. (1992). The effects of two repeated reading interventions on generalization of fluency. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 15*, 21-28.

Reading Fluency



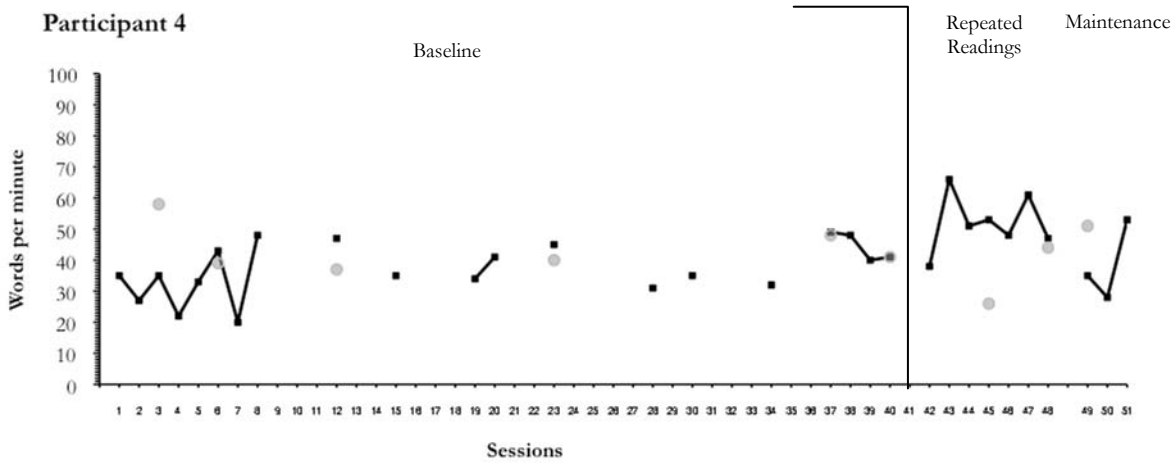
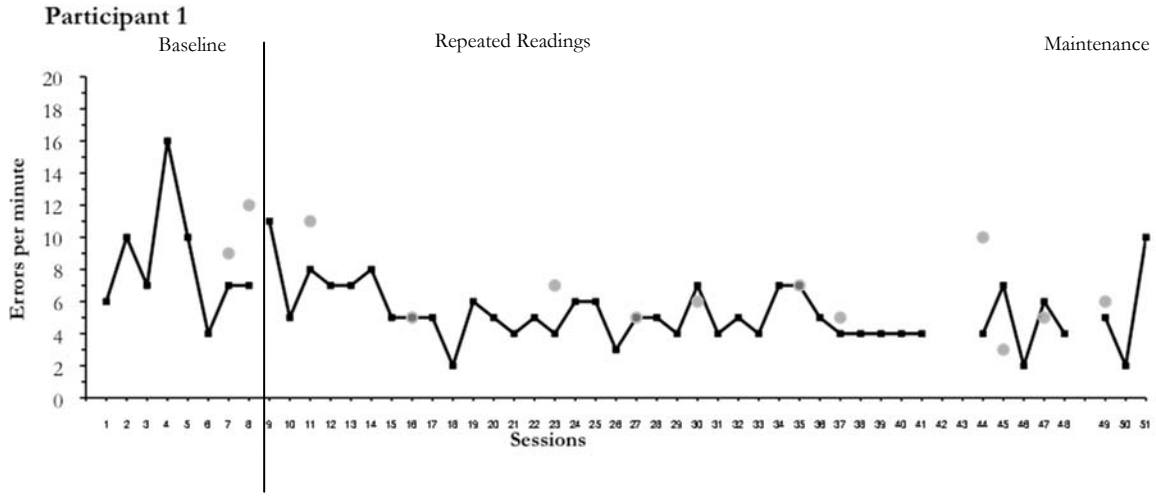



*Figure 1.* Reading fluency as measured by the number of words read correctly per minute by during a 1-minute fluency assessment at the end of each session.

Errors Per Minute



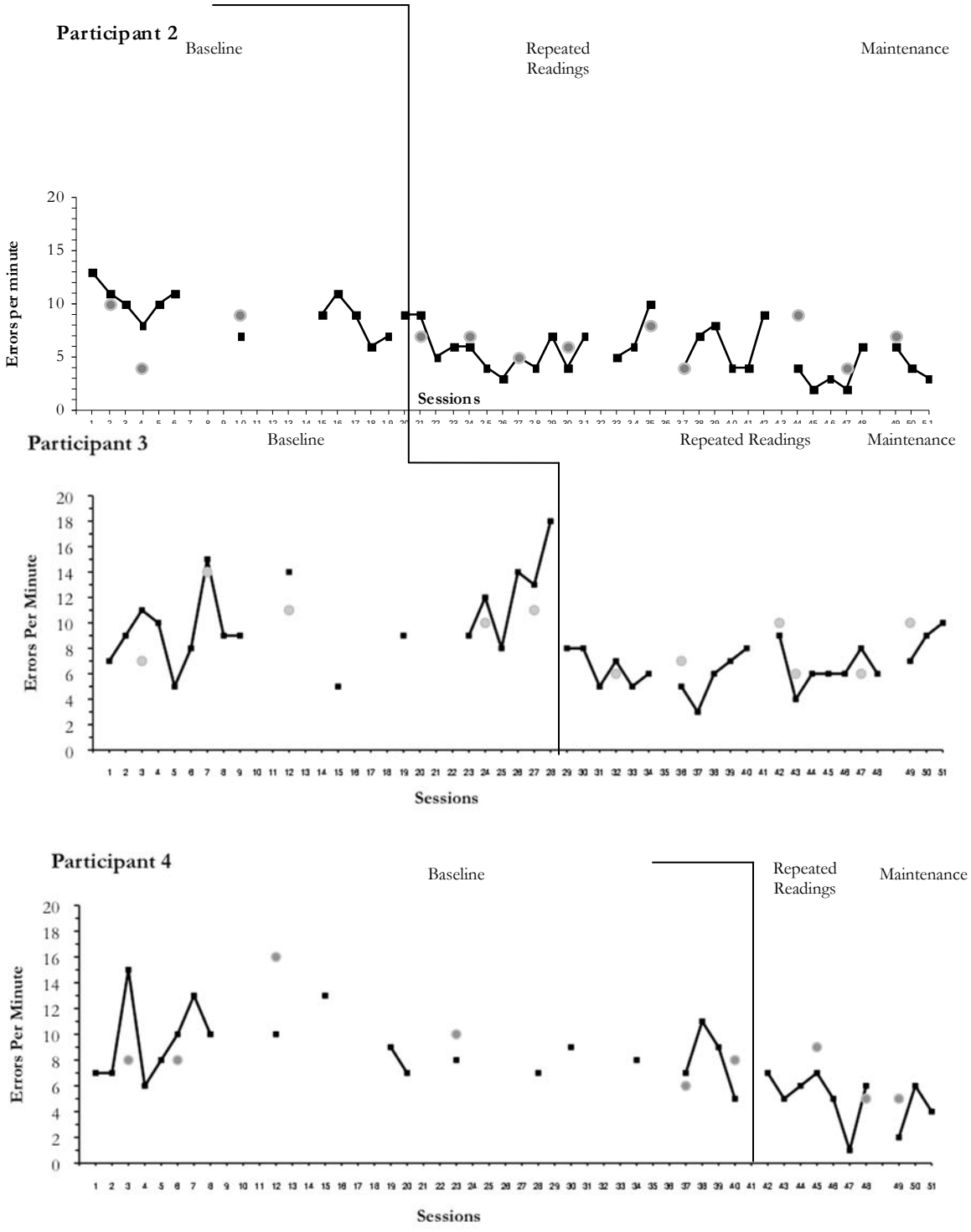
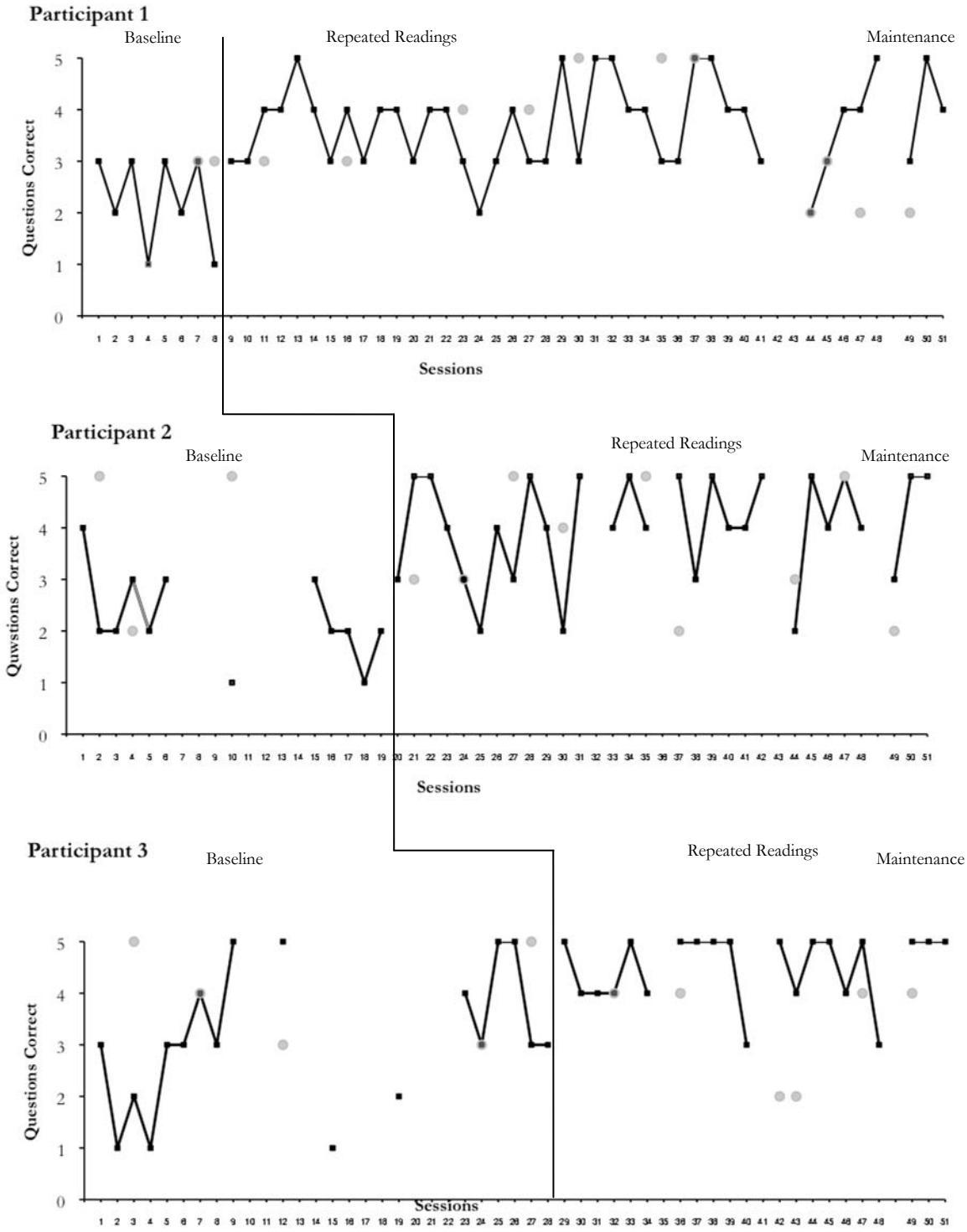



*Figure 2.* Errors Per Minute as measured by the number of words read incorrectly per minute during a 1-minute fluency assessment at the end of each session.

Literal Comprehension Questions



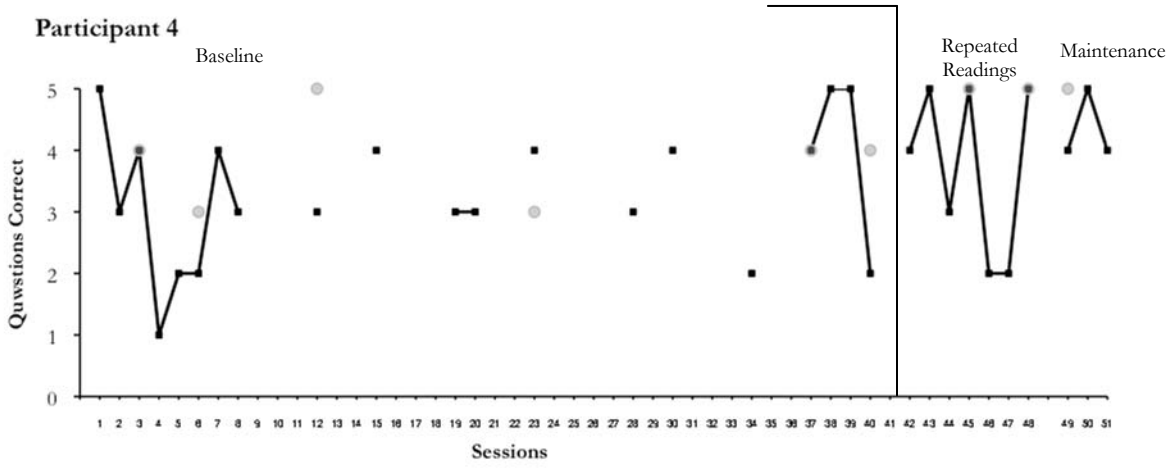



*Figure 3.* Literal Comprehension as measured by the number of literal comprehension questions answered correctly during the literal comprehension assessment at the end of each session.

# An Historical Look at Gender in the ESL Classroom

Patricia Malloy McCaughan
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** The role that gender plays with respect to language learning in the classroom is ripe for investigation. Some educators and researchers maintain that females possess superior language skills. This author argues that ideas regarding female language superiority are suspect and may encourage discriminatory pedagogy for women as well as men.

Gender has been used as a basis for English as a second language (ESL) research and has been found, in some cases, to reflect female superiority in language. Studies have found that gender difference manifests itself in how teachers teach in the ESL classroom. Some scholars question whether gender is a worthy subject to study at all and whether, in fact, females have superior language skills. In this paper, the role that gender plays in learning is investigated. It is hypothesized that females do not, in fact, have better L2, or second language skills, than males.

## Literature Review

The following chronological literature review of eight articles investigates this hypothesis and demonstrates that, despite existing research on the topic, it is not possible to conclude that superior ESL skills exist in either gender.

### *Sex Differences in Second Language Learning?*

Ekstrand (1980) reports a paucity of studies about sex differences in L2 learning, and data on sex and foreign language acquisition is nonexistent. Nevertheless, Ekstrand later contradicts himself when he reports "consistent superiority of girls in all variables" (p. 209). According to these studies, "Girls are superior to boys in all the French and English tests but also in other achievement tests, at least in the initial data" (p. 209).Ekstrand's contradiction is a sign of the overall contradictory nature of gender study. Such contradictions are replete throughout the data and echo the general societal confusion about male and female abilities. Ekstrand later calls into question his own report about female superiority when he states that there are large problems in data and interpretation of findings. He goes on to say that the differences that do appear are quite small. Ekstrand concludes that the same study "does not warrant any safe conclusions regarding sex differences in L2 learning" (p. 210).

After reporting other studies with murky findings, Ekstrand (1980) considers it "astonishing" (p. 211) that sex differences in L2 learning have not been the recipient of larger studies. He attributes the lack of larger studies to opinions that favor the superiority of females in L1 learning and, therefore, the assumption that female superiority would also exist in L2 learning. Ekstrand questions the uncertainty of the assumption of female superiority in L1 learning and, if there is one, whether it would apply only to certain areas of language learning. He also argues that the connection between female L1 and L2 superiority is tenuous at best. However, if one accepts the existence of Norm Chomsky's critical period hypothesis—the hypothesis that there are specific times in childhood when language is programmed to be learned—there is at least one similarity between L1 and L2 acquisition at young ages. In other words, the critical period hypothesis states that L1language and L2 acquisition are best accomplished by children. In fact, there have been instances when adolescents who were not exposed to language at a young age were unable to adequately acquire language at all. Therefore,

McCaughan, P. M. (2009). An historical look at gender in the ESL classroom. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 80-84). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

there may be at least one connection between female L1 and L2 childhood acquisition. That said, this does not obviate the need for more gender/language study, especially in view of the fact that the existence of Chomsky's critical period hypothesis is hotly debated.

*Gender Differences are Disappearing*

Alan Feingold of Yale University conjectures that female superiority is not the important issue for discussion but that sex differences are inconsequential and diminishing. According to Feingold (1988), gender differences were found from 1947 to 1983, but they were small and declined throughout that same period. Differences encompassed higher scores made by girls on grammar, spelling, and perceptual speed; boys scored higher on spatial visualization, high school mathematics, and mechanical aptitude. Feingold reports that there were no gender differences in verbal reasoning, arithmetic, and figural reasoning. Even though his essay does not address the causes for the differences or the diminishment, he states that the differences have been linked to, among other things, attitudes. He calls for further research into the matter. Ekstrand (1980) reported that girls had more positive attitudes than boys about the study of an L2.Although it is difficult to establish a link between attitudes and learning, most teachers would subjectively testify to the merging of positive attitudes toward learning and increased effort with successful learning. In addition, beliefs and motivation are closely correlated with attitudes (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). If a student perceives that there is value in learning a second language, they will be more motivated to obtain it.

*Should We Stop Studying Sex Differences Altogether?*

Baumeister (1988) states that gender studies may not be productive ground for research because sex differences may be used as a basis for female discrimination and oppression. Baumeister acknowledges that research aligned by gender was initially valuable in a world where researchers only considered males and then rashly intuited how the same research concerned women. He hypothesizes that, when considering the feminist view that discrimination pervades society, there may be a need to discontinue or, at least, limit sex differences research. However, the more important determination from this author's perspective is this:If one is fearful of discrimination by taking into account gender, one cannot address the lingering discrimination that still exists against females.Society continues to assign discriminatory gender roles to females, and the expectation that females learn second languages in superior ways relegates them to a different status than men and may, in fact, place extraordinarily high expectations upon those females who do not excel. In addition, research into language vis-à-vis gender can result in pedagogy that may benefit both genders.

*Sex Differences in Second-Language Ability*

Lynn and Wilson (1993) return to the theme of ascertaining and reporting differences in a study of Irish children learning Irish as a second language. Very little difference was found between male and female intelligence. However, they report, for tests on the L2, girls scored significantly higher on 21 of the 24 comparisons, but this advantage only occurred in children under nine years of age. The fact that an increase did not express itself in children from ages 9 to 13, according to Lynn and Wilson, invalidates the opinion that better scores obtained by females are linked to social expectations. Lynn and Wilson conclude that if differences were attributable to social expectations, an increase would be apparent from pre-puberty to post-puberty. Therefore, they conclude that the differences are probably attributable to a biological basis. In this author's opinion, the two researchers do not support such a leap in judgment; they arrive at a biological explanation without any convincing evidence. Social expectations, beliefs, and

attitudes are so powerful that one cannot globally discount them. In addition, if sex differences do exist, whether they are biological or not is a controversial topic.

*Differential Teacher Treatment-by-Gender in the EFL Classroom*

The linking of gender, as a social construction, and social expectations is discussed further in the article by Sunderland (1994). In spite of what she says are social expectations that girls are better at language, teachers treat students differently in non-English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. On the whole, boys receive more attention, both positive and negative, than girls. This prioritizing of males supports the author's view that female discrimination exists. However, because of a lack of research in L2 learning and teacher/student interaction, it is unclear whether these differences occur in the EFL classroom as well (Sunderland, 1994). Sunderland concludes that with gender viewed as a social construction, some type of differential treatment probably occurs in a mixed-sex L2 heterogeneous classroom, whether favoring male or female. In this author's opinion, despite lack of agreement about the cause of differential treatment, such treatment exists. What is unclear is how this treatment affects performance.

When Sunderland analyzes the EFL findings that do exist, she hypothesizes that if girls are thought to be better at language and at L2, is it not logical to assume that this would affect teachers' behaviors with girls being asked more challenging questions and getting as much attention, if not more, than boys? In Sunderland's limited study of 7 EFL students, she found that 4 students reported differences: (a) teachers expected more from girls as far as written work and politeness; (b) girls were called upon more when no one raised their hand; and (c) girls received more praise and encouragement. Some of these findings are suspect, however, when she also reports that, at other times, female students were more often ignored.

The stated reasons for this perceived imbalance are interesting. One student reported that, in his perception, boys were asked harder questions to threaten them; another reported that it was to punish the boys. One female student opined that it was to preserve the males' egos. In other words, rather than harder questions indicating more interest or more expectations for success, according to this limited sample, the harder questions had a negative tone. Sunderland concludes that "the social construction of gender being what it is, it is unlikely that differential teacher treatment will ever not be a feature of a mixed-sex classroom," ESL or not. This author agrees.

*Sex Differences in Foreign Language Text Comprehension*

Bugel and Buunk (1996), likewise, consider gender as a product of socialization.They report that females in the Netherlands, despite the fact that they have equal or better academic performance in language learning in early years, consistently score lower on national foreign language examinations. Bugel and Buunk test the hypothesis that examination differences are due to the subject matter of the test and find that females "do better on questions about human relations, education, care, art, and philosophy; males do better on economic and technological topics, politics, sports, and violence" (p. 16). Thus, preferences with regard to reading choices are relegated to gender and, moreover, these preferences influence girls' performance on standardized testing. Again, because of cultural and social expectations, the researchers report that girls choose topics that are considered to be *female* or *feminine*. Furthermore, the study tracked expected differences in female and male topics which reflected deeper differences in girls' and boys' knowledge and interests. One wonders how much sexist attitudes, on the part of the researchers, come into play. It would be worthwhile to conduct research on this topic with respect to standardized testing in the United States.

*Gender as Social Practice: Implications for Second Language Acquisition*

Susan Ehrlich (1997) agrees that gender is a social construction when she reports that it is not a fixed identity but one that is in flux, depending upon the social community within which it is expressed. To support this view, Ehrlich refers to prior sociolinguistic research in gender and language that does view gender identity as a fluid construction.She explains further that feminist sociolinguists "[have] generally rejected the idea that gender is a set of attributes residing permanently within an individual. More recent conceptions of gender characterize it as something individuals do as opposed to something individuals are or have" (p. 422). Ehrlich explains further that, rather than language reflecting identity, language constitutes identity. In other words, language transgresses identity boundaries.

In addition, Ehrlich (1997) calls for classroom community to be considered as a major factor in investigating gender differences in L2 learning. Further, she challenges studies that find female superiority without taking into account the social, cultural, and situational contexts in which second languages are acquired. Ehrlich concludes that generalizations about gender and L2 learning are both speculative, including the paradigm of female superiority vis-à-vis language, and difficult to maintain. Further, she emphatically states that it is not gender that interacts with language but "gendered social practices" (p. 440). Therefore, gender is conflated with the social world within which it is expressed. In this author's view, environment cannot help but be an influence.

*Differences in Men's and Women's ESL Writing at the Junior College Level*

Just as Bugel and Buunk found that one factor, topic selection, influences test results, Morris (1998) has conjectured one particular factor as being responsible for superior scores on ESL writing by female students in Quebec. Echoing Ehrlich, this single factor is formed from the social fabric. Morris states that women at all levels outperform males in ESL classes. The females' superior performance, however, is not with respect to linguistic abilities. Differences are found in the degree to which female students adhere to writing assignment guidelines in an academic setting where adherence to assignments is richly rewarded. This author suspects that Morris' findings are colored by the perception that females are, or should be, compliant.

Morris extends her finding to the ESL classrooms. She opines that the reason for female success is, again, socially determined: Females follow instructions better, comply with rules, use learning strategies better, and aim to please the teacher more than males.Morris offers that these social qualities in the ESL classroom, or any classroom for that matter, may be construed by teachers as signs of academic superiority. This author argues that in order to obtain reliable data, researchers have to be fully aware of their own preconceptions with regard to gender behavior.

Morris (1998) concludes that grading rubrics should not focus so much on assignment adherence but on "communicative proficiency" (p. 235). Higher grades for girls may not be beneficial. In fact, girls were being short-changed because they did not receive feedback about their ESL skills and boys were being short-changed because the grading guidelines leaned heavily toward assignment adherence. Mastery of subject matter was not being prioritized and, thus, both genders were not receiving productive ESL feedback. It is useful to remember that discrimination and gender typing can negatively influence both genders.

## Conclusions

Further research should be done regarding gender differences in the ESL classroom with an eye to developing pedagogies that benefit both genders. Indeed, Baumeister's concerns about female oppression must be considered. However, in this case, this author argues that the benefits of research outweigh the risks. Baumeister's essay was written in 1988, and there have been

many encouraging trends against female discrimination since then which supplants fear about sexism resulting from publication of research data. Furthermore, it appears that whether female L2 superiority exists is a weighty issue, is important, and is far from determined. If females are found to be better language learners, it is this author's belief that their abilities will not be solely due to biology, if they are at all. Thus, when it is found how females achieve their language superiority, teachers could use these research results to inform their pedagogy in a manner that helps both genders. The skills and strategies that females use in some areas could be extended to other areas where they are not utilized, and the same skills and strategies could be taught to male students. These pedagogies would reduce educational discrimination and benefit English language learner males and females alike.

## References

Baumeister, R. F. (1998, December). Should we stop studying sex differences altogether? *American Psychologist,* 1092-1095.

Bugel, K., & Buunk, B. P. (1996). Sex differences in foreign language text comprehension: The role of interests and prior knowledge. *The Modern Language Journal, 80,* 15-31.

Eagly, A. H. (1987). Reporting sex differences. *American Psychologist, 42,* 756.

Ekstrand, L. H. (1980). Sex differences in second language learning? Empirical studies and a discussion of related findings. *International Review of Applied Psychology, 29,* 205-259.

Ehrlich, S. (1997). Gender as social practice: Implications for second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 19,* 421-446.

Feingold, A. (1988). Cognitive gender differences are disappearing. *American Psychologist, 43*(2), 95-103.

Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2006). *How languages are learned*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lynn, R., & Wilson, R. G. (1993). Sex differences in second-language ability: An Irish study. *School Psychology International, 14,* 275-279.

Morris, L. A. (1998). Differences in men's and women's ESL writing at the junior college level: Consequences for research on feedback. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 55*(2), 219-238.

Sunderland, J. (1994). Differential teacher treatment-by-gender in the EFL classroom: Using ex-participants' perspectives. In J. Sunderland (Ed.), *Exploring gender: Questions and implications for English language education* (pp. 148-154). New York: Prentice Hall.

# What Teaching Strategies Can I Employ to Improve Student Achievement in the Addition of Fractions with Different Denominators?

Teresita A. Nieves
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** The purpose of this action research was to determine what instructional strategies could be used to improve student achievement in fraction addition. An eighth grade intensive math class practiced multiplication facts and hands-on applications of fractions concepts for 2 months. Pretests/posttests were used to measure improvement in computation and understanding.

Many middle school students do not recognize fractions as mathematical entities, or objects that can be referred to as real things (Sfard, 1991). Rather, they view fractions, as well as many other mathematical concepts, only as procedures that they have memorized. During class discussion, students expressed concerns with fraction addition and finding the least common denominator (LCD). As students practiced their multiplication facts, their ability to find the LCD increased but their difficulty finding equivalent fractions continued. This study researched how a combination of drill and practice, the Concrete/Semi-Concrete/Abstract Approach (CSA) for fraction concepts, and competitive games, could help eighth grade remedial students master fraction addition. The following null hypothesis was tested: Students will have no significant increase in mastering fraction addition with different denominators after 8 weeks of the combined strategies drill and practice, Concrete/Semi-Concrete/Abstract (CSA) Approach, and competitive games.

## Review of Literature

### *Why Students Struggle with Fractions*

Many middle students struggle with fractions (Suh, Moyer, & Heo, 2005). Although they learn how to add, subtract, multiply, and divide fractions for several years in school, they lack the understanding and number sense that is necessary to manipulate fractions even when presented in practical situations because they lack the understanding of fractions as actual values. The emphasis on standardized tests instruction and improper calculator use has created a considerable imbalance between comprehension and fluency (Krudwig, 2003). This lack of understanding and number sense hinders their success in other areas of mathematics. The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (Hiebert, 2003) found that U.S. teachers use most of their instructional time teaching computation procedures and little to no time on developing conceptual understanding or connecting the procedures that students are learning with the concepts that show why and how those procedures work. The data show that when students over practice procedures before they actually understand them, it becomes more difficult to make sense of them later, which sets them up for failure in future math classes (Hiebert, 2003). This occurs because as the procedure is practiced, the individual steps become more unified and are eventually stored as a single procedure (Anderson, 1983). While this compression increases speed in computation, it decreases the student's ability to reflect on the concepts that are connected to each procedural step.

Nieves, T. A. (2009). What teaching strategies can I employ to improve student achievement in the addition of fractions with different denominators? In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 85-91). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

*Theoretical Considerations*

*Learning theory on math.* "Conceptual knowledge is defined as knowledge of those facts and properties of mathematics that are recognized as being related in some way [and] is distinguished primarily by relationships between pieces of information" (Hiebert & Wearne, 1986, p. 200). Procedural knowledge has no connection to these relationships; it involves knowledge of written symbols and the set of rules that governs those symbols within a syntactic system. Working with fractions is difficult for students because they associate numerals to the syntactic system of whole numbers. The image of a fraction contains a new syntactic system within a preexisting semantic base (Hiebert & Wearne, 1986). Although the fraction"4/5" has a "4" and a "5" in it, both being greater than one, the value of "4/5" is less than one. To truly understand the meaning of this, the student cannot continue thinking of the numeral "4" as a whole number. Instead, the student must recognize the relationship between the "4" and the "5." Students who are not aided in recognizing that different combinations of previously learned symbols can represent the same concept, such as value, continue to struggle and do not recognize the semantic link (Hiebert & Wearne, 1986).

*The importance of automaticity.* According to the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2000), knowing the basic number combinations, such as single digit multiplication and division, and having computational fluency, or automaticity, in these is essential and elemental to future success in other areas of mathematics. Without automaticity, students spend too much time and energy focusing on basic skills, such as retrieving math facts, rather than on other higher order processes involved in problem solving. Unfortunately, middle school students develop math skills without concurrent development of automaticity because they do not have to memorize basic math facts or formulas due to the availability of reference sheets and calculators for standardized tests (Krudwig, 2003).

*Instructional Strategies*

*Drill and practice.* Students need to make connections with the prior procedural, or computational, knowledge that leads to a concept as an entity. In fact, the absence of either computational or structural understanding at various stages of learning actually delays further development (Sfard, 1991). Timed practice drills provide an effective traditional means of developing automaticity when combined with untimed practice of facts for mastery.

*Concrete/Semi-Concrete/Abstract (CSA) approach.* The Concrete/Semi-Concrete/Abstract (CSA) approach enables students to gain understanding of concepts and fluency in computation by gradually moving through three phases. The phases move from lower level understanding to higher level understanding through the use of scaffolding activities. According to Miller, Butler, and Lee (1998), the CSA approach creates a 25-85% improvement in students' mathematical test scores. CSA is also supported by other research findings, which show that developing visual models for fractions is a significant influential factor in building understanding for fraction computation (Suh, Moyer, & Heo, 2005).

*Effects of games and competition on attitudes and learning.* Some research finds that games improve or reduce the negative effects of attitude and lack of motivation, thereby increasing student performance (Druckman, 1995). Furthermore, Van Eck (2006) found that although noncompetition games do not create more positive student attitudes towards mathematics, the presence of a coach, mentor, or advisor in conjunction with competition can make learners function beyond their maximum ability. This setting can increase the positive effects of competition, such as self efficacy and positive attitude, and simultaneously decrease

the stress of competition and math anxiety. Advisement and coaching was also found to lower math anxiety during non competition, as well.

## Methods and Procedures

*Organization*

Sixteen eighth grade students in an intensive class, ages 13 through 15, attending The Charter School at Waterstone, in Homestead, Florida, participated in this study. The class was composed of students who scored a Level I or II on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test. Eleven (68%) of the students were Hispanic, two (12.5%) of the students were African American, and three (18.75%) of the students were White. Ten (62.5%) of the students were male, and six (32.5%) of the students were female. Only one of the participating students was an ESOL student. This student was instructed using ESOL strategies, specifically vocabulary building, extended wait time, and peer tutoring. Each student was administered a pretest on fraction addition. Students participated in 30 minute sessions of drill and practice and concept building activities for 16 days during an 8 week period. The researcher kept an anecdotal log for each meeting in order to document student success or difficulty throughout the intervention.

*Timeline of Study*

In the first week, all students were given a written pretest on addition of fractions. A separate pretest on multiplication facts was also administered in order to determine which multiplication facts the students were having trouble with. The automaticity aspect of the intervention focused on these fact families. Students graded their own papers and discussed areas of difficulty that they wanted to improve. In the second week, students modeled the multiplication fact families using manipulatives (concrete phase) and participated in class discussions about the connection between multiplication and addition. Students practiced giving timed responses. Incorrect answers, or answers that were too slow, were automatically corrected by their partners.

During weeks three, four, and five students drew pictorial models of several multiplication problems on white boards (semi-concrete phase). Students were allowed to choose which multiplication fact families they wanted to practice and how to practice. They were given three choices, but not limited to choosing only one: (a) write out their own practice, (b) use the printed worksheets, or (c) flash cards with a partner. Students also played the Multiplication Game, in which they competed against each other for speed. During the sixth week, students represented fractions using colored shape tiles on the projector. Students practiced drawing pictorial models of equivalent fractions and used the pictorial models to solve fraction addition problems. Students also competed to find equivalent fractions by drawing pictorial models, using white boards, and solved various fraction addition problems using the pictorial models. Students created five fraction addition problems of increasing difficulty (with their solutions) for the rest of the class to attempt to solve. Students had three resources for help in creating their own problems: the text book, their partner, or the teacher. During week seven students created story problems involving the addition of fractions with different denominators (abstract phase). In the final week all students were given a written posttest on the multiplication facts and a separate posttest on addition of fractions. Students graded their own papers and discussed areas of improvement. Students also discussed areas that still needed more work.

*Statistical Analysis*

All the students in the study were given the pretest and equivalent posttest on fraction addition, consisting of 12 addition problems. The tests assess the students' understanding of the necessity of equivalent fraction. Answers were considered correct as long as the students'

answers were equivalent to the simplified answer provided by the answer key. The percentage scores for the fraction addition pretest and posttest were compared using a paired samples t-test. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software was used to determine if there was any significant improvement in student achievement. All the students in the study were given the multiplication facts recall pretest and posttest. A paired samples t-test was also used to compare the pretest and posttest scores on the multiplication facts. A correlations test was also done in order to find a possible correlation between the improvement in multiplication fact recall and improved fraction addition. Because no pretests or posttests were administered for the other two strategies used in the intervention, there were no other statistical analyses done.

## Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the combination of three strategies, drill and practice, CSA, and competitive games, which could be used to improve students' understanding of and achievement in the addition of fractions. The mean percentage score for the fraction addition pretest was 37.7%. Following the treatment, the posttests mean percentage score was 82% (See Figure 1). The mean difference from pretest to posttest was 44.27 with a 95% confidence interval of a 28.46-60.07 increase from pretest to posttest. The paired sample t-test shows that the difference is highly significant with a correlation of 0.51 and a p-value less than .05 (See Table 1).

Table 1
*Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Mean Scores for Fraction Addition*

| Group | N | Mean (%) | t (2-tailed) | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pretest | 16 | 37.7 | | |
| | | | 5.972 | 0.0000006 |
| Posttest | 16 | 82 | | |

## Discussion

Originally, the researcher believed that the major source of student difficulty with fraction addition consisted of a lack of multiplication fact recall. Their lack of automaticity seemed to be the cause of further difficulty in finding the least common denominator when adding fractions with different denominators. However, after 2 weeks of drill and practice on multiplication facts, even though students' multiplication fact recall began to improve (See Figure 2), they continued making errors in fraction addition because their understanding of equivalent fractions did not improve automatically as a result of their increased fluency. The literature suggests that drill and practice can reaffirm skills only when the concepts from which those skills come from are mastered. Instruction focused on strategies that help make connections between procedures and meaning improves students' conceptual knowledge (Hiebert & Wearne, 1986). Therefore, the researcher's focus switched from mostly drill and practice to a combined approach in which drill and practice complemented the CSA approach through competitive activities.

Students were able to arrive at equivalent numerators and denominators, abstractly, once they realized that they could use multiplication facts rather than draw pictorial models to count units. This supports other research that shows that automaticity without conceptual

understanding does not allow students to transfer knowledge to other areas of mathematics efficiently (Pesek & Kirshmer, 2002). Conversely, conceptual understanding accompanied by automaticity allows higher understanding of mathematical concepts (Sfard, 1991). The findings of this study do not support a correlation between increased multiplication fact recall and fraction addition. However, the findings suggest that increased understanding of fractions can be achieved through the combination of the three strategies used in the intervention.

## Recommendations

The lack of understanding of fractions should be addressed through a combination of strategies that include drill and practice, CSA, and competitive games. The competitive games with mentoring serve as motivation for students to push themselves beyond their current ability level in fraction manipulation. Furthermore, incorporating competitive aspects into the drill and practice also makes the drill and practice activities more enjoyable for the students. The CSA approach enables students to transition from lower level understanding of fraction concepts to higher levels gradually and the increase of automaticity gained from drill and practice decreases their cognitive load, allowing for more automatic understanding and manipulation of fractions at each phase of the CSA approach. Future replication of this study would benefit from increased time for the intervention. Also, the researcher believes that the last three weeks of this study had a more powerful effect on student achievement because of the combination of the three strategies. The researcher believes that this intervention could help students master other basic math concepts, such as basic addition and subtraction with whole numbers and addition and subtraction of decimal fractions. This study is limited by its quasi-experimental design. Future research should be conducted to include a control group. Future research could also test whether this combination of strategies is beneficial in higher levels of mathematics, as well.

## References

Anderson, J. R. (1983). *The architecture of cognition.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Druckman, D. (1995). The educational effectiveness of interactive games. In D. Crookall & K. Arai (Eds.), *Simulation/gaming across disciplines and cultures: ISAGA at a watershed* (pp. 178-187). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hiebert, F. (2003). What research says about the NCTM Standards. In J. Kilpatrick, W.G. Martin, and D. Schifter (Eds.), *A research companion to principles and standards for school mathematics.* Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Hiebert, J., & Wearne, D. (1986). Procedures over concepts: The acquisition of decimal number knowledge. In J. Hiebert (Ed.), *Conceptual and procedural knowledge: The case of mathematics* (pp.199-223). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Krudwig, K. M. (2003). Get it right and get it fast! Building automaticity to strengthen mathematical proficiency. *Focus on Learning Problems in Mathematics.* Retrieved on January 20, 2008, from http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Get+it+right+and+get+it+fast!+Building+automaticity+to+strengthen...-a0152872836

Miller, S. P., Butler, F. M., & Lee, K. (1998). Validated practices for teaching mathematics to students with learning disabilities: A review of literature. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 31*(1), 1-24.

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. (2000). *Principles and standards for school mathematics*. Reston, VA: Author.

Pesek, D. D., & Kirshmer, D. (2002). Interference of instrumental instruction in subsequent relational learning. In J. Sowder & B. Schappelle (Eds.), *Lessons learned from research* (pp. 101-107). Reston, VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.

Sfard, A. (1991). On the dual nature of mathematical conceptions: Reflections on processes and objects as different sides of the same coin. *Educational Studies in Mathematics, 22,* 1-36.

Suh, J. Moyer, P., & Heo H. J. (2005). Examining technology uses in the classroom: Developing fraction sense using virtual manipulative concept tutorials. *Journal of Interactive Online Learning, 3*(4). Retrieved on January 20, 2008, from http://www.ncolr.org

Van Eck, R. (2006). The effect of contextual pedagogical advisement and competition on middle-school students' attitude toward mathematics and mathematics instruction using a computer-based simulation game. *Journal of Computers in Mathematics and Science Teaching.* Retrieved on January 20, 2008, from http://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+effect+of+contextual+pedagogical+advisement+and+competition+on...-a0144705086

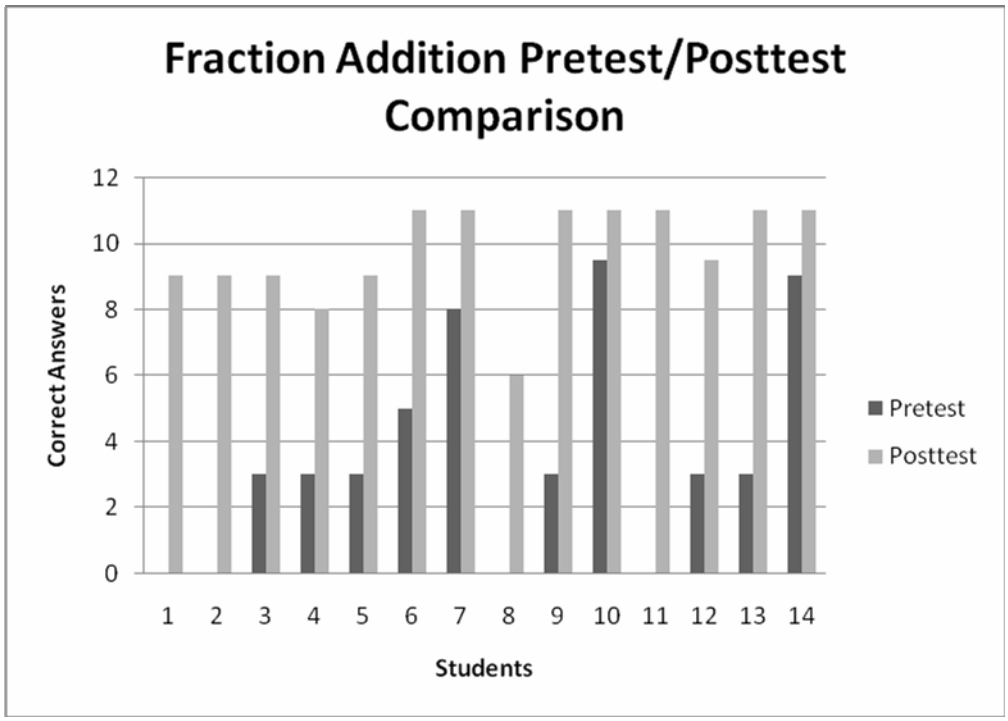



*Figure 1.* Fraction addition pretest/posttest comparison.

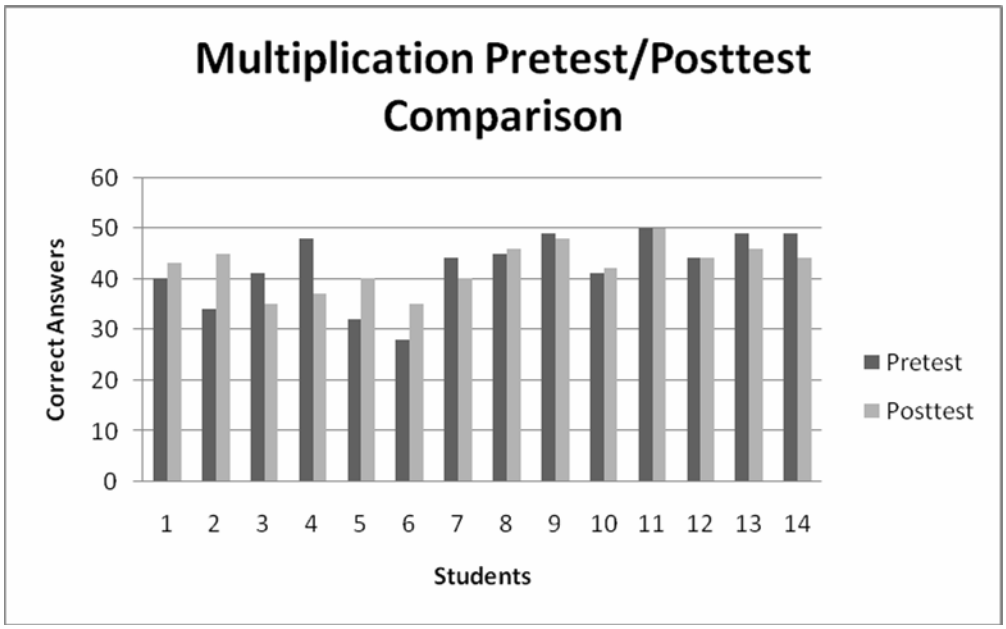



*Figure 2. Multiplication pretest/posttest comparison.*

# Reducing the Discipline Gap Among African American Students: Learning in Classroom Communities of Practice

Debra Mayes Pane
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** The author argues that learning in classroom communities of practice may reduce exclusionary school discipline practices and the discipline gap that disproportionately affect African American students. Communities of practice prioritize the social nature of learning as legitimate peripheral participation, encouraging community membership, social identity transformation, and synergistic relationships and spaces.

Exclusionary school discipline is the administration of punishment to disruptive students on the premise that isolation gives the perpetrator time to reflect on what happened, realize the error of his or her ways, and return to the same situation with a change of behavior and attitude. Exclusionary school discipline practices range from time-outs to office referrals, suspension, and expulsion. One of the problems with exclusionary school discipline is that the majority of students affected by the practice are African Americans. Since the Children's Defense Fund (1975) research on school suspension, studies of school discipline have consistently documented the disproportionality of African American students, particularly males, involved in exclusionary school discipline (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2000). However, explanations for the disproportionality, which is termed the *discipline gap* (Monroe, 2006), are inconclusive.

Exclusionary discipline consequences are more frequent, harsher, and less congruent to the incident for African American students, particularly males, even though no evidence supports the claim that they are more disruptive than their White peers (Skiba et al., 2000). Skiba and colleagues (2000) found that African American students, particularly males, were referred to the office, suspended, and expelled for more disruptive behavior compared to White students. For instance, African American students were referred for more subjective reasons such as disrespect or excessive noise while White students were referred for more serious and objective behaviors such as smoking and vandalism. Results also indicated that significant racial disproportionality existed after controlling for socioeconomic status regardless of analytical method used. Racial and gender disparity appeared to originate at the classroom level as "systematic and racial discrimination" (Skiba et al., 2000, p. 16). Nonetheless, empirical research to explain racial and gender disparities in school discipline is nonexistent.

Few studies examine the social aspects of classroom interactions related to discipline even though misbehavior and discipline are main concerns of teachers (Public Agenda, 2004). Urban education literature does, however, explore the connection between classroom conflicts and disproportional representation of African American students in the achievement gap (Delpit, 1995; Milner, 2006). The effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogy (integrating students' cultures into teaching and learning practices) with African American students who experience social and academic school failure is widely documented (Gay, 2000). Some scholars further conclude that teachers who are culturally responsive classroom managers organize and manage their classrooms with a culturally responsive "frame of mind as much as a set of strategies or practices" (Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003, p. 275). The link between classroom

Pane, D. M. (2009). Reducing the discipline gap among African American students: Learning in classroom communities of practice. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 92-97). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

conflicts, academic issues, and marginalized students' cultural practices (i.e., behaviors) has also been studied from a critical sociocultural standpoint (Gutiérrez, 2008; Lewis, Enciso, & Moje, 2007). Conclusions suggest that African Americans, or any other marginalized group of students, are not the problem as suggested by exclusionary school discipline practices but that students' cultural practices are valued inequitably.

The author has found one study that explicitly explores social interactions and exclusionary discipline practices at the classroom level. Vavrus and Cole (2002) examined the "sociocultural factors that influence a teacher's decision to remove a student from the classroom" (p. 87). They studied how disciplinary moments, or "patterns of classroom interaction that often precede a suspension" (p. 89), are co-constructed or negotiated as social practice among teachers and students in moment-by-moment interactions. Results indicated that disciplinary moments vary by the sociocultural context of particular classrooms rather than occur as a series of events strictly defined in school discipline policy. However, no studies have been found that explore how to reduce the discipline gap for African American students by prioritizing social practice.

The author acknowledges that social practice and negotiations in classrooms entail cultural and emotional backgrounds and experiences of all participants and may implicate racial discrimination that permeates from the societal to the local classroom level, but these nuances extend beyond the scope of this paper. Additionally, the author acknowledges research that explains Black students' underachievement in school (e.g., Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). The author does not attempt to minimize these bodies of research but delimits the focus of this paper to how to transform conditions within classrooms to reduce the discipline gap for African American students. With these limitations in mind, the following question is addressed: How can learning in classroom communities of practice reduce the discipline gap for African American students? This paper explores how learning in classroom communities of practice may reduce the need for exclusionary school discipline practices and ultimately the discipline gap for African American students. The next section introduces the social nature of learning in communities of practice.

## Social Nature of Learning

The social nature of learning can be understood through three interpretations of Vygotsky's (1986) zone of proximal development (ZPD), the first two of which are based on conventional views of learning that prioritize the transmission of knowledge and minimize the social nature of learning. In the first interpretation, teaching is explained as scaffolding, or slowly relinquishing initial explicit support given for performance of a task until the learner can perform the task independently. In the second interpretation, learning is explained as the successful merger of scientific and everyday (cultural) knowledge. In practice, African American students who are viewed as *excessively noisy* by the teacher are usually less successful in these independent task and transmission of knowledge scenarios.

A third interpretation (based on a critical social view of learning that prioritizes the social nature of learning and processes of social transformation) of the ZPD from activity theory (Engeström, 1987) is compatible with Lave and Wenger's (1991) *communities of practice* framework proposed in this paper. In this interpretation, the ZPD is defined as the "distance between the everyday actions of individuals and the historically new form of the societal activity that can be collectively generated" (p. 174) by negotiating conflicts embedded in everyday actions. Learning is not the overt individual results of instruction based on given cultural information, but a "relational understanding of person, world, and activity" (p. 51) viewed as sociocultural transformations in terms of continuous, evolving, holistic participation in communities of practice. This interpretation brings with it the teacher's understanding or

willingness to base learning on relationships amid social activity. Because the teacher prioritizes working together, the excessively noisy African American students will be more likely to fare well and get to stay in class. In this classroom, the teacher focuses on social transformation and encourages full membership in the learning community. Excessive noise is viewed, instead, as healthy resistance, participation in activities, and continual negotiation towards a more productive social identity. Resistance is viewed as transformations in and of communities of practice rather than misbehavior. Teachers who understand this view of the ZPD embody the notion that African American students in the discipline gap who are labeled as troublemakers because they seem excessively noisy will grow academically and socially in their classroom when given time and encouragement to participate with other students. Thus, learning involves the whole person in relationship to specific activities and social communities, which implies becoming a full participant through evolving forms of community membership in communities of practice. The communities of practice perspective is defined and explained in the next section.

## Communities of Practice Perspective

A communities of practice perspective is guided by a critical social practice theory of learning (Freire, 1970/2000); the process of learning is defined as legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), which encourages community membership, social identity transformation, and synergistic relationships and spaces (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

### *Legitimate Peripheral Participation*

In LPP, learning occurs as situated activity in communities of practice. LPP indicates a shift away from theories of situated activity in which learning is a cognitive process inside one's head that can be deposited into an activity or situation, devoid of participation in the social world (Freire, 1970/2000). From this perspective, excessively noisy African American students in the discipline gap are encouraged to learn by negotiating to become full participants in the sociocultural practices of a particular community. The teacher views the African American students' excessive noise as what it is—animated dialogue that overlaps play fighting, cultural behaviors that are built on in a community of practice. African American students in the discipline gap, like any other students, can easily judge what it takes to become a full participant in the classroom, the likelihood of doing so, and how to proceed based on this knowledge. Learning as LPP is understood as an integral aspect of all activity that takes place anywhere at any time and is not necessarily caused by intentional instruction. In other words, people learn both official (Apple, 2000) and incidental knowledge and practices from the social organization of the community of practice as much or more than from instructional material or techniques.

The notion of LPP helps teachers understand the social organization of classrooms or schools as communities of practice with assorted forms of membership. LPP provides a context for exploring what people learn or do not learn with what meanings for identity production or reproduction. Learning occurs through the transformative potential of negotiated, often uncomfortable, interactions among members of specific communities of practice (Fránquiz & Salazar, 2004). At first, excessive noise and dialogue overlapping play fighting may be hard for the teacher to deal with, especially if he or she is from a Eurocentric background. However, with increased understanding and use of LPP in the classroom, teachers more readily encourage students to resist and negotiate successfully during learning processes. As students' social and academic identities undergo transformation and resilience develops, the teacher's need for exclusionary discipline practices diminish. From an LPP perspective, student resistance, if recognized as an important part of the learning process by the teacher, is used to readjust the classroom structure to allow the student to negotiate success. For example, rather than excluding

African American students in the discipline gap for excessive noise, teachers can request or even require (counter intuitively) that students use overlapping dialogue and play fighting to dramatize how they understand a new concept in math or social studies class.

*Community Membership*

LPP is a three-pronged phrase that describes how people engage in social practice and learn through various aspects of community membership. *Legitimate participation* is about ways of belonging to, or forms of membership in, communities of practice. For instance, African American students who dramatize their understanding of a new concept with excessive noise belong to the classroom community of practice as learners. *Peripheral participation* suggests non-central ways of being located in the social world, referring to how "changing locations and perspectives are part of actors' learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 36). The teacher who encourages (or counter intuitively requires the entire classroom community) African American students in the discipline gap to use excessive noise to dramatize how they understand a new concept in class is encouraging students to learn how to participate more successfully with the help of expert members of the community of practice. Students ultimately develop a different identity and form of membership at school; teachers reduce the need to remove students from class for excessive noise.

*Legitimate peripherality* involves relations of power and positioning of community members, implicating broader social structures (Lave & Wenger, 1991). For example, a teacher who reduces power relations in a way that the African American students in the discipline gap can move toward more full participation in a community of practice (i.e., dramatize knowledge) puts the student in an empowering position. Conversely, if these same students are held back, often legitimately from a societal perspective, from more fully participating in the community of practice or among communities of practice are in a disempowering, or powerless, position. For example, principals may require teachers to write office referrals for any type of disruption (i.e., excessive noise). On the one hand, teachers who are not allowed to encourage students to become full members of a classroom community of learners through negotiations (which may be excessively noisy dramatizations to some) are left powerless and disempowered. On the other hand, teachers who are not obliged to write referrals for disruptions (i.e., excessive noise) are free to encourage their African American students in the discipline gap to rise out of partial participation mode and become legitimate full participants in the classroom community of practice. Full analysis of situated learning as LPP means connecting peripheral participation to the legitimacy of and control over the social organization's resources (i.e., channel cultural behaviors to concretize and transform a learning community).

*Social Identity Transformation*

Learning is more than just involvement in new activities, performing new tasks, and mastering new understandings because these entities do not "exist in isolation but are a part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 53). Learning implies becoming a different person and necessarily involves the construction of identities, or living relationships among people participating in communities of practice, with possibilities facilitated by societal systems of relations. A relational view of the person and learning constructs whole persons with agency who define themselves in practice. For example, rather than labeling African American students in the discipline gap a priori as excessively noisy and disruptive, teachers who understand the LPP view of learning encourage their students to create new identities for themselves by engaging them in positive learning interactions. As a

result, students learn to use their cultural behaviors to continually, intentionally, and reflectively monitor their own engagement in the context of practice and trajectories of positive participation.

Because participation is the fundamental form of learning in LPP, the situated nature of learning extends beyond the immediate sociocultural context. Interrogations are made into how societal forces shape and are shaped by immediate contextual relationships, both reproduction and transformation of social identities as well as communities of practice, depending on paths, relationships, and practices claimed by membership. In other words, what happens in classrooms mimics what happens in society and what happens in society influences classroom practice. The relational emphasis between changing identities and membership in communities of practice makes it possible to think of continuous learning, official or unofficial, as a basic characteristic of communities of practice. Ultimately, teachers who reduce the need for exclusionary discipline practices within their classrooms reduce the need for the same practices outside of the classroom.

*Synergistic Relationships and Spaces*

LPP supports the sociocultural organization of classroom space into places of activity and distribution of knowledgeable skill via ongoing historically constructed, conflicting, synergistic relations among participants and processes of community production and reproduction (Gutiérrez, 2008). If African American students in the discipline gap engage in a classroom activity that invites them to be themselves yet work and solve academic and social issues together for the good of the classroom learning community, they experience what it means to become a knowledgeable, accepted member of a community of practice. Rather than developing teacher-student relationships based on conventional apprenticeship and views of learning, communities of practice encourage synergistic relationships of participation within and across various cycles of learning. “These cycles emerge in the contradiction and struggle inherent in social practice and the formation of identities” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 57). LPP learning is never a transfer or assimilation but rather a problematic, contradictory transformation and change implicated in each other.

## Conclusion

Because learning processes are part of the collective, generative working out of contradictions in communities of practice, social cycles of production and reproduction of the future of particular communities implies spaces, even momentarily, of agreement (Engeström, 1987). Learning in generative spaces (Engeström, 1987) is more palatable and available to African American students in the discipline gap, leaving an historical residue of collectible physical, linguistic, and symbolic artifacts that are constructed and reconstructed in practice over time. LPP, framed in a critical theory of social practice, emphasizes the “relational interdependency of agent and world, activity, meaning, cognition, learning, and knowing” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 50). Meanings and communication are socially negotiated by people situated in the historical development of ongoing activity with others. Further, learning is viewed as “historical production, transformation, and change of persons. Or to put it the other way around, in a thoroughly historical theory of social practice, the historicizing of the production of persons should lead to a focus on processes of learning” (p. 51). LPP is a significant framework for viewing discipline based on its fundamental premise of engaging and including all, especially marginalized, members of society. Viewing disciplinary (or potential disciplinary) actions as negotiable social practices among the teacher and African American students in particular classrooms shifts our perspective and practices away from the need to use exclusionary discipline in school and society toward what is being learned socially and academically. LPP

provides a framework for challenging what could happen in future communities of practice to reduce and thus transform the disproportionality of African Americans in the discipline gap.

**References**


Apple, M. W. (2000). *Official knowledge: Democratic education in a conservative age.* New York: Routledge.

Children's Defense Fund. (1975). *School suspensions: Are they helping children?* Cambridge, MA: Washington Research Project.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: The New Press.

Engeström, Y. (1987). Learning by expanding: An activity-theoretical approach to developmental research. *Human Development, 31*, 137-151.

Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the "burden of 'acting white'". *The Urban Review, 18*(3), 176-206.

Fránquiz, M. E., & Salazar, M. C. (2004). The transforming potential of humanizing pedagogy: Addressing the diverse needs of Chicano/Mexicano students. *The High School Journal 87*(4), 36-53.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1970)

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, & practice.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Gutiérrez, K. D. (2008). Developing a sociocritical literacy in the Third Space. *Reading Research Quarterly, 43*(2), 148-164.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lewis, C., Enciso, P., & Moje, E. B. (2007). Examining opportunities to learn literacy: The role of critical sociocultural literacy research. In C. Lewis, P. Enciso, & E. B. Moje (Eds.), *Reframing sociocultural research on literacy: Identity, agency, and power* (pp. 15-48). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Milner, H. R. (2006). Classroom management in urban classrooms. In C. M. Evertson & C. S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 491-522). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Monroe, C. R. (2006, Winter). African American boys and the discipline gap: Balancing educators' uneven hand. *Educational HORIZONS,* 102-111.

Public Agenda. (2004). *Teaching interrupted: Do discipline policies in today's public schools foster the common good?* Retrieved March 1, 2009, from http://www.publicagenda.org

Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., & Peterson, R. (2000). *The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment* (Policy Research Report #SRS1). Bloomington: Indiana University, Indiana Education Policy Center.

Vavrus, F., & Cole, K. (2002). "I didn't do nothin'": The discursive construction of school suspension. *The Urban Review, 3*(2), 87-111.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1986). *Thought and language.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Weinstein, C. M., Curran, M., & Tomlinson-Clarke, S. (2003). Culturally responsive classroom management: Awareness into action. *Theory into Practice, 42*(4), 270-276.

# Hispanics: Does Our Language (Spanish) Define Who We Are?

Elsie E. Paredes
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** Use of the pan-ethnic denomination *Hispanic* to refer to Spanish-speakers assumes a homogeneous group. Hispanics literally constitute 20 national origins with different characteristics and idiosyncrasies. Because individuals' national origin may influence their traditions, customs, values, and beliefs, differences in nationality should be considered in designing research.

The day I left Peru and landed in the United States, I automatically became a Hispanic, a student of color, a minority. During the 31 years I lived in Peru, I only referred to myself as *Peruana* (Peruvian). As I started adapting to my new environment as a graduate student at FIU and as an immigrant in Miami, I met people from very diverse backgrounds, mostly from Central and South America. It was by being exposed to this multiplicity of cultures that I became aware that Peruvians, Argentineans, Cubans and so forth were in fact very different people, with very distinct cultural traits and varying dialects of Spanish. Conversely, every textbook, research article, and magazine I read for my classes referred to all Spanish-speaking people as Hispanics.

The Hispanic population is growing at a fast rate both through immigration and through birth rate increase. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by the year 2050, the Hispanic population will have grown to 97 million, comprise 24.5% of the United States population, and comprise the largest minority group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). In California, Hispanic children are close to becoming the predominant group of school children, and they are an important and growing presence in a number of school systems in major metropolitan areas in other states as well (Sullivan, 2000). The purpose of this paper is to examine and critique the use of the pan-ethnic label, *Hispanic*, broadly used among researchers and scholars to identify a very diverse group of Spanish-speakers in the U.S.

## Method

A literature review was conducted. Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Education Full-text and Omnifile Full Text Mega were selected as most representative of education. The search included publications from 1999 to 2009. Databases were searched for the following descriptors: Hispanics, Hispanic Americans, Latino, and Spanish-speaking students. Each term was searched individually and then paired with English as a second language. Then, individual nationalities were used as descriptors paired with English as a second language. The descriptors were: Mexican American, Puerto Rican, Cuban American, Dominican American, and Colombian American. The results in number of articles found are shown in Table 1.

## Who are the Hispanics?

Despite these significant demographic trends, our society has failed to recognize the diverse nature of this important segment of the population and has continuously treated Hispanics as if they were a homogeneous group. Hispanics represent 20 Spanish-speaking nationalities as well as some of the earliest settlements in what is now the United States (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006). Ninety percent of all Hispanics in the U.S. trace their origins from eight countries: Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Peru, and Ecuador--plus Puerto Rico. The remaining have their origins in Honduras, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Spain.

Paredes, E. E. (20092). Hispanics: Does our language (Spanish) define who we are? In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 98-104). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

Mexicans and their descendants are the largest Hispanic group (66.9%). In fact, most of the research on Hispanics has concentrated on this group which renders generalizations about the Hispanic population problematic as they may be characterizing the experience of Mexican as a group dominated by large numbers of low-skilled, low-income immigrants. Puerto Ricans are the second largest group (8.6%) and Cubans (4% of the U.S. Latino population) are the third. Other countries of origin are grouped into Central and South American (14.3% of the Latino population), and "other Hispanic origins" (Thierren & Ramirez, 2000, p. 1), which include other Caribbean countries, representing 6.5%.

Table 1

*Number of Articles Found According to Database Descriptors*

| Descriptors | ERIC | Education Full-text | Omnifile Full-text |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hispanic-American | 75 | 10 | 79 |
| Latino | 70 | 44 | 48 |
| Spanish-speaking Students | 295 | 206 | 211 |
| Mexican American | 64 | 8 | 9 |
| Puerto Rican | 53 | 4 | 4 |
| Cuban American | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Dominican American | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Colombian American | 0 | 0 | 0 |

*The Misleading Term Hispanic*

The term Hispanic was introduced by the government in the 1970s and has been used in all subsequent census schedules. During the Census of 2000, the term *Latino* was added and since then has been used interchangeably, although there are marked preferences. While the term Hispanic highlights a linguistic commonality among all members, the term Latino suggests a closer connection to Latin America and may include non-Spanish speakers, such as Brazilians (Portuguese), Surinamese (Dutch), and Guyanese (French). Hispanics are only Hispanics in the U.S.; in their home countries, the term is neither embraced nor used (Tienda & Mitchell, 2006).

Policy makers and scholars now have access to data that classify these people by their Hispanic origin. However, in many cases, the term Hispanic confuses our understanding of this population. Spanish-speaking individuals are referred to as Hispanic, which is an umbrella name

that homogenizes different people under the same identity label. However, in each of these groups, there are sub-populations. Not only do these sub-populations differ with regard to socioeconomic status, educational achievement, and geographical concentration, but they also vary greatly in terms of language background and length of residence in the United States (Mow & Nettles, 1990). Data often fail to break Hispanics into important national-origin groups, such as Colombian or Dominican. Furthermore, the term Hispanic is used to describe people in the United States who are descended or have migrated from countries in which Spanish is spoken, who might speak English only. Because the term is rooted in the use of language rather than in ethnicity, Hispanic is a term that includes White, Blacks, mestizo/mulato (i.e. the mixture of African, Native American, and European).

Identification of Hispanics in the United States is often based on an assumed shared native language–Spanish. However, many Latin and Central American people speak indigenous languages (i.e. Quechua, Aymara, and Mayan) as their native language and they have little or no proficiency in Spanish. Moreover, to many, the term Hispanic has colonial overtones, which reminds us of the oppression exerted by Spaniards after the colonization of the Americas.

*The Diversity Among Hispanics*

Latino national groups differ markedly from each other on a number of dimensions. For example, Census 2000 data indicate that, whereas 36% of Mexican households are composed of five or more people, only 14% of Cuban households demonstrate that characteristic (Thierren & Ramirez, 2000). Similarly, whereas 73% of adult Cubans have graduated from high school, only 51% of adult Mexican Latinos have done so. Furthermore, the percentage of individuals who have earned a bachelor's degree varies from 7% of Mexicans to 23% of Cubans. When Latinos are examined as a pan-ethnic group, however, the following generalizations have been made:

> Hispanics live in family households that are larger than those of non-Hispanic Whites…More than 2 in 5 Latinos have not graduated from high school . . . . The proportion with a bachelor's degree or more was much lower for Hispanics (10.6%) than for non-Hispanic Whites (28.1%). (p. 3)

On careful examination of data for Latino national groups, however, the data for Cuban Latinos do not match the statements that are made for Latinos as a whole. In fact, the figures for Cubans are more similar to the figures for non-Hispanic Whites than they are to the figures for Mexican Latinos. Thus, the generalizations that are often made across Latino groups are at times inaccurate and could be misleading (Umana-Taylor & Fine, 2001).

Hispanic immigrants have entered the country with different socio-economic statuses than other immigrants groups such as Indians, Taiwanese, or Nigerians (Jeria, 1999). Latin Americans have higher rates of labor force participation but lower-collar employment. However, the breakdown by national origin indicates that there are differences among countries. South Americans from Colombia, Peru, Argentina, and Chile show higher economic status and higher educational level when compared with other Latin American immigrants (U.S. Census, 2004)

College completion rates for Latino immigrants are an indicator of future economic advantage. There are significant differences among immigrants from various countries and regions. South American immigrants are most likely to complete college, with over 30% having completed a bachelor's degree. The immigrants from Central America (not including Mexico) are the least likely to complete college education, with less than 20% possessing a bachelor's degree. An analysis of the countries of origin reveals that those who have migrated from Brazil, Argentina, and Peru are the most likely to have completed a college degree (Lowell & Suro, 2002). These data illustrate that Latinos continue to lag behind other racial or ethnic groups in

their educational attainment and that students from Caribbean and Central American countries are the most likely to experience difficulties in completing college degrees. Low educational attainment also limits the economic level that these populations can achieve.

*Research on Adult Hispanic Learners*

Because Hispanics/Latinos are often considered a homogenous population in demographic reports such as the U.S. Census, most research has focused on a collective Hispanic/Latino population, and little distinction among Hispanic/Latino populations is evident in existing research (Jeria, 1999). An area of research in which this homogenous grouping is especially evident is in research concerning adult Spanish-speaking ESL students. In many of these studies, researchers discuss the Hispanic or Latino population in their study without acknowledging the nationality differences among the Hispanics/Latinos included in their samples (Gault, 2003; Menard-Warwick, 2004). Furthermore, regardless of the sample characteristics, the results of those studies are often generalized to all Hispanic/Latino populations. How can research be effective in addressing the needs of adult language learners if the definition of the target population is blurry?

It is claimed that learners from different cultures learn in different ways, and that they differ in cognitive styles, self-expression and communication styles (Bennett, 2006). Furthermore, previous studies in language learning strategies, have suggested conducting further research with learners from particular cultural backgrounds to examine ways in which culture influences the use and reporting of strategies (Lunt, 2000; Oxford, 1996). Because individuals' national origin may influence their traditions, customs, values, and beliefs, learning should not be examined without considering differences in nationality.

The research literature in adult ESL education mostly uses the terms Latinos or Hispanics, but in reality much of this literature is based on the Mexican American experience. Although this research can be translated to those from other countries, it is important to recognize the diversity that exists among Spanish speakers to examine within-group differences and consider how they affect the adult learning experience for students from different countries of origin. What is shared among these countries of origin is a legacy of Spanish colonization and subsequent establishment of the Spanish language over indigenous languages, which provide a basic link between peoples, resulting in a common group identity (Fitzpatrick, 1971).

There is a considerable lack of research about Hispanics as adult learners in the field of adult education. The few studies that have been reported have employed a deficit perspective to interpret the Hispanic experience in adult education. The educational experience of Hispanics is described as needing remedial language in order to assimilate culturally into U.S. society (Young & Padilla, 1990). This only serves to perpetuate the damage done to learners in alien educational settings. Furthermore, Hispanic adult education is discussed as an instance of *minority education* in order to indicate the marginalized status of Hispanic Americans. Thus, Hispanics are frequently viewed as aliens who have come from another country and who do not fit neatly into U.S. society. Hispanics do not share equitably in the political, wealth, and material benefits of the United States (Jackson, 1995).

Jeria (1999) argues that what is offered to the Hispanic population through adult second-language classes is "training in a language in which they are asked to reproduce cultural symbols that teachers of adults think they do not have, in other words, they are working from a deficit" (p. 58). He contends that such a view, from a deficit and minority perspective, makes Hispanics invisible in the field of adult education. Mainstream adult educators do not incorporate Hispanic socio-cultural factors and historical issues that define the experience of Hispanics in the U.S. in

developing programs that serve this population. Rather, adult educators tend to employ top-down, authoritarian, assimilationist models of education, rendering the Hispanic experience invisible to the practice and research in adult education.

*Cultural Diversity Research on Learning*

Some scholars interested in cultural diversity research on learning (Orellana & Bowman, 2003) argue that there are significant problems in using preset social categories in research. Often, researchers merely label their populations (e.g., working-class Hispanic women) or use pan-ethnic labels such as *Asian* and *Hispanic.* These labels lump together individuals and groups that vary widely in histories, languages, immigration status, cultural practices, and political and religious affiliations (Conell, 1987).

Another problem with focusing on static differences between groups is that such differences are easily interpreted as deficits (Orellana & Bowman, 2003). The cultural learning styles approach (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003) is a way of talking about cultural differences rather than deficits among different ethnic groups. It arose as an attempt to leave behind deficit-model thinking, in which cultural ways that differ from the practice of dominant groups are judged to be less adequate without examining them from the perspective of the community participants. . Work on cultural learning styles, however, is sometimes used in ways that are overly static and categorical. Treating cultural differences as traits makes it harder to understand the relationship between individual learning and the practices of cultural communities and this, in turn, sometimes hinders effective assistance to student learning. Therefore, ethnic and other cultural descriptors "may fruitfully help researchers examine cultural practices if they are not assumed to imply the essence of the individual or group involved, and are not treated as causal entities (Gutierrez & Rogoff 2003, p. 23).

It is argued that in order to do social science research without having some notion of social categories from which to work is nearly impossible. Orellana and Bowman (2003) suggest that

> researchers take more control over the categories they name and over which ones they use for comparisons. For instance, instead of simply noting the race or ethnicity of participants, they might record others such as language and/or language preferences; immigration status, countries of origin, and regions of origin within those countries; current and past social class positioning; and other cultural practices. (p. 27)

In other words, rather than assuming a priori what defines entities as social groups, and comparing these groups to mainstream norms, researchers can discover empirically the meanings of social categories and define groups through practice rather than through bounded identity markers.

As qualitative research approaches often emphasize the role of the socio-cultural context where language learning occurs (Davis, 1995), language learning is viewed holistically with a focus both on micro-level phenomena, such as interaction within the classroom, and on broader socio-cultural phenomena including the experiences of the participants and the ideological orientations of the community. In an ethnographic study of classroom language use in a Native American community, Philips (1983) drew connections between communicative behavior in the classroom and learners' cultural background. She found that the children's cultural backgrounds strongly influenced their interactional patterns in the classroom, underscoring the importance of a thorough understanding of learners' cultural experiences for interpreting learning behaviors.

## Conclusion

Research can play a significant role in exploring how culture affects learning outcomes and processes. In addition to research using samples of specific national origins (instead of the pan-ethnic label Hispanic), researchers can look at similarities and differences within and among Spanish-speaking nationalities to better understand the role that culture plays in ESL learning. Educators and researchers need to learn about and understand the social, cultural, political, and economic history of Hispanics, especially of the particular ethnic or national group being served. Other learner characteristics need to be considered in designing research, especially for adult ESL learners. Besides cultural background, other variables such as prior educational experiences, socio-economic status, and beliefs about learning can provide a clearer picture for designing studies that aim to enrich our understanding and to provide culturally relevant adult education.

## References


Bennett, C. I. (2006). *Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice* (6th ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and power.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Davis, K. A. (1995). Qualitative theory and methods in applied linguistics research. *TESOL Quarterly, 29*, 427-453.

Fitzpatrick, J. P. (1971). *Puerto Rican Americans: The meaning of migration to the mainland.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Gault, T. R. (2003). Adult Hispanic immigrants' assumptions regarding good teaching in ESL (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, 2003. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 65*(5), 1704A.

Gutierrez, K. D., & Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires of practice. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 19-25.

Jackson, L. A. (1995). *Stereotypes, emotions, behavior, and overall attitudes toward Hispanics by Anglos* (JSRI Research Report No. 10). East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, Julian Samora Research Institute.

Jeria, J. (1999). The quest for visibility in adult education: The Hispanic experience. In S. Imel & J. M. Ross-Gordon (Series Eds.) & T. C. Guy (Vol. Ed.), *New directions for adult and continuing education: No. 82. Providing culturally relevant adult education* (pp. 49-65). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Lowell, B. L., & Suro, R. (2002). *The improving educational profile of Latino immigrants*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. Retrieved August 3, 2008, from http://pewhispanic.org/files/reports/14.pdf

Lunt, E. H. (2000). The *learning strategies of adult immigrant learners of English: Quantitative and qualitative perspectives*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Melbourne, Australia.

Menard-Warwick, J. (2004). Identity and learning in the narratives of Latina/o immigrants: Contextualizing classroom literacy practices in adult ESL (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, 2004). *Dissertation Abstracts International, 65*(9), 3255A.

Mow, S., & Nettles, M. (1990). Minority student access to, and persistence and performance in college: A review of trends and research literature. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 35-105). New York: Agathon.

Orellana, M. F., & Bowman, P. (2003). Cultural diversity research on learning and development: Conceptual, methodological, and strategic considerations. *Educational Researcher, 32*(5), 26-32.

Oxford, R. L. (1996). (Ed.). *Language learning strategies around the world: Cross-cultural perspectives* (Tech. Rep. No. 13). Manoa: University of Hawaii, National Foreign Language Resource Center.

Philips, S. (1983). *The invisible culture: Communication in classroom and community on the Warm Springs Indian Reservation.* London: Longman.

Sullivan, T. A. (2000). A demographic portrait. In P. S. Cafferty & D. W. Engstrom (Eds.), *Hispanics in the United States: An agenda for the twenty-first century* (pp. 1-29). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

Thierren, M., & Ramirez, R. R. (2000). The Hispanic population in the United States: March 2000. In *Current population reports* (Publication No. 20-535; pp. 1-7). Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved December 20, 2008, from http://www.census.gov/prod/2003pubs/p20-545.pdf

Tienda, M., & Mitchell, F. (2006). *Multiple origins, uncertain destinies: Hispanics and the American future.* Washington DC: The National Academies Press.

Umana-Taylor, A. J., & Fine, M. A. (2001). Methodological implications of grouping Latino adolescents into one collective ethnic group. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 23*, 347- 362.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2004). *The American community-Hispanics: 2004.* Retrieved March 10, 2007, from http://www.census.gov/population/www/socdemo/hispanic/reports.html

Young, E., & Padilla, M. (1990). Mujeres unidas en acción: A popular education process. *Harvard Educational Review, 60*, 1-18.

# Four Components of a Manuscript Reporting Qualitative Empirical Studies: A Brief Overview

Maria S. Plakhotnik and Tonette S. Rocco
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** Publishing in scholarly journals is challenging due to a high manuscript rejection rate. One third of the rejection rate can be attributed to poor organization (McKercher, Law, Weber, Song, & Hsu, 2007). This paper discusses four components of reporting qualitative empirical studies to guide researchers in developing a logical manuscript.

"Research is central to the development of any field of study" (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 1). To contribute to a field of study, research needs to be presented at conferences or meetings and, ultimately, published in peer-reviewed journals to reach wider national and international audiences. Sharing research results with scholarly audiences is the final and focal point of research (American Psychological Association [APA], 2001). Publishing in scholarly journals also helps both experienced and novice researchers to establish and advance their academic careers, for example to receive promotions and achieve tenure-track positions (Chisholm, 2007). However, publishing in scholarly journals is a challenging and stressful process due to high, up to a 90%, manuscript rejection rate (McKercher et al., 2007). One of the core deficiencies in submissions that lead to such a high rejection rate is poor manuscript organization. Specifically, poor organization contributes to up to one third (34%) of the manuscript rejection rate (McKercher et al., 2007). On the other hand, manuscripts that are organized in a clear, logical, and coherent manner "spare readers a distracting variety of forms throughout a work and permit readers to give full attention to content" (APA, 2001, p. xxiii).

Publishing in scholarly outlets is particularly challenging for qualitative researchers. Unfortunately, many perceive qualitative research as less rigorous than quantitative and, therefore, less publishable (Rocco, 2003). One way to increase rigor and, hence, publication chances is to present results of a qualitative empirical study in a clear and logical manner. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to discuss four components of manuscripts reporting qualitative empirical studies to guide researchers in the development of a logical and coherent manuscript. The four major components include: (a) introduction, (b) method, (c) discussion, and (d) implications.

## Introduction

The purpose of the introduction section is to frame the study or to "set the stage for the entire study" (Creswell, 2003, p. 73). This frame should be well-organized and logical and challenge the readers to read further, comprising only a few pages of the manuscript. To accomplish this purpose, the introduction section is divided into two main parts or subsections: the research problem and a literature review or a framework (see Figure 1).

### *Research Problem*

The research problem subsection guides the reader from (a) the background to a problem (b) through to the specific problem that the study is set to address to (c) research questions that guide the study.

Plakhotnik, M. S., & Rocco, T. S. (2009). Four components of a manuscript reporting qualitative empirical studies: A brief overview. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 105-111). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

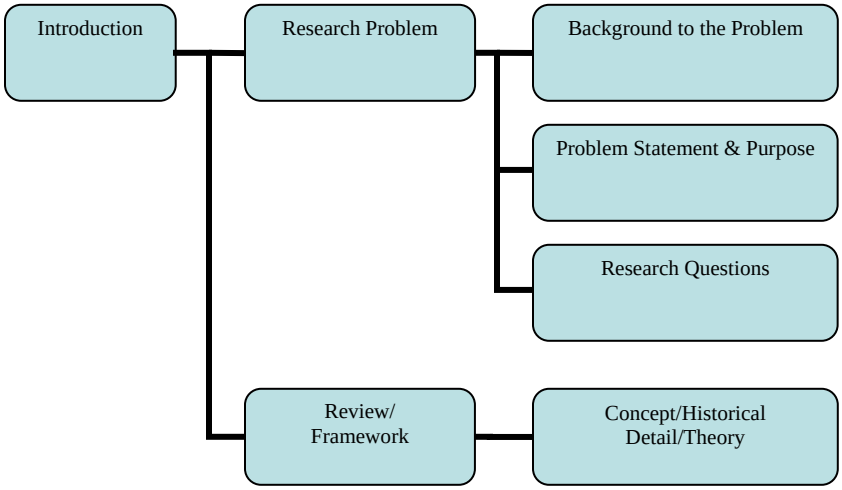



*Figure 1.* Subsections of the Introduction

*Background to the problem.* The research problem opens with a background to the problem written in one to three paragraphs. The background to the problem situates the study in a broader context, for example, historical, national, or international. Because the background opens the manuscript, it should also "hook the reader" (Hacker, 1998, p. 34), provoking interest and making the study relevant or important to the reader. To hook the reader, background can include staggering statistics, paradoxical or unusual facts, a surprising analogy, a quote, or other tools that engage the reader. Background to the problem can be written in a less inductive format and start with a researcher's narrative or experiences or a story (Creswell, 2003).

*Problem statement and purpose*. The background to the problem is usually followed by one to three paragraphs that formulate the problem statement. The problem statement points to a phenomenon, concept, issue, or dilemma that needs to be investigated (Creswell, 2003). Although the background to the problem might point to broad social issues, the problem statement focuses on a specific gap in knowledge that will be addressed in the study.

The problem statement is usually followed by the study's purpose. Problem statement and purpose statement are separate elements of a manuscript with different functions and, hence, should not be confused. Although a problem statement identifies a gap in knowledge about an issue or phenomenon, a purpose statement points to "what needs to be done" to address the gap (Merriam & Simpson, 2000, p. 19). The purpose statement should be considered "the most important statement in an entire research study" (Creswell, 2003, p. 87) and the first step in a study design (Patton, 2002). A good purpose statement in a qualitative study starts with a signaling phrase, for example, "the purpose of this study is." and includes the phenomenon, research design, participants, and location (Creswell, 2003).

*Research questions*. The purpose is further "refined" (Creswell, 2003, p. 88) into research questions. Creswell (2003) suggests formulating two types of questions: a central question and several related sub-questions. The central question mirrors the purpose statement in a question format. Sub-questions should flow from the central question and represent aspects of the central question. No formula can determine the number of questions needed in a qualitative study. Too many questions might lead to a loss of focus in a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994); too few questions might limit the researchers' ability to address the study purpose. Creswell suggests using one or two central questions and five to seven sub-questions. Miles and Huberman do not

recommend using more than a dozen questions. Research questions can appear after the purpose, just before method or early in the method. Wherever research questions are placed, the relationship of the research questions to the purpose and problem must be evident.

*Review/Framework*

The introduction section also includes a review of relevant empirical, theoretical, and/or conceptual works in a form of a literature review, a conceptual framework, or a theoretical framework. The literature review and conceptual and theoretical frameworks share five functions: (a) to build a foundation, (b) to demonstrate how a study advances knowledge, (c) to conceptualize the study, (d) to assess research design and instrumentation, and (e) to provide a reference point for interpretation of findings (Merriam & Simpson, 2000). All five functions are not necessarily fulfilled by the review or framework in each manuscript, but often they are, and the functions would be the same whether the form used is a literature review, theoretical framework, or conceptual framework. In a literature review or conceptual or theoretical framework, a case is built for the importance of the study through a presentation and critique of the concepts, terms, definitions, models, and theories found in a literature base and seen through a particular disciplinary orientation. The terms *literature review*, *conceptual framework*, and *theoretical framework* have often been used interchangeably by researchers. Although these three forms of review of relevant literature share similar functions and relationships to other parts of manuscripts, they each represent a distinct type of review and should be labeled and used appropriately (see Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009).

A theoretical framework involves the presentation of a specific theory, such as systems theory or self-efficacy, and empirical and conceptual work about that theory. Merriam (2001) describes the theoretical framework as "the structure, the scaffolding, the frame of your study" (p. 45). The structure comes from the author's disciplinary orientation and the literature related to the topic and theory under investigation. Although a theoretical framework is used when investigating a specific theory, a conceptual framework is made up of theoretical and empirical work relevant to the manuscript's purpose where the purpose is not to further investigate a specific theory. Qualitative research often explores areas that are understudied and searches for emergent theory (Creswell, 2003). When searching for emergent theory, therefore, a conceptual framework is important for situating the study. The author must demonstrate the importance of the study by defining the main ideas and the network of relationships between them (Becker, 1998). A conceptual framework grounds the study in the relevant knowledge bases that lay the foundation for the importance of the problem statement and research questions. Therefore, theory may not be guiding the study but concepts are. As part of the introduction section, the purpose of the literature review is to determine if a topic is researchable, to report the results of closely related studies, and to establish the importance of the current study in relationship to previous studies (Creswell, 2003). The literature review might be seen as casting a broad net around an area to explore the topic. The net should include presentation of the history or chronology of the manuscript's main idea. In a history, the author should acquaint the reader with the major authors' writing in favor of or in opposition to the main idea and the state of the current empirical research (A. L. Wilson & E. R. Hayes, personal communication, May 24, 2002).

## Method

The method section of a qualitative study should include information on these subsections: a conceptual framework, sample, data collection, data analysis, with integrity measures and data management integrated into sample, data collection, and data analysis where appropriate (see Figure 2).

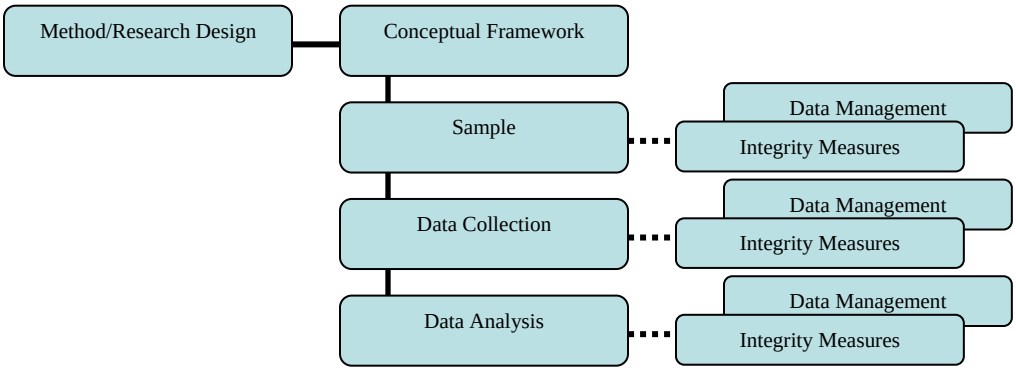



*Figure 2*. Subsections of Method

*Conceptual Framework of the Method*

In the method section, authors need to provide a rationale for design decisions and to ground the rationale in the extensive body of qualitative inquiry literature concerned with the specific type of qualitative method used. Many methods sections and abstracts describe the study simply as "a qualitative study." *Qualitative* is neither a type of study nor does qualitative inquiry have a single unified theoretical orientation. Some maintain it is a paradigm or a way to see the world encompassing diverse orientations. Just as the overall manuscript has a framework built on literature, theory, or concepts, so does the method section. For example, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) discuss 6 interpretative paradigms, while Patton (2003) differentiates among 16 theoretical traditions within qualitative research. Each of them has roots in certain disciplines and aim at answering different questions. Therefore, authors should clarify for the reader the appropriateness of the qualitative interpretative paradigm or theoretical tradition to the research questions and to the study's conceptual framework. In this section, the author describes why a specific method is the most suitable for the study being reported.

*Sample*

In qualitative empirical studies, samples can be composed of people, behaviors, events, or processes (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Patton (2002) refers to 11 types of samples, while Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) identify 22 sampling schemes. Regardless of what sampling typology is used, researchers need to provide information on sampling decisions. The type of sample should be named and the rationale for the type of sample needs to be articulated. The process and criteria used to select critical cases or stratified random, for example, need to be discussed; demographic information about the participants should be included. Further, although Patton (2002) clearly states, "There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (p. 244), this does not mean that no information is necessary on the size of the sample or the rationale for the sample size. The information and rationale should relate to the research problem, purpose, and research questions (Morse, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). This information increases the reader's ability to understand the relationship between the participants, the data being discussed, and the usefulness of the findings to other situations and contexts.

*Data Collection*

Qualitative data comes from participants/people, observations/fieldwork, and documents (Patton, 2002) and "uses methods that speak to quality, that is, nuances, perceptions, viewpoints, meaning, relationships, stories, and dynamic changing perspectives" (Swanson, Watkins, & Marsick, 1997, p. 89). Data can be people focused or structure focused as in projects, programs,

and organizations, or oriented towards time (e.g., critical incident) or geography (See Patton, 2002). When discussing data collection, it is insufficient to report, "interviews were conducted." Wengraf (2001) discusses lightly, moderately, and heavily structured depth interviews. For each type of interview, specific design decisions need to be made (see Gubrium & Holstein, 2001). Different types of interviews can impact the relationship of the respondent to the interviewer and produce different types of data changing the nature of the findings (See Kvale, 1996; Wengraf, 2001). Details on data collection tools should include item development, number of items, item topics, and design changes (if any) were made after beginning the process. In some cases, reporting the instrument items, categories, or a sampling of items may help the reader understand the process. Details should also be provided on the actual data collection process: instrument distribution, interview time, location, and whether audio or video-recorded.

*Data Analysis*

In simple terms, to analyze data means "to draw valid meaning" from data (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1) that consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction occurs when coding data chunks, clustering, memoing, searching for themes, simplifying data into categories, and comparing the themes and categories. Data display "is an organized, compressed assembly of information that permits conclusion drawing and action" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). Types of data displays include outlines, matrices, graphs, charts, and networks. During conclusion drawing and verification, the researcher makes decisions about which patterns, explanations, configurations, and propositions observed from the beginning of the data collection process have meaning in terms of the conceptual framework and the practical implications to the field (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Verification of these conclusions should occur throughout the process. More formal approaches include asking colleagues to review the conclusions, replicating the study with another data set, or returning to the literature. Researchers need to report how data were reduced, analyzed, and interpreted and provide a rationale for specific data analysis tools or methods. The decisions need to be grounded in the inquiry literature.

*Integrity Measures and Data Management*

Although a separate subheading is not required, integrity measures include methods a researcher uses to verify plausibility or to diminish interference, contamination, or degradation of any part of the research process to strengthen the process. Verification is important because without this step "we are left with interesting stories…of unknown truth and utility" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 11). There is not one right way to establish the integrity of the study. However, whether the standard is generalizability, triangulation, trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), or the use of an audit trail or a panel of experts or an external reviewer (Creswell, 2003), the steps taken and the rationale for the steps must be described. This description might be in a form of several sentences or a separate subsection within the methods section.

Data management concerns that should be addressed include answers to the following questions: How were data collected and stored? Were interviews completely transcribed or were decisions made to eliminate some words or phrases or to paraphrase during transcription? How were transcripts treated? There are other questions that could be asked. These concerns can often be addressed by the addition of a word or phrase within the description of integrity measures taken, data collection, or analysis.

## Discussion

A good discussion section in an empirical qualitative study includes the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the data. Relevant literature is included and organized to build on

and support the stated purpose of the paper, clarify, explain, or support the data, and illuminate the data's meaning. The interaction between the presentation of the data and the existing literature provides new insights, raises unexplored issues, and clarifies further research needs.

Wolcott (1994) suggests considering each detail in terms of relevancy and sufficiency. Are the data relevant to the account, theme, model, or emergent theory being discussed? Are the data presented sufficient to support the analyst's contention that a theme, model, or emergent theory exists? Are the data treated consistently throughout the discussion in terms of writing style and technical considerations? If data chunks are attributed to certain participants by a pseudonym, is this done each time? In addition, is the discussion of data through comparison to the literature done in a similar fashion throughout?

"With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, see precisely which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 1). Discovering new integrations, generating new or revised conceptual frameworks, nurturing emergent theory or models: all this and more is possible. These possibilities are lost on readers when data presentation and interpretation are given little thought. Data can be presented thematically, as cases or reconstructed cases, as stories or in other forms. When presenting data thematically, the literature should be integrated into the discussion of the theme. If cases or stories are presented intact, they should be followed by an examination of the case or story in terms of the conceptual framework of the study. The reader needs information provided by the analyst to understand the study's importance to the field to make a judgment as to whether successful analysis, presentation, and interpretation have occurred.

## Implications

Implications for the field is the section of the paper where the author responds to the *so what* question. So what does this presentation, analysis, and interpretation of empirical data or literature contribute to the field? What meaning can be derived from this work for practitioners and scholars? Answering these questions might be troublesome for both experienced and novice researchers. For example, the inability to answer the *so what?* question is the second top deficiency in the manuscript submissions which led to manuscript rejection by reviewers (McKercher et al., 2007).

In some qualitative empirical manuscripts, the field might be mentioned in the beginning or at the end of the manuscript and connections to the field are missing in the conceptual framework and discussion sections. There are different ways to address this. One way is to carefully integrate relevant literature from the field and make connections throughout the manuscript. Another way is to articulate the relationships between the key points being made in the manuscript to the field. Implication sections can include further research questions, implications for practice or theory, and new insights into the topic. One way to enhance the meaning of further research questions is to organize them in a table around themes from the data analysis or literature review (see Stein, Rocco, & Goldenetz, 2000).

## Concluding Thoughts

The purpose of this paper was to briefly discuss four components of manuscripts reporting qualitative empirical studies to guide researchers in the development of a logical and coherent manuscript. Insufficient attention to the organization of a manuscript results in a high percentage of rejected manuscripts. Unfortunately, this rejection then contributes to the misperceptions that only well known authors are published or certain types of papers are not published because they are not honored by the editors, reviewers, or the field. Authors do not have control over some aspects of the manuscript publication process (Hatcher & Winn, 2008);

however, they can learn about other aspects of research and writing that will improve the quality of manuscripts and increase the likelihood of favorable critiques by reviewers and editors.

## References


American Psychological Association. (2001). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.

Becker, H. S. (1998). *Tricks of the trade.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Chisholm, K. (2007). Strategies for publishing in scholarly HRD journals [Forum]. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 18*(1), 139-147.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-29). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Hacker, D. (1998). *The Bedford handbook* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Bedford Books.

Hatcher, T., & Winn, P. L. (2008). Publishing in HRD research journals [Innovative session]. In T. J. Chermack (Ed.), *Proceedings of the Academy of Human Resource Development 2008 Annual Conference* (pp. 110-115). Panama City, FL: AHRD.

Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1995). *Designing qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McKercher, B., Law, B., Weber, K., Song, H., & Hsu, C. (2007). Why referees reject manuscripts. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research, 31*(4), 455-470.

Merriam, S. B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Simpson, E. L. (2000). *A guide to research for educators and trainers of adults* (Updated 2nd ed.). Malabar, FL: Krieger.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *An expanded sourcebook: Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morse, J. M. (2000). Determining sample size. *Qualitative Health Research, 10*(3), 3-5.

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2007). A call for qualitative power analysis. *Quality & Quantity, 41*, 105- 121.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Rocco, T. S. (2003). Shaping the future: Writing up the method on qualitative studies [Forum]. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 14*(3), 343-350.

Stein, D., Rocco, T. S., & Goldenetz, K. A. (2000). Age and the university workplace. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 11*(1), 61-80.

Swanson, B. L., Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (1997). Qualitative research methods. In R. A. Swanson & E. F. Holton (Eds.), *Human resource development research handbook: Linking research to practice* (pp. 88-113). San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Wengraf, T. (2001). *Qualitative research interviewing*. London: Sage.

Wolcott, H. F. (1994). *Transforming qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

# From Foster Care to College: Perceptions of Young Adults on Their Academic Success

Steve J. Rios
Florida Atlantic University, USA

**Abstract:** Perceptions of college students, all former foster youth, regarding influences that impacted their academic attainment are described. Themes involve external interactions and internal influences, including a newly identified set of internal characteristics, "success strengths," that promote college attainment. The Foster Youth Academic Achievement Model is introduced.

During an era when even underprivileged young adults in the United States are obtaining higher levels of education, young people who grow up in foster care – 24-hour-a-day care away from abusive homes of origin – lag behind their peers in high school graduation and General Equivalency Diploma (GED) graduation rates (Merdinger, Hines, Osterling, & Wyatt, 2005).

Each year, more than 20,000 18-year-olds leave foster care to take their place in society; many are ill-equipped and ill-prepared for their adult lives (Christian, 2003). Recent studies regarding the educational deficits among foster children have documented the problem well, but have offered little insight into how successful young adults who grew up in foster care were able to reach their post-secondary goals. (Finkelstein, Wamsley, & Miranda, 2002; Hochman, Hochman, & Miller, 2004). Professional development and adult education initiatives, based on the perceptions of young adults who grew up in foster care and have obtained college, should play a central role in improving college attainment rates among these young adult learners.

## Purpose of the Study

The phenomenological study reported in this paper explained and described the perceptions of 24 undergraduate college students in South Florida who grew up in foster care regarding how external factors (i.e., home environment, schools, communities, and social service organizations) and internal characteristics (e.g., beliefs, emotions, and motivation) influence their educational achievement (Rios, 2008). Educational achievement was defined as graduation from high school and enrollment in either two or four-year institutions of higher education.

## Research Design

This study was conducted in three South Florida counties with demographics similar to many other metropolitan, diverse, U.S. counties with high populations of youth in foster care. A criterion-based purposive sampling procedure identified participants who (a) had experienced at least one year in foster care in South Florida before reaching the age of 18, (b) were attending a college or university, (c) were adults, and (d) received support from the state to continue their education beyond high school.

Of the 123 young adults attending a college or university and enrolled in Florida's tuition program, 25 (20%) were interviewed. Of those 25, one interview was not included because of the low quality of the recordings. Therefore, interviewees included 24 former foster youth (ranging from 18 to 23 years of age, with a mean of 20): 7 men, 17 women. The 24 participants included 18 Blacks (including Haitians, Jamaicans, Bahamians, African Americans, and Dominicans) and 6 Whites. Some participants had been in foster care all of their lives. Some had entered foster care in early elementary school, and others had entered foster care in their teens. The majority (*N*= 11) had attended only one high school; 5 had attended 2 high schools; and 10 had attended 3

Rios, S. J. (2009). From foster care to college: Perceptions of young adults on their academic success. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 112-118). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

or more high schools. The majority of participants ($N$ = 22) attended public universities or colleges: 12 were enrolled as freshmen, 8 as sophomores, 3 as juniors, and 1 as a senior.

Phenomenology was used as the research method because the goal was to obtain perceptions, which influence behavior and attitudes. Phenomenology promotes the description of participants' subjective experiences, and a key goal of this research was to determine how participants described, felt about, and made sense of their lived experience (Patton, 2002, p. 104). A semi-structured interview procedure was utilized for the 45 to 90 minute interviews, which were transcribed and checked for quality. Thematic analysis was used to identify themes. Themes were illustrated with participant quotes (using pseudonyms to protect participants' identities). This research qualified as exempt through the university's Institutional Review Board.

## Research Findings

This section presents themes and concepts that emerged from the analysis of the interviews conducted. Two themes emerged during the inductive analysis of the data: (a) academic barriers, and (b) academic supports. Each theme had sub-themes (types) that added new dimensions to previous research on this topic.

### *Academic Barriers*

Academic barriers are obstacles that limit academic achievement or attainment of career goals (Kenny et al., 2007). Four types of academic barriers were identified: (a) school-related, (b) foster care-related, (c) peer-related, and (d) internal, each of which will now be described.

#### *School-related Academic Barriers*

School-related academic barriers are obstacles experienced by students in organizations that provide formal instruction (Kenny et al., 2007). Students indicated that they faced two types of school-related barriers, non-empathetic teachers and administrators and lack of academic rigor, as primary obstacles to their academic progress.

*Non-empathetic teachers and administrators.* Participants indicated that when school authority figures did not have an intellectual or conceptual grasp of their life and academic situations, they reacted insensitively, and had a limited (or detrimental) impact on participants' academic progress.

*Lack of academic rigor.* The second type of school-based barrier that emerged consistently was a lack of academic rigor, which means classes were too easy and curriculum did not result in consistent knowledge gain (Marzano, 2003). Participants in this study voiced negative perceptions about many of the schools they attended, indicating that they were not consistently challenged to learn.

#### *Foster Care-related Academic Barriers*

Foster care-related barriers are obstacles encountered by youth primarily because they are wards of the state (Casey Family Programs, 2004). Participants indicated that uninformative caseworkers and low quality foster care placements were the primary foster care-related barriers to their college attainment.

*Uninformative caseworkers.* Many participants said caseworkers did not tell them about their post-secondary educational benefits until it was almost too late, when they already had spent years not working hard in school, and when they were almost 18, or already had turned 18, and were struggling with questions of where to live and how to survive without state support.

*Low-quality foster care placements.* The young adults interviewed consistently indicated that their residential placements were not conducive to their academic progress and that

guardians made little or no effort to work with schools and teachers, to help them develop good study habits, and to support the child's efforts to learn as much as possible.

*Peer-related Academic Barriers*

Participants complained about other foster children who were generally apathetic about school and were emotionally or physically abusive to higher-performing peers. One participant, a first-year African American university freshman, provided insight into the mindset of low-performing youth when he said they were always provoking and acting jealous toward him because they had "nothing to live for." At least five participants indicated that fights with other foster children resulted in stints at juvenile detention centers, which resulted in educational delays.

*Internal Academic Barriers*

Personal academic barriers are internal emotions and individual behaviors that negatively impact educational progress. Anger was perceived by participants as having had a major negative impact on their academic progress and was associated closely with the second major personal academic barrier identified, bad behavior, which included fighting and rebellion against authority figures, that often resulted in academic suspensions and expulsions.

*Summary of Academic Barriers*

Most research on academic achievement of youth in foster care indicates that institutional or bureaucratic barriers (i.e., lack of collaboration or delays in transferring of educational records) are the major barriers to foster youth academic success (Burrell, 2003; Casey Family Programs, 2003). Participants, however, spoke of more personal barriers experienced at school, in their foster care placements, with peers and from within themselves. The next section will discuss academic supports, which participants perceived played an important part in their academic success and college attainment.

## *Academic Supports*

The academic support that participants perceived they received can be divided into four types: (a) school-related academic support, (b) foster care-related academic support, (c) community-related support, and (d) personal academic support, or personal success strengths.

*School-related Academic Supports*

Participants' primary support at school came from caring teachers, helpful counselors, and a challenging academic environment. Stability of school placement in high school was also an important factor.

*Caring teachers.* Nearly half of the participants conveyed positive perceptions about teachers, consistently noting educators who made a special effort to help them, pay attention to them and make them feel comfortable being foster youth in school.

*Helpful counselors.* Although participants consistently indicated they valued teachers who were caring, they seemed to not expect nurturing from their counselors, who they knew were overwhelmed. From counselors, participants clearly valued and expected assistance to plan for and apply to college. The patterns for both teachers and counselors indicated that memorable adults went beyond their job description.

*Challenging academic environment.* Nine participants, including seven former honors students, credited academically rigorous classes, and high-performing classmates, for their academic progress, a perception that supports earlier work on student achievement (Hanushek, Kain, Markman, & Rivkin, 2002).

*Foster Care-related Supports*

The primary supports related to foster care came from foster parents, the adults who care for youth in substitute care, and caseworkers who promoted higher education. Like biological parents, these adults have the potential to impact youths' academic achievement (Casey Family Programs, 2003; Steinberg, 1996).

*Authoritative foster parents*. Participants clearly appreciated and benefited from foster parents whose "beliefs, attitudes, and values about learning serve to guide their behavior with their children around school-related issues" (Bempechat, 1998, p. 38). The plurality of the sample indicated that their foster parents were strict but highly supportive.

*Education-promoting caseworkers.* Five participants mentioned caseworkers whose actions specifically encouraged them to excel educationally. These actions included asking about educational progress, making wake up calls to assure youth get to college classes, and taking youths to college campuses. Although foster parents and caseworkers had direct authority in the lives of participants, the students also consistently noted the positive role played by adults who were not in authority positions over them, such as mentors and relatives.

*Community-related Support*

For participants in this study, who often spend many years living away from their biological families, blood relatives were mentioned as part of the youth's community, as opposed to their household. These relatives, as well as general community mentors, emerged as the primary sources of community-related support.

*Education-savvy mentors.* Seven participants praised mentors with whom they formed trusting and supportive relationships. These mentors were all college-educated adults who helped the participants apply to, and enroll in college (and obtain vital financial support). The value of mentors is illustrated by Erica, a female African American university sophomore who thought she couldn't attend college because she was in foster care. A helpful school guidance counselor helped Erica obtain a mentor who "called whoever she had to call to make sure I got what I needed." The assistance provided by her mentor resulted in Erica receiving tuition waivers for four years of a public university education, and a monthly government stipend of nearly $1,000.

*Conscientious relatives.* Fourteen of the students spoke admirably about the support they received from relatives, mostly from aunts and siblings. Siblings also served as motivational role models, providers of emotional and financial support, and academic mentors.

*Personal Academic Support: Success Strengths*

The following seven "success strengths," personal competencies associated with healthy development and life success, emerged from participants' narratives: (a) perseverance, (b) responsibility, (c) self-efficacy, (d) resourcefulness, (e) diligence, (f) internal motivation, and (g) goal orientation.

*Self-efficacy.* Although nearly all participants experienced periods of self-doubt and often behaved in ways that were inconsistent with their academic abilities, they all eventually came to believe strongly in their own abilities to succeed academically, a trait vital for academic excellence. Virginia, a community college freshman, was impelled to attend college by the academic success she experienced in high school. She said that: "I know I was able to do it. Everybody's able to do it. Even if you are in [special education] classes you can do it as long as you apply yourself." This strong sense of self-efficacy was evident in nearly all the participants.

*Resourcefulness.* Participants' academic strategies included constantly seeking advice about schoolwork, obtaining tutors, buying extra study resources, and becoming friends with high-performing youth.

*Diligence.* Consistently, academic effort was identified as an important pattern among participants, who spoke of going beyond what was expected of them and working very hard to do well in school.

*Internal motivation.* Thirty-two of participants' 38 statements concerning motivation related to participants' internal motivation to succeed academically. For instance, one longed for the independence and stability that a college degree might provide. Another indicated that she realized that it was up to her to get the education she knew she needed for success in life.

*Goal orientation.* The importance of educational goals, also known as "educational aspirations" (Benard, 2004, p. 29) as an element of high achievement, is well documented (Adelman, 2006). Six participants aspired to graduate degrees and none of them expressed any doubt that they would attain their goals.

### *Summary of Academic Supports*

Academic supports included support from school personnel, caretakers, caseworkers, and mentors. Success strengths refer to characteristics that comprise a set of student-level factors that support years of quantitative research indicating that "student level factors account for the lion's share of variance in student achievement" (Marzano, 2003, p. 25).

### *Foster Youth Academic Attainment Model*

Participants identified both barriers and supports within and across the contexts of family, school, and peer groups. The interaction of sources of external supports (i.e., school, foster care, and community), sources of external barriers (i.e., school, foster care, and peers), internal supports (i.e., success strengths) and internal barriers (i.e., negative emotions and behaviors) can be conceptualized by a new proposed model for understanding influences on foster youth academic success, the Foster Youth Academic Achievement Model. This model, shown in Appendix A, is based on Lewin's Force Field Analysis Model (Marrow, 1969).

## Implications for Educators

Understanding the perceptions of former foster youth in college, and advocating for change based on that awareness, can help adult educators "equalize the wrongs of society by providing an education to an adult populace that did not receive the basics through traditional education" (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2000, p. 156). Former foster youth are currently benefiting from new Federal legislation, specifically the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act (H.R. 6893/P.L. 110-351), that aims to improve education and health care services for children in care, especially for transitioning youth and young adults who emancipate from foster care (Children's Defense Fund, 2008).

This study has implications that dovetail with increase national attention on improving foster youth's educational opportunities. The finding that some participants experienced a lack of empathy among teachers and other school personnel, as well as that others benefitted from caring teachers and helpful counselors, implies that educational leaders at all levels of education should seek out materials and staff training regarding the influences that impact educational achievement among youth in foster care and make sure that as many members of their staff as possible are exposed to this training. Particular emphasis should be placed on the identification of foster youth in school, showing these young people empathy, monitoring their educational progress, and providing mentoring, and a supportive yet challenging academic environment.

## Conclusion

The need for special academic support to help disadvantaged youth overcome barriers to their academic progress is a major tenet of educational research and practice. This study described perceptions of successful young adult students from an especially vulnerable sub-set of

our youth population – foster children. The study indicates that a deeper understanding of the type of support that is needed, and an understanding of how youth contribute to their own academic success through a particular set of personal attributes, can help society increase the numbers of foster children who attain college and succeed in life.

## References


Adelman, C. (2006). *The toolbox revisited: Paths to degree completion from high school through college.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Bempechat, J. (1998). *Against the odds: How "at-risk" students exceed expectations.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Benard, B. (2004). *Resiliency: What we have learned*. San Francisco, CA: WestEd.

Burrell, S. (2003). *Getting out of the "red zone": Youth from juvenile justice and child welfare systems speak out about the obstacles to completing their education, and what could help*. Washington, DC: Youth Law Center.

Casey Family Programs. (2004). *A road map for learning: Improving educational outcomes in foster care.* Washington, DC: Author.

Children's Defense Fund. (2008). *Fostering connections to success and increasing adoptions will improve outcomes for children and youth in foster care*. Washington, DC: Author.

Christian, S. (2003). Educating children in foster care. Washington, DC: National Conference of State Legislatures. Retrieved March 27, 2006, from http://www.ncsl.org/programs/cyf/CPleducate.htm

Finkelstein, M., Wamsley, M., & Miranda, D. (2002). *What keeps children in foster care from succeeding in school?* New York: Vera Institute of Justice.

Hanushek, E. A., Kain, J. F., Markman, J. M., & Rivkin, S. G., (2001). *Does peer ability affect student achievement?* (NBER Working Paper W8502). Retrieved December 28, 2008, from http://ssrn.com/abstract=285625

Kenny, M. E., Gualdron, L., Scanlon, D., Sparks, E., Blustein, D., & Jernigan, M. (2007). Urban adolescents' construction of supports and barriers to their educational career attainment. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*, 336-343.

Hochman, G., Hochman, A., & Miller, J. (2004). *Foster care voices from the inside.* Washington, DC: Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care.

Johnson-Bailey, J., & Cervero, R. M. (2000). The invisible politics of race in adult education. In A. L. Wilson & E. R. Hayes (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and continuing education* (pp. 147-160). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Marrow, A. J. (1969). *The practical theorist: The life and work of Kurt Lewin.* New York: Basic.

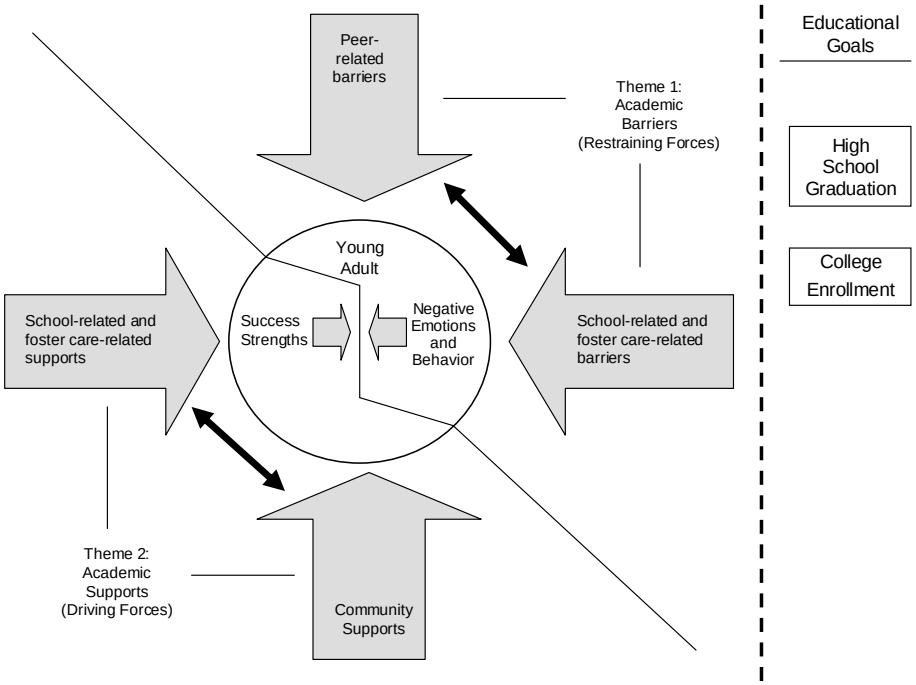
Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Merdinger, J. M., Hines, A. M., Osterling, K. L., & Wyatt, (2005). Pathways to college for former foster youth: Understanding factors that contribute to educational success. *Child Welfare, 84*(6), 867-896.

Rios, S. J. (2008). *From foster care to college: Young adults' perceptions of factors that impacted their academic achievement.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Florida International University, Miami.

Steinberg, L. (1996). *Beyond the classroom: Why school reform has failed and what parents need to do.* New York: Touchstone.

Appendix A: Foster youth academic achievement model.



# An Exploratory Qualitative Study of the Proximal Goal Setting of Two Introductory Modeling Physics Students

Vashti Sawtelle
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract.** A qualitative investigation on the impact of goal-setting strategies on self-efficacy of two students taking Introductory Modeling Physics was conducted. The study found that the problem solving process can be divided into two main themes: goal-setting and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy plays a role in the goal setting process of these two students, and may be linked to the retention of students in physics.

Although many things contribute to the success of a student, many students see success in a physics class as impossible. Introductory Physics focuses heavily on problem solving, but few classes actually work to develop these skills. Over the recent decades, bachelor's degrees in physics have lagged behind the other sciences such as mathematics, the natural sciences, and engineering receiving only 2% of the undergraduate degrees awarded in these technical fields (Mulvey & Nicholson, 2007). Fencl and Scheel (2005) discussed the possibility of self-efficacy impacting the retention of students in the physics classroom. In 1977, Bandura provided the theoretical framework of self-efficacy in an effort to supply a theoretical explanation for human behavior change. He defined self-efficacy to be the beliefs in one's ability to perform a *specific* task, particularly stressing the specificity of the task. Thus though self-efficacy might be well understood in mathematics, it needs to be investigated separately in physics.

Betz and Hackett (1989) showed that in mathematics, self-efficacy expectations are strong predictors of mathematics-related educational and career choices. Physics is often considered to be directly related to mathematics, and furthermore studies of self-efficacy in career and educational psychology have strongly linked self-efficacy to both persistence in technical fields and success in those same fields (Brown, 1989; Lent, 1986, 1987). These works suggest that it would be beneficial to the science education community to explore the relationship between self-efficacy and physics in general, as well as in specific reformed instructional approaches such as Modeling Instruction.

To investigate self-efficacy in the physics classroom, it is necessary to return to the problem-solving structure of most physics classes. One of the primary components of problem solving is goal-setting. Schunk's (1983, 1991) research on self-efficacy looks at the relationship between self-efficacy and motivational factors, such as goal setting. Bandura and Cervone (as cited in Schunk, 1991) showed that providing students with feedback on goal progress increases self-efficacy. Furthermore, Schunk (1983) showed that setting goals enhances self-efficacy. However, Schunk (1991) also makes it clear that these goals must be proximal in nature (i.e. closely related to the students' task). To better understand self-efficacy in physics, and its impact on the retention of students in the field, it would be informative to also understand the goal setting habits of students in physics classes. This study uses the definition of goals provided by Wentzel (2000), "a cognitive representation of *what* it is that an individual is trying to achieve in a given situation" (p.106). With this in mind, this study will address this research question: How do two Modeling Physics students, one man and one woman, construct and use proximal goals?

Sawtelle, V. (2009). An exploratory qualitative study of the proximal goal setting of two introductory modeling physics students. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 119-125). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

## Method and Participants

A variety of students take Introductory Physics in college. The two-semester sequence is required for engineers, pre-health students, and physics major alike. Furthermore, the Modeling classes are conducted in such a way that the data gathered are necessarily information rich, as is necessary for a good qualitative study (Merriam, 2002). Due to the significant amount of group work and the focus on the students' learning, the Modeling classroom is ideal for studying goal setting in the physics learning environment. In the Modeling classroom, students work together on lab and guided inquiry activities in small groups (3 to 4) and also engage in large class discussions, where they present their ideas and results to their peers. The instructor spends a minimal amount of time lecturing, encourages group work, and engages students through Socratic questioning. Clearly, in the Modeling classroom, a lot of opportunity exists for students to set their own goals in learning the material.

The timing of the study was the first semester of a two semester sequence, and the students are focused mainly on Newtonian Mechanics during this time. Three sources for the case study were used: observation, interviews, and a research reflection notebook (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Data collection began with observing all students in one Modeling class for approximately two hours. The observation was during an in-class activity where the goal was to find the mass of the turkey in the set-up shown in Figure 1. Interaction between the researcher and participants was minimal with the students during the observation, and time was divided among all 9 groups. Observations were recorded in field notes during the 2-hour time frame. Due to the variety of career paths requiring Introductory Physics, these students ranged from entering freshmen to seniors. Also, the class is approximately 40% female and mostly Hispanic. There were 9 mixed-gender groups of 3 students each arranged in the classroom as seen in Figure 2.

To obtain information rich data, a researcher should choose participants to interview who have a great deal of familiarity with the course and its requirements (Rubin & Rubin, 2007). Two students were chosen: Giselle and John (gender-specific pseudonyms). Both John (Group 7) and Giselle (Group 4) are sophomores in college and are biology majors. Additionally, both students are in the pre-medical school track. Giselle never had any physics before this class and has participated in studies before with the researcher's research group. John had one physics class in high school in Brazil, and has never participated in a study with the researcher's research group before. The interviews took place in the middle of the semester and were conducted individually for approximately 45 minutes each.

At Florida International University, the Physics Department has incorporated Modeling Physics classes that are in part designed to give students the necessary problem solving skills. The physics community at Florida International University (FIU) is very tight-knit. Everyone knows one another and spends much of their time working together. As a graduate student in this environment, the researcher is necessarily a part of this community. However, the introductory students have very little connection with this physics community. They interact almost exclusively through the use of the tutoring sessions the undergraduates run. Thus, introductory students will have had little to no contact with the researcher. Throughout the research, a reflection notebook was used to monitor subjectivity, and member checking was used to ensure validity.

## Results and Analysis

The analysis on the three sets of data yielded six final stages derived from the transcripts of the data: external influences, internal influences, introduction and representation, coordination of representation, applications, and checking for consistency. As expected, the internal

influences were more evident in the interviews than in the observation. Similarly, the external influences were clearer in the observation of the in-class assignment. However, the remaining four themes were evident in both the interviews and observations. Furthermore, the themes of internal influences and external influences provide information as to how this process impacts the self-efficacy of the students in a fashion parallel to the goal setting process, while the other four themes—introduction and representation, coordination of representation, applications, and checking for consistency—exemplify the goal-setting process. To better understand self-efficacy in physics, for this paper, the focus is primarily on the interaction between the feedback to self-efficacy loop and the goal-setting process.

*Feedback to Self-Efficacy*

In this loop, two themes emerged: (a) external influences and (b) internal influences. External influences are the effects on the problem solving process that are from outside the student (i.e. outside resources, group work, etc.) Internal influences are the effects on the problem solving process that come from within the student (i.e. confusion, level of engagement, etc.).

*External influences*. Most of the time, the students begin their work in the self-efficacy feedback loop, often through the use of previously acquired resources, or external influences. As John notes,

> …the main strategy when we read a question is [to figure out] what we need to solve for. We try to implement what we already know from past problems we did, and laws that we learned and formulas. And once we gather all that knowledge, whether it's on a piece of paper or a big board, you start playing with it in order to be able to find the next step.

Here John describes accessing his previously obtained resources and applying them to the situation at hand. Similarly, Giselle relies on the materials provided by the professor: "He always uses a worksheet for the experiment we have to do. Then the worksheet tells us steps, and tells us what to do, tells us what's going on and stuff." These participants clearly show confidence to perform the task due to the impact of the external influences available.

*Internal influences*. Similarly, within the self-efficacy feedback grouping, the internal influence theme plays a role in understanding the level of perceived difficulty of the activity and the level of engagement of the student. John makes this theme evident with his statement:

> It's more of you need to come to class; you need to be active. You need to be willing to make mistakes, and if you're not really trying to solve something, and you're just looking around at the other people doing it, you won't learn. So you can read the book, but it won't be enough. You need to be active; you need to try.

Clearly these participants acquire a level of self-efficacy from their own internal perspectives on what is necessary to get to the end result. However, no actual goal setting appears to have taken place. Rather, these influences have a strong impact on how the students start the process of goal setting and moving forward. This is where Bandura's (1977) theoretical framework of self-efficacy plays a role. The perception of what outside resources are available, how difficult the problem will be, and the level of engagement necessary to succeed are all directly linked to one's belief in his/her ability to perform the task at hand.

*Goal-Setting Process*

Nevertheless, this self-efficacy feedback loop, while related to the goal-setting process, does not actually characterize the process itself. When students solved a problem in class, and later spoke of their experiences in interviews, a specific, non-sequential process was observed; this process had distinct stages. A student might be in any one of these stages while solving a

problem. This process does not have a specific order, and the students seem to go through multiple cycles of the process before solving the problem. These stages are as follows: (a) introduction and representation, (b) coordination of representation, (c) applications, and (d) checking for consistency.

*Introduction and representation*. The first theme of introduction and representation is the depiction of the problem to be solved, and can take the form of equations, diagrams, or graphs. Almost all the students start the goal-setting process by creating a diagram that is an accurate introduction and representation of the situation at hand. This is evidenced early in the observation: "[Giselle's group members] say they need to check some angles. They are drawing diagrams and trying to relate the angles in them." Also, Giselle discusses drawing graphs in the interview: "No, [graphs] are helpful because you can see it more, and you kind of understand what's going on a little bit more." Giselle is clearly in the introduction and representation stage of the goal-setting process, but it's also important to notice how she notes that the graphs are helpful. This stage of the goal-setting process is positively impacting her self-efficacy to move forward on the problem. We see a direct link to the self-efficacy feedback loop by her mention of an internal influence of understanding. Additionally, diagrams, equations, and graphs are all parts of the introduction and representation stage, and the students return to creating these representations throughout the problem solving process, thus impacting their self-efficacy along the way.

*Coordination of representation*. The second theme of coordination of representation occurs when the student relates the representations to one another, which may involve interpretation in words, or simply finding the relationship between the diagrams and equations. After students have a few different representations, there must be some coordination of representations. John most clearly explained this part of the goal-setting process:

> Ok, there's different ways to find the weight. Some people used trigonometry, and found the components of the forces. Other people used geometry; they discovered that the triangle on the top of the turkey had to be the same as the triangle below, and then they found the forces somehow that way. Probably using calculus or something like that. We got the same answer basically.

In this segment, John discusses the relationship between the physical setting of the experiment, the physics concept, and the mathematical tools. He is coordinating all of the representations of the situations to create a coherent and complete design of the task at hand. Nonetheless, he is also transferring information back to his self-efficacy feedback loop. In his last statement, "We got the same answer basically" is an example of John using the external influence of other people's result to positively impact his own self-efficacy. Similarly, students were observed trying to create a coherent relationship between the representations, "[John's group was] confused about where the angle would go in their diagram. [They ask], 'Does it start or stop at the turkey or at the sensor?'" They're trying to coordinate their diagrammatical representation with the physical experimental setup (see Figure 1). However, this is an example where the coordination of representation negatively impacts the students' self-efficacy through the internal influence of confusion apparent in the quotation.

*Applications.* The third theme, applications, occurs when a student employs the coordinated representations to move forward in the problem-solving process and includes putting the correct numbers in the equations or graphs. This theme arises out of the students making sense of all the information they've been working with so far. This is easily understandable when John says:

> Well there are different forces that act in each axis that affect the gravity and the normal force that oppose each other. So I can find the normal. And the tension, it was already provided. And since it was in equilibrium, the two forces in the x-axis would have to be in equilibrium or it would be moving. So I think we found that; I think we did solve for the mass. But we had to get a lot of measurements in order to find the forces.

John attempts to apply the coordinated representation of the equilibrium physics concept to his diagrammatical representation. This is why he refers to the forces in the different axes. He may not be pointing to a physical picture, but he is referring to a mental diagram. In addition, a direct connection to self-efficacy is evident in John's statement, "I can find the normal." Given his accurate coordination of representations, John's self-efficacy to move to the application step is positively impacted.

*Checking for consistency*. The applications stage does not end the goal-setting process; rather, a checking for consistency theme that emerges from the data ends this process. Checking for consistency is verifying the reliability of the end result, consisting mainly of checking units or making sense of the final number. This happened repeatedly in the observation: "One student, looking at his answer [for the mass of the turkey] says, 'I'm satisfied because it weighs about 4/5 of a pound," and "I hear, 'Our units do go!'" as well as, "'Wow, that's really too low, let me see what you did.'" Although clearly the students are checking for consistency at this endpoint, this step in the goal-setting process does not only happen at the end. Again, this stage transfers information to the self-efficacy feedback. The checking for consistency stage tells the students how confident they should be in their answer, which influences their self-efficacy for completing the next stage of the problem. The students also check at shorter intervals throughout the process. For example, Giselle describes trying to figure out which lengths they should measure to get the angle: "We were like 'this is too long' because we're trying to measure the angle here, not here." Also in the observation, when a particular group had figured out all the angles in their triangle, pointing at angles in a diagram drawn on their paper, they ask each other if the angles add up to 180°. These students are going through the checking process during the problem solving, and transferring positive feedback to their self-efficacy.

During the entire goal-setting process, information is transferred back to the self-efficacy feedback loop each time the students complete a stage and move to the next during the goal-setting process. In the final stages of the process, the students find the correct answer; regardless of whether they were correct, a variety of information passes between them. Externally influencing them is the professor revealing the answer: The professor gets the electronic scale out to measure the mass of the turkey. Everyone leans forward as he places the turkey on the scale. It reads 388g. As John states, "Some of the times we thought we got it, and we didn't. We totally got something else, or we forgot to add or subtract something, and we got a totally different number from everybody else." Clearly, the students look for an external validation on their goal-setting process, which gives them positive or negative feedback to their self-efficacy.

## Conclusion

The observations and interviews of the two Modeling Physics students indicate the problem solving process can be divided into two main themes: goal-setting process and self-efficacy feedback. The goal-setting process consists of four primary stages that transfer information to the self-efficacy feedback loop. It is evident that each stage of the goal-setting process independently impacts the self-efficacy, supporting Schunk's (1991) conclusion that proximal goal setting affects self-efficacy. Considering the link between self-efficacy and the persistence of students in technical fields (Lent, 1987), and the impact of goal-setting on self-

efficacy in the Modeling classroom, goal-setting should be further explored as a way to understand the retention of students in physics.

## References


Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Towards a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review, 84*(2), 191-215.

Bandura, A., & Cervone, D. (1983). Self-evaluative and self-efficacy mechanisms governing the motivational effects of goal systems. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 45,* 1017-1028.

Betz, N. E., & Hackett, G. (1989). An exploration of the mathematics self-efficacy/mathematics performance correspondence. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education, 20*(3), 261-273.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson.

Brown, S. D., Lent, R. W., & Larkin, K. C. (1989). Self-efficacy as a moderator of scholastic aptitude-academic performance relationships. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 35*(1), 64-75.

Fencl, H., & Scheel, K. (2005). Engaging students. *Journal of College Science Teaching, 35,* 20-24.

Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Larkin, K. C. (1986). Self-efficacy in the prediction of academic performance and perceived career options. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 33*(3), 265-269.

Lent, R. W. (1987). Comparison of three theoretically derived variables in predicting career and academic behavior: Self-efficacy, interest congruence, and consequence thinking. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 34*(3), 293-298.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). Assessing and evaluating qualitative research. In *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (pp. 18-33). New York: John Wiley.

Mulvey, P. J., & Nicholson, S. (2007). *Enrollments and degrees report, 2005*. Retrieved March 23, 2009, from http://www.aip.org/statistics/trends/reports/ed.pdf

Pollock, S. J., Finkelstein, N. D., & Kost, L. E. (2007). Reducing the gender gap in the physics classroom: How sufficient is interactive engagement? *Physics Review Letters Special Topic – Physics Education Research, 3*(1).

Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2005). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schunk, D. H. (1983). Developing children's self-efficacy and skills: The roles of social comparative information and goal setting. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 8,* 76-86.

Schunk, D. H. (1991). Self-efficacy and academic motivation. *Educational Psychologist, 26*(3), 207-231.

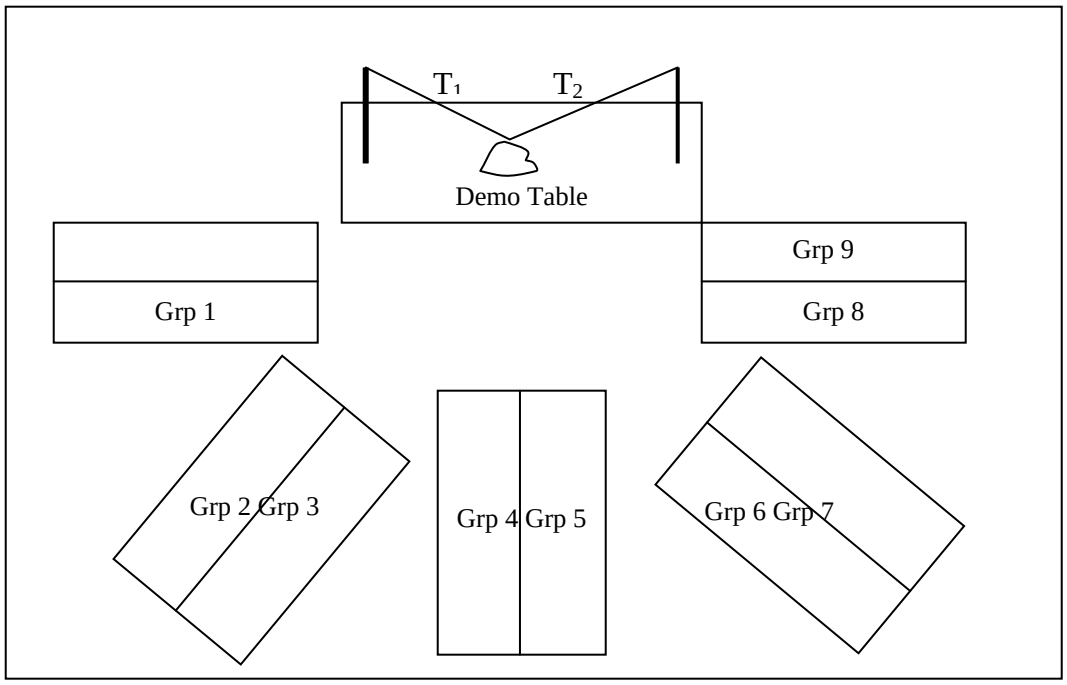



*Figure* 1. The experimental set-up for the in-class observation activity.

Table 1
*Major Questions Used as an Interview Guide for Both John and Giselle.*

**Major Interview Guide:**

A) I'm interested in understanding what a student does to succeed in [Insert Professor]'s physics class. What would you tell a friend is necessary?
B) Let's use an example of problem solving. Walk me through the activity you did when you tried to find the mass of the turkey.
C) How was this an example of a typical physics problem?
D) Are there any examples in this "find the mass of the turkey activity" of general things that you do when solving physics problems?
E) Generally, how would you say you attempt to solve a physics problem?

# Engagement Leadership: A New Developmental Model

Michael Bradley Shuck
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract**: This paper explores the connection between leadership behaviors and employee engagement to build a proposed conceptual model. A conceptual link between employee needs (Herzberg, 1959; Maslow, 1970), emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998), and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) is discussed.

The world of work is changing and so must the way we look at leadership (Maccoby, 2007). The very fabric of the workforce is shifting (Joo & McLean, 2006) and leaders must be prepared to meet the new challenges of humanity; the threats and opportunities have never been greater (Maccoby, 2007). The idea of employee engagement is gaining considerable attention as leaders are beginning to invite followers to be collaborators in the process of shaping the future of work. Employee engagement is defined as the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral elements associated with role performance (Saks, 2005) and is conceptualized through an understanding of meaning, safety, and availability (Kahn, 1990). Employee engagement represents the depth in which an employee identifies with his/her work. "Not only does employee engagement have the potential to significantly affect…retention, productivity and loyalty, [but] it is also linked to customer satisfaction, company reputation and overall stakeholder value" (Lockwood, 2007, p. 7). Sadly, it is conservatively estimated that only 30% of the global workforce goes to work engaged (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Shuck & Wollard, 2008). With evidence pointing toward the significant benefits of engaged employees (Wagner & Harter, 2006), why are so few leaders actively engaging their employees and why are so many employees going to work every day disengaged?

It is estimated that 70% of the global workforce goes to work every day disengaged (Shuck & Wollard, 2008; Wagner & Harter, 2006). Disengaged employees develop distrust toward leadership and focus more on their unhappiness rather than on the mission or strategic direction of organizational outcomes (Payne, Cangemi, Fuqua, & Muhleakamp, 1998). The psychological construct of employee disengagement translates into the physical behaviors of restricting output, frequent absenteeism, apathy, high levels of theft, and passiveness (Payne et al., 1998). Since 2003, engagement levels among employees have steadily dropped every year although its importance to key organizational leaders has increased (The Ken Blanchard Companies [TKBC], 2008). In recent studies, executives rated the development of employee engagement among the top priorities of their companies for the coming year (Ketter, 2008; TKBC, 2008). Additionally, in a survey of 1,800 corporate managers and leaders, 58% listed "creating an engaged workforce" (TKBC, 2008, p. 3) as the top management challenge of their organization and 82% of the surveyed workforce said that employee engagement was one of the most important issues facing their company right now (Czarnowsky, 2008). Although leadership is talking about engagement, very little is being done to develop it. "The discrepancy between the perceived importance of engagement and the level of engagement that exists in organizations today" (Czarnowsky, 2008, p. 4) is cause for concern.

Although many factors affect the way an employee experiences work (Robbins & Judge, 2009), current research suggests that leadership behavior can greatly influence these factors

Shuck, M. B. (2009). Engagement leadership: A new developmental model. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 126-132). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

(Mester, Visser, Roodt, & Kellerman, 2003). Little, however, is known about how this influence occurs. The purpose of this manuscript is to provide an exploration of leadership behaviors associated with the development of employee engagement, specifically in the workplace. First, employee engagement and leadership will be introduced, followed by a conceptual framework of leadership in the context of employee engagement, ending with a proposed model. Lastly, concluding remarks bring the manuscript to a close.

## Employee Engagement

Leader behavior is a key factor in developing employee engagement (Shirey, 2006). Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of employee engagement refers to the atmosphere created in the workspace by those who have the power to influence. Employees are continuously assigned roles at work that define their unique perception of being an employee (Kahn, 1990). At work, employees defend themselves from both isolation and feeling overwhelmed by alternately pulling away from and toward relationships, projects, and responsibilities that allow or disallow the consistent expression of one's preferred self. The choice to express or withdraw is the emotional, and eventual physical act of employee engagement.

Kahn (1990) posited that meaningfulness, safety, and availability were important constructs to fully understanding why an employee becomes engaged. Meaningfulness is defined as the positive "sense of return on investments of self in role performance" (Kahn, 1990, p. 705). Meaningfulness completes a circular model where employees add value and significance to what they are doing as well as receive feedback that they are valuable and significant to the organization. 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). Employees need to believe that they can trust their working environment and that they know what is expected of them at work. Often encompassing a physical component, safety is just as much about employees' fearing emotional and psychological harm. Availability is defined as the "sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary" (Kahn, 1990, p. 705) for the completion of work. Employees must believe that they have the tools to complete their work or that at minimum, these tools can and will be obtained.

Through this framework, employee engagement is understood by fulfilling the needs found within these three constructs (Kahn, 1990). The decision to engage is an internal decision based on external forces (Harter et al., 2002; Kahn, 1990) outside of an employee's control, but within the leader's sphere of influence.

## Leadership

Leadership is a complex and multifaceted construct. In the past 60 years, more than 65 classification systems have been developed to explain the various dimensions of the word *leadership* (Fleishman et al., 1991). For the purposes of this manuscript, leadership has been defined as "a process whereby an individual influences a group…to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2007, p. 3). From this perspective, leadership is understood as an event that takes place between leaders and those who follow them, not a set of traits or characteristics. This definition infers that leadership is available to everyone, not a select few. Additionally, an additional perspective of leadership includes a dimension of positive influence that transforms followers (Burns, 1978; Maccoby, 2007). Merging these two perspectives is at the core of how leadership in an engagement context should be conceptualized; this new context of leadership could be called *engagement leadership*. Although engagement leadership can be characterized through definition, no framework for its development exists. Thus, a new conceptual framework is suggested in the following section.

## Conceptual Framework of Leadership and Employee Engagement

Research has indicated that the qualities of transformational leadership parallel the outcomes of employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008), suggesting that transformational leadership might be appropriate theory to conceptualize the height of employee engagement in a leadership context. Although this connection sounds intuitive, no research connects the constructs; it is merely suggested (Macey & Schneider, 2008). In the following section, a conceptual framework of leadership in the context of employee engagement is explored through several existing frameworks. First, Herzberg's (1959) two factor and Maslow's (1970) motivation theories are explored in relation to the structure of transactional leadership (Northouse, 2007) theory as a foundation for transformational leadership. Second, emotional intelligence is discussed as a skill set which bridges transactional leadership behaviors and transformational leadership behaviors. Third, transformational leadership is discussed as an antecedent to employee engagement, followed by a proposed conceptual model.

### *The Basic Building Blocks of Leadership*

Leaders need skills to build a foundation on which they later stand. Herzberg's (1959) two factor theory and Maslow's (1970) motivation theories combine to develop a framework for how leaders create this foundation. Herzberg's two-factor (1959) theory developed from the belief that one's relationship to work can influence overall success. Herzberg's (1959) theory proposes that extrinsic hygiene factors are conceptualized as employees' basic needs in the workplace. If these hygiene conditions are not met, an employee experiences dissatisfaction with his/her work. If these conditions are met, dissatisfaction does not occur (Latham & Ernst, 2006); not being dissatisfied leads to the ability to be satisfied, but does not necessarily assure it. Herzberg (1959) went on to say that more intrinsic motivational factors (i.e. importance of contribution, personal growth, meaning) encourage employees to be engaged in their work; however, attention must be paid to the extrinsic hygiene factors (i.e. fair pay, job security, and physical environment) that result in no dissatisfaction before a leader can begin using intrinsic motivation factors to develop satisfaction. This idea parallels the structure of Maslow's (1970) motivation theory, providing a link between work and human motivation.

Maslow (1970) posited that humans have basic needs that must be met for growth and development to occur. First, needs are arranged in order of potency (Maslow, 1970). Second, the more foundational the need for survival, the sooner it appears within the hierarchy (1970). Third, needs are filled sequentially, starting from the lowest need and moving to the highest (1970). Basic human needs are individually identified as physiological, safety, belonging and love, esteem, and self-actualization (1970). The importance of Maslow's theory as it relates to this conceptual framework of engagement leadership is found in the structure of the theory and the premise that not filling first level needs precludes the rise to meeting second or third level needs; according to the application, a leader must meet a follower's basic needs (i.e. a follower's extrinsic hygiene factors) before he/she can lead at the transformational level. Fulfilling these needs can be conceptualized through transactional leadership theory (Bass, 1985).

Transactional leadership is defined as a set of behaviors that motivate and guide followers in the direction of a goal by providing clear expectations and defining role and task requirements (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Although transactional leadership is often characterized by theories such as contingent rewards and management by exception (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000; Northouse 2007), again it is the conceptualization of transactional leadership in this context that is essential to engagement leadership. This conceptualization, that leaders must understand and meet their followers' needs, is directly parallel to Herzberg (1959) and Maslow's

(1970) motivational theories and explains why so many leaders never get beyond the basics; they simply provide no foundational reasons for a follower to be motivated.

Much like building a house, the foundational behaviors that have been discussed set the structural strength of a leader's ability to lead. As a transactional-type leader, followers would be provided with clearly defined expectations, resources to complete their work, and a burgeoning low level of trust, but no more; no relationship, no personal development, and no emotion. Rather subordinates are objects for manipulation rather than development (Northouse, 2007). Moving beyond the basics requires a leader to develop an additional set of skills. Great leaders know that leadership is not built on transactions alone but on acknowledgement of human emotions (Goleman, 1998; Maccoby, 2007).

*Emotional Intelligence*

Goleman, Boyatzis, and McKee (2002) posit that when researchers attempt to explain why some leaders are so effective and others fail, emotional intelligence is the dividing factor. Effective leaders are a like in one significant way: they all have a high degree of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998). Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to understand and express emotions within one's self, to use emotions to facilitate thinking, to recognize and reason with emotions, and to manage emotions within relationships to others (Mayer, Caruso, & Salovey &, 2000). Emotional intelligence is conceptualized in four domains of development: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management (Goleman, 1998; Goleman et al., 2002). Self-awareness refers to "the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effects on others" (Goleman, 1998, p. 88). Self-management is defined as the "ability to control…emotions and act with honesty and integrity in reliable and adaptable ways" (Goleman et al., 2002, p. 49). Social awareness is defined as sensing the emotional tone of the organization and its employees and being able to act (Goleman at al., 2002). Relationship management is defined as working with the emotions of others (Goleman et al., 2002). Goleman et al. (2002) and Maccoby (2007) both build upon the foundational skills that leaders need (i.e. hygiene factors) and argue that without emotional intelligence, a leader is unable to move beyond the foundations of leadership.

Evidence points to emotional intelligence as the bridge between transactional leadership behaviors and engagement linked leadership behaviors (Goleman, 1998; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Within the domains of emotional intelligence, a significant conceptual relationship seems to exist between Herzberg (1959) and Maslow's (1970) motivation theories as well as Kahn's (1990) original conceptualization of employee engagement. When employees are engaged, they are emotionally connected to others and cognitively vigilant to the direction of the team (Harter et al., 2002); there is an important connection beyond the basics. Transformational leadership builds upon the conceptualization that has been developed up to this point and turns the corner on transactional behaviors through the integration of emotional intelligence.

*Transformational Leadership*

Although transformational leadership has attracted scrutiny throughout the academic community, positive results continue to emerge from leaders using this style (Barling et al., 2000). Transformational leadership is defined as leadership that improves the performance of and develops followers to their fullest potential (Northouse, 2007). Transformational leadership motivates followers by (a) raising a follower's level of value to and providing a sense of connection to goals, (b) encouraging followers to transcend their own self-interest for the betterment of the team, and (c) helping followers address higher level needs (i.e. intrinsic psychological motivation factors) (Bass, 1985). Extending the original work on charismatic

leadership by House (1977), Bass (1985) emphasized the origins of the emotional elements of leadership and gave more attention to the needs of followers rather than those of leaders (Northouse, 2007), building upon Herzberg's (1959) two factor theory, Maslow's (1970) motivation theory, and Goleman et al.'s (2002) conceptualization of emotional intelligence.

Four behavioral characteristics define the context of transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Idealized influence parallel's Kahn's conceptualization of meaningfulness and safety and is defined as a leader's ability to successfully communicate an organization's direction and display strong moral character, fostering the conditions of trust to develop. Inspirational motivation is defined as "leaders who communicate high expectations to followers, inspiring them…to become committed to and a part of the…vision of the organization" (Northouse, 2007, p. 183). This type of communication parallel's Kahn's (1990) meaningfulness construct and underscores the importance of intrinsic motivation in the engagement leadership process. Intellectual stimulation, defined as encouraging innovation, creativity, and problem-solving in a safe environment, parallels Kahn's (1990) safety and meaningfulness constructs. Lastly, individual consideration, defined as providing a supportive, encouraging work environment (Robbins & Judge, 2009) parallels Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of meaningfulness, safety, and availability. Individual consideration implies leaders give attention to and support employees in completing their jobs. None of these transformational leadership behaviors is possible without emotional intelligence.

In conclusion, a link has been drawn between the conceptual underpinnings of transformational leadership and employee engagement. The links between basic leadership behaviors and transformational leadership behaviors show a building block model that has implications for how engagement leadership can be conceptualized. The conceptualization of domains associated with transformational leadership seems to be an antecedent of the engagement leadership construct; engagement leadership as understood in this model would be an antecedent of employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2008). See Figure 1.

## Concluding Remarks

A conceptual relationship has been drawn between leadership behaviors and the development of employee engagement. This relationship has implications for how HRD scholars and practitioners approach the concept of leadership development within organizations looking to develop employee engagement. Billions of dollars are spent each year on training leadership skills and behaviors (Robbins & Judge, 2009). It seems prudent that those teaching leadership and leaders themselves would seek a model that has the power to significantly impact retention, productivity, loyalty, customer satisfaction, company reputation, and overall stakeholder value (Lockwood, 2007; Wagner & Harter, 2006). This conceptual model provides a pragmatic way to train and learn leadership skills in a developmental way that provides a research based and conceptually sound foundation.

## References

Czarnowsky, M. (2008). *Learning's role in employee engagement.* American Society for Training and Development: Author

Barling, J., Slater, F., & Kelloway, E. K. (2000). Transformational leadership and emotional intelligence. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal, 21*, 157-161.

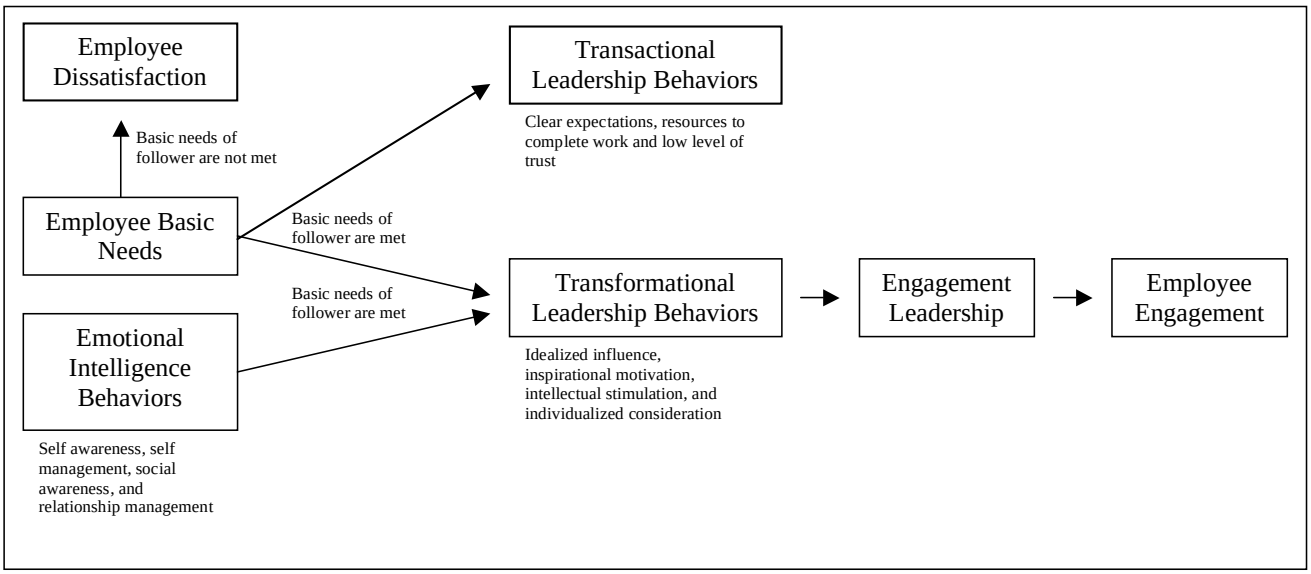
Bass, B. M. (1985). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New Young: Free Press.

Beck, J. (2003). Independent workforce theory: Implications for HRD. *Human Resource Development International, 6*(1), 21-41.

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
Fleishman, E. A., Mumford, M. D., Zaccaro, S. J., Levin, K.Y., Korotkin, A. L. & Hein, M. B. (1991). Taxonomic efforts in the description. *Leadership Quarterly, 2*(4), 245-287.
Goleman, D. (1998). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review, 76*(1), 93–102.
Goleman, D., Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*, 268-279.
Herzberg F. (1959). *The motivation to work*. New York: Wiley.
House, R. J. (1977). A 1976 theory of charismatic leadership. In J. G. Hunt & L. L. Larson (Eds.), *Leadership: The cutting edge* (pp.189-207). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
Joo, B., & McLean, G. N. (2006). Best employer studies. *Human Resource Development Review, 5*, 228-257.
Kahn, W. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal, 33*(4), 692-724.
Ketter, P. (2008). What's the big deal about employee engagement? *T+D, 62*, 44-49.
Latham, G. P., & Ernst, C. T. (2006). Keys to motivating tomorrow's workforce. *Human Resource Management Review, 16*, 181-198.
Lockwood, N. R. (2007). Leveraging employee engagement for a competitive advantage. *2007 SHRM Research Quarterly, 52*(3), 1-12.
Maccoby, M. (2007). *The leaders we need*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
Macey, W., & Schneider, B. (2008). The meaning of employee engagement. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 1*, 3-30.
Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper and Row.
Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D., & Salovey, P. (2000). Selecting a measure of emotional intelligence: The case for ability scales. In R. Bar-On & J. D. A. Parker (Eds.), *The handbook of emotional intelligence* (pp. 320–342). New York: Jossey-Bass.
Mester C., Visser D., Roodt G., & Kellerman R. (2003). Leadership style and its relation to employee attitudes and behaviour. *Industrial Psychology, 29*(2), 72-82.
Northouse, P. G. (2007). *Leadership: Theory and practice.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Payne, K., Cangemi, J. P., Fuqua, H., & Muhleakamp, R. (1998). Leadership and employee empowerment. In J. P. Cangemi, C. J. Kowalski, & K. H. Khan (Eds.), *Leadership behavior* (pp. 119-130). Lantham, MD: University Press of America.
Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2009). *Organizational behavior*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
Saks, A. M. (2006). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 21*(7), 600-619.
Shirey, M. R. (2006). Authentic leaders creating healthy work environments for nursing practice. *American Journal of Critical Care, 15*(3), 256-267
Shuck, B., & Wollard, K. (2008). Employee engagement: Motivating and connecting with tomorrow's workforce. *New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development, 22*(1), 48-53.
The Ken Blanchard Companies. (2008). *2008 corporate issues survey*. Guildford, United Kingdom: Author.
Wagner, R., & Harter, J. K. (2006). *12: The great elements of managing*. Washington, DC:

The Gallup Organization.

*Figure 1*. Engagement Leadership Conceptual Model



# A Historical Perspective of Employee Engagement: An Emerging Definition

Michael Bradley Shuck
Florida International University, USA

Karen K. Wollard
Kelly, Wollard & Associates, Inc., USA

**Abstract**: This paper explores the development of employee engagement through a historical perspective lens. Using a structured literature review, seminal works are identified and reviewed. A working definition is proposed.

Employee engagement has generated a great deal of interest in recent years as a widely used term in organizations and consulting firms (Macey & Schneider, 2008) especially as credible evidence points toward an engagement-profit linkage **(**Czarnowsky, 2008**)**. Employee engagement has been characterized as "a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components . . . associated with individual role performance" (Saks, 2005, p. 602). Engaged employees often display a deep, positive emotional connection with their work and are likely to display attentiveness and mental absorption in their work (Saks, 2006). Although engaged employees are consistently more productive, profitable, safer, healthier, and less likely to leave their employer (Fleming & Asplund, 2007; Wagner & Harter, 2006), only 30% of the global workforce is estimated to be engaged (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Saks, 2006). Nonetheless, despite continued evidence of linkages to positive business outcomes, employee engagement is declining (Czarnowsky, 2008).

As the concept of employee engagement moves from consulting and HR literature to more rigorous academic journals, the engagement construct has been poorly conceptualized and defined (Macey & Schneider, 2008 ), resulting in potential misuse of the construct. The current conceptualization includes both attitudes (satisfaction, commitment, involvement, and empowerment) and behaviors (organizational citizenship behaviors, taking initiative, willingness to take on new responsibilities, and acceptance of change; Macey & Schneider, 2008) but varies significantly in the literature. HRD professionals are being asked to play an increased role in the development of engagement interventions but are challenged with understanding the concept due to poor conceptualization, definition, and often-disjointed literature.

## Problem Statement

The employee engagement construct has been inconsistently interpreted (Macey & Schneider, 2008) since its inception. Contemporary definitions of employee engagement have primarily come from business, psychology, and human resource consulting practitioner bodies of literature (Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2005), many of which lack the rigor of academic scrutiny. Additionally, consulting firms who report having developed interventions that aid organizations in building employee engagement lack a working definition of the construct, referring to engagement only as a "persistent positive state" (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 4). Without a clear definition and common understanding, strategies for the development of employee engagement are cluttered, scattered, and unfocused. Having a clear definition and common understanding of employee engagement could result in enhanced strategy for HRD practitioners and scholars. The purpose of this paper is to explore the historical development of employee engagement through an integrated review of the literature and to propose a working

Shuck, M. B., & Wollard, K. K. (2009). A historical perspective of employee engagement: An emerging definition. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 133-139). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

definition of the employee engagement construct. First, the method will be discussed. Second the historical development of employee engagement including a proposed working definition of the construct will be explored followed by concluding thoughts.

## Method

The method that best captures data from various emerging fields of study is an integrative literature review, which is a "distinctive form of research that generates new knowledge"…about an emerging topic of study (Torracco, 2005, p. 356). Because employee engagement is an emerging topic being studied in various academic fields of which all have different conceptualizations, an integrated literature review was conducted. Selection of articles and data organization and analysis are discussed in this section.

### *Selection of Articles*

The following data sources were selected and searched for their representation of the human resource development, human resource management, business, and psychology fields: PsycInfo, ABI/Inform, ASTD's Training & Development Journal (T&D), the Society for Human Resource Management Journals, the Academy of Management database, all four Academy of Human Resource Development (AHRD) journals, and AHRD conferences papers from the last ten years. Data sources were abstract queried using the single keyword *employee engagement* and limited to articles with employee engagement appearing in the abstract or title, published in the English language, and peer-reviewed. Literature was broadly searched for the key word employee engagement as a "distinct and unique construct" (Saks, 2005, p. 602). Because the first mention of employee engagement in the academic literature comes from Kahn (1990), the search was limited to articles published from 1990 to 2008.

A staged review method was then used to analyze all articles containing the phrase employee engagement. A staged review is the practice of initially reviewing only abstracts to determine relevancy and then reviewing relevant articles in depth (Torraco, 2005).

### *Data Organization and Analysis*

A total of 155 abstracts were reviewed (see Table 1). Of the 155, ten were duplicates and five were unrelated to the topic and deleted. The remaining 140 abstracts were printed and

Table 1
*Number of Selected Articles by Database Source*

| Database | Hits | Abstracts |
|---|---|---|
| PsycInfo | 19 | 19 |
| ABI/Inform | 969 | 120 |
| T&D, ASTD | 10 | 10 |
| SHRM Journals | 2 | 2 |
| Academy of Management | 3 | 2 |
| AHRD Conference Papers (1998-2008) | 2 | 2 |
| HRD Review | 0 | 0 |
| HRD International | 0 | 0 |
| HRD Quarterly | 0 | 0 |
| Advances in HRD | 0 | 0 |

reviewed by both authors. Major theoretical articles were identified for further review. Of the 140 articles identified for further review, 26 were empirical. Ten of the 26 were selected for complete reading as they were considered to be seminal works on the topic because either (a) the authors were known for contributions in their areas of expertise, or (b) the abstract mentioned research specific to the development of employee engagement.

## Historical Development of Employee Engagement

This literature review examines the historical development of the construct of employee engagement. First, early and contemporary conceptualizations of employee engagement are discussed followed by a proposed working definition of the construct.

### *Early Conceptualizations of Employee Engagement*

The first mention of employee engagement appears in an *Academy of Management Journal* article, "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work" (Kahn, 1990). In his article, Kahn explains the underpinnings and major influences on his thought, beginning with the classic sociology text, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1961). Goffman (1961) heavily influenced Kahn's (1990) writing as evidenced by Kahn's suggestion that "people act out momentary attachments and detachments in role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 694); a direct reference to Goffman's (1961) internationalist theory. This conceptualization and others alluding to the roles we play in our lives are interwoven throughout Kahn's (1990) development of the first grounded theory of personal engagement and personal disengagement. Kahn (1990) defined personal engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performances" (p. 700). Drawing from the work of Goffman (1961), Maslow (1970), and Alderfer (1972), Kahn (1990) posited that the domains of meaningfulness, safety, and availability are important to fully understanding why a person becomes engaged. Kahn (1990) defined meaningfulness as the positive "sense of return on investments of self in role performance" (p. 705). He defined safety as the ability to show one's self "without fear or negative consequences to self image, status, or career" (Kahn, 1990, p. 705) and availability as the "sense of possessing the physical, emotional, and psychological resources necessary" (p. 705) for the completion of work.

Kahn's conceptualization of personal engagement and personal disengagement would be the only piece of empirical research on employee engagement until early 2001, when Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter (2001) focused on why employees develop job burnout. Conceptual in nature, Maslach et al. (2001) posited that employee engagement was the positive antithesis to burnout and defined employee engagement as "a persistent positive affective state . . . characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure" (p. 417). Together, Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al. (2001) provided the two earliest theoretical frameworks for understanding employee engagement (Saks, 2005).

The only study to date to empirically test Kahn's (1990) conceptualization of engagement found that all three of Kahn's (1990) original domains were "important in determining one's engagement at work" (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004, p. 30). This finding suggests the framework Kahn (1990) used in his conceptualization is foundational for the scaffolding of the construct.

### *Contemporary Conceptualizations of Employee Engagement*

Harter et al. (2002) published one of the earliest and most definitive pieces of consulting literature on employee engagement. Using a research foundation pioneered by the late Donald O. Clifton as a part of the Gallup Strengths movement and popularized by the publication of *First Break All the Rules* (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999), Harter and colleagues (2002) pulled data

from a meta-analysis of 7,939 business units across multiple fields of industry. Harter et al. (2002) were the first to look at employee engagement at the business unit level. In their conceptualization, employee engagement was defined as an "individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (Harter et al., 2002, p. 417). This definition added the expectation of an individuals' satisfaction level and measured engagement on the business unit level, altering the way engagement had been previously viewed. Harter et al's (2002) article was a catalyst for the rapid expansion of interest in the employee engagement construct since it was the first widely disseminated publication to suggest an employee engagement-profit linkage. The Corporate Leadership Council (2004) and Towers Perrin (2003) followed Harter et al. (2002) by disseminating consulting literature on employee engagement geared toward consulting products. These for-profit organizations remain huge international players in driving the profitability of the employee engagement construct, although none share a common conceptualization or definition.

The first academic research to specifically conceptualize and test antecedents and consequences of employee engagement occurred in 2005 (Saks, 2005). Prior to Saks (2005), practitioner literature was the only body of work connecting employee engagement drivers to employee engagement consequences. Saks provided an important bridge between previous theories of employee engagement, practitioner literature, and the academic community. Saks (2005) thought employee engagement was developed through a social exchange model and was the first to separate job engagement and organizational engagement into separate types of employee engagement. As a result, Saks (2005) defined employee engagement as "a distinct and unique construct consisting of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components . . . associated with individual role performance" (p. 602). This definition was inclusive of previous literature by introducing the idea that employee engagement was developed from cognitive (Kahn, 1990; Maslach et al., 2001), emotional (Harter et al., 2002; Kahn, 1990), and behavioral components (Harter et al., 2002; Maslach et al., 2001).

In 2006, The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) commissioned a publication on employee engagement and commitment as an extension of the *Effective Practice Guidelines Series*. This report was hailed as a "clear, concise, and usable format" (Vance, 2006, p. v) for understanding employee engagement, hoping to make the concept of employee engagement more accessible to SHRM members. Although topic headings such as *Key Ingredients, Job and Task Design,* and *Designing Engagement Initiatives* were peppered throughout the pages, this publication was not clear and concise, lacked a single definition of employee engagement, and offered few research-based solutions for those struggling with developing engaged employees. This publication is noteworthy, however, because it marked the entrance of professional societies into the employee engagement conversation.

Two years after the SHRM study, The American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) commissioned a study in association with Dale Carnegie Training to look at employee engagement (Czarnowsky, 2008). This study focused on the role of learning in the employee engagement construct, marking the first major research publication by ASTD on employee engagement and the first look into the construct from a training perspective. Using data from 776 human resources and learning executives from around the world, ASTD defined engagement as "employees who are mentally and emotionally invested in their work and in contributing to their employer's success" (Czarnowsky, 2008, p.6). The results of the study showed connections to the foundational work of Kahn (1990) and Maslach et al. (2001) by creating meaningful work environments, providing opportunities for learning, and focusing on the experience of the

employee. Additionally, this study presented an important link to the academic community, since ASTD was the first professional society to use a research driven framework to understand employee engagement.

Building significantly on the work of multiple scholars, Macey and Schneider (2008) pioneered conceptual research in the area of employee engagement. Conceptualizing that employee engagement develops from (a) trait engagement, (b) state engagement, and (c) behavioral engagement (2008), they drew significant parallels from previous research and defined each as a separate engagement construct. From their perspective, employee engagement is defined by suggesting that "(a) job design attributes would directly affect trait engagement, (b) the presence of a transformational leader would directly effect state engagement, and (c) the presence of a transformational leader would directly affect trust levels and thus, indirectly affect behavioral engagement" (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 25). In this conceptual model, the preceding state of engagement would build on the next, each developing a piece of the overall employee engagement construct. This contribution to the field, which built significantly on the work of Saks (2005), helped to clear the cluttered, scattered, and unfocused conceptual state of employee engagement by breaking the engagement construct into distinct parts.

*A Working Definition of Employee Engagement*

As evidenced by the literature reviewed, several definitions of employee engagement exist. Although each represents unique perspectives of the time and field, the disjointed approach to defining employee engagement has lent itself to the mischaracterization of the construct and the potential for misinterpretation. This is especially challenging for the HRD field, a field that is often called on to develop interventions for the development of such a construct. Several definitions from both the practitioner and academic literature reviewed for this paper are listed below starting with the earliest specific definition and working forward in time.

- "Personal engagement is the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performances" (Kahn, 1990, p. 700).
- "A persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure" (Maslach et al., 2001, p. 417).
- "Employee engagement refers to the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work" (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269).
- "A distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance" (Saks, 2005, p. 602).
- "[Engaged] employees are mentally and emotionally invested in their work and in contributing to their employer's success" (Czarnowsky, 2008, p. 6).
- Trait engagement is defined as the "inclination or orientation to experience the world from a particular vantage point" (Macey & Schneider, 2008, p. 5). Psychological state engagement is defined as an antecedent to behavioral engagement (encompassing the constructs of satisfaction, involvement, commitment, and empowerment). Behavioral engagement is "define[d] in terms of discretionary effort" (p. 6).

In each of the definitions, several areas of consistency and inconsistency can be identified. First, being engaged is a personal decision; it concerns the individual employee, not the organization. Many definitions (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Saks, 2005) allude to this; however, Maslach et al. (2001) and Czarnowsky (2008) speak only of generalities, underscoring a primary misconception that employee engagement is about the organization. Employee engagement concerns the individual, not the masses. Second, in several of the

definitions, different types of engagement can be identified: (a) cognitive engagement, (b) emotional engagement, and (c) behavioral engagement—each as separate, definable areas, although a few of the definitions only mention one type of engagement (e.g., Harter et al., 2002; Czarnowsky, 2008). The idea from both the literature reviewed as well as the definitions themselves is that each type of engagement builds on the next, which is consistent with the employee engagement framework (Alderfer, 1972; Maslow, 1970).

Third, employee engagement has no physical properties, but is manifested and often measured behaviorally (Kahn, 1990; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Behavioral manifestation is understood inconsistently as an employee's role performance, an employer's success, or discretionary effort, but consistently understood as an internal decision manifested outwardly. Best conceptualized as a positive or forward moving emotive state (Maslow, 1970), employee engagement is rooted in the psychology of the employee and observed through behavior. Last, employee engagement is about adaptive behaviors purposefully focused on meeting or exceeding organizational outcomes. By synthesizing the definitions, we argue that employee engagement can be defined in an emergent and working condition as a positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward organizational outcomes

## Conclusion

This historical perspective of employee engagement has uncovered areas of inconsistent definitions and interpretations. In addition to understanding how the concept has evolved, scholars and practitioners can benefit from an integrated understanding of the construct through the use of a working, emergent definition. Encompassing early and contemporary conceptualizations, this definition gives scholars and practitioners a pragmatic tool in the form of a common understanding as well as a clear definition. By using a clear definition synthesized through multiple conceptualizations in various fields of study, HRD practitioners may be more uniquely situated to develop the expertise to provide specific strategic interventions in their places of work.

## References

Alderfer, C. P. (1972). *Human needs in organizational settings*. New York: The Free Press of Giencoe.

Buckingham, M., & Coffman, C. (1999). *First, break all the rules; What the world's greatest managers do differently*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Corporate Leadership Council. (2004). *Driving performance and retention through employee engagement*. Washington, DC: Author.

Czarnowsky, M. (2008). *Learning's role in employee engagement: An ASTD research study.* Alexandria, VA: ASTD.

Fleming, J. H., & Asplund, J. (2007). *Human sigma*. New York: Gallup Press.

Goffman, E. (1961). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor-Doubleday.

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87,* 268-279.

Kahn, W. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, *33*(4), 692-724.

Ketter, P. (2008). What's the big deal about employee engagement? *T+D*, *62*, 44-49.

Macey, W., & Schneider, B. (2008). The meaning of employee engagement. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 1,* 3-30.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B., & Leiter, M. P. (2001). Job burnout. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52, 397-422.

Maslow, A. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd ed.). New York: Harper and Row.

May, D. R., Gilson, R. L., & Harter, L. M. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 77*, 11-37.

Saks, A. M. (2006). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *21*(7), 600-619.

Torraco, R. (2005). Writing integrative literature reviews: Guidelines and examples. *Human Resource Development Review*, *4*(3), 356-367.

Towers Perrin. (2003). *Working today: Understanding what drives employee engagement*. Retrieved November 2, 2006, from http://www.towersperrin.com

Vance, R. J. (2006). *Employee engagement and commitment: A guide to understanding, measuring, and increasing engagement in your organization.* Alexandria, VA: The SHRM Foundation.

Wagner, R., & Harter, J. K. (2006). *12: The great elements of managing*. Washington, DC: The Gallup Organization.

# Project POWER: *P*romoting *O*ur *W*ill Through *E*ducation and *R*esearch

Martin J. Wasserberg and Louie F. Rodriguez
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** Project POWER utilized participatory action research to critically examine issues facing students in an urban high school, setting the stage for the co-creation of spaces for student-teacher dialogue. The project culminated in a dialogue between the students and their future teachers at a university in Miami, Florida.

> I got [a] paper that said "congratulations" in [class] today. That's my first time! I don't never get none of these things. My sister brings them all the time, but my parents get mad at me 'cause I don't never get no type of paper that says "congratulations." – Larry, 11th grader

Larry's comment above was captured during a classroom dialogue about the significance of supportive teachers. Classroom dialogues can help build relationships across social, cultural, and power differences (Nagda & Gurin, 2007) and have implications for student identity development (Stables, 2003). Classroom dialogues are therefore especially important when considering social justice outcomes. Project POWER (Promoting Our Will through Education and Research) was a year-long participatory action research (PAR) project originating with a partnership between a university researcher and a local classroom teacher. The project ultimately engaged a high school class in a dialogue with future teachers to give them a voice in defining the types of teachers they would like. The project took place in the context of a historically struggling urban high school. Results provide insights to how youth can be meaningfully engaged within the school context, as well as how university researchers can collaborate with local high schools.

## Rationale

The struggle to provide equal educational opportunities for Black and Latino/a children in urban schools remains a significant challenge to the nation. A cursory look at the largest and most racially and economically segregated school districts would demonstrate that dropout rates among high school age youth of color exceed 50% (Orfield, Losen, Wald, & Swanson, 2004). In particular, urban high schools tend to be large and overcrowded, conditions that often deny students adequate opportunities to learn (Fry, 2003). Most schools also struggle to provide equitable resources and qualified teachers and to resist the counterproductive tendencies of zero-tolerance policies, particularly for youth of color (Kozol, 1992, 2005). The surrounding communities are typically characterized by concentrated poverty, violence, and political disenfranchisement (Noguera, 1996).

Within the everyday realities of the work of teachers and students, schools serving low-income youth of color are increasingly finding themselves in the position of meeting Adequate Yearly Progress, a system of accountability based largely of standardized test scores, based on No Child Left Behind standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Thus, the governmentally created top-down policy mandates have in many ways determined how and what is taught, and subsequently the quality of relationships between students and school adults

Wasserberg, M. J., & Rodriguez, L. F. (2009). Project POWER: *P*romoting *o*ur *w*ill through *e*ducation and *r*esearch. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 140-145). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

(Rodríguez, 2008). Within this era of *test-prep pedagogy*, alternative dialogical pedagogies are helpful in resisting the marginalization that is so often reproduced in urban schools as a way to forge a new pathway for youth engagement in schools and to collaborate with struggling schools to explore what is possible despite policy and cultural constraints.

## Theoretical Framework

Given the challenges associated with teaching and learning within the context of struggling urban schools, the epistemological approach to research was rooted in justice and equity. The researchers aimed to create a process whereby the youth were direct agents throughout the research process. Thus, a PAR framework was utilized, whereby the youth identify problems and issues that are directly relevant to their lives (Cordova, 2004).

PAR researchers believe that student-researchers possess expert knowledge and experiences in their everyday social contexts that are too often denied or subtracted from youth within the school context. As Cordova (2004) explains, "it is in direct interaction with those experiencing the 'issue' that [researcher] practitioners are able to determine the contours of that issue, the problems, the needs, and thus, the appropriate research questions" (p. 46). The researcher-"researched" relationship is thus fundamentally reformed through the process of PAR work, positioning as equal the value of the latter's experiences.

Parallel to the principles of PAR work, the researchers involved in this project also drew from Freirian pedagogy, which focuses on consciousness-raising for the purposes of realizing the liberatory possibilities of education (Freire, 1974). Freire emphasizes that a liberatory education means communication and dialogue and that it is the role of the teacher to maintain the dialogue with problem-posing and critical analysis. Within the context of classroom dialogues, the researchers drew from the realities, challenges, and experiences that were most familiar to the students' lives. Using Freire's problem-posing pedagogy, the students in this course used their own theories about such issues as school dropout/pushout rates, teacher quality, socioeconomics, and racial dynamics as theoretical bases to examine other issues in schools and communities for the remainder of the project. Problem-posing pedagogy necessitates that the traditional researcher-"researched" relationship is transformed through dialogue.

## Project POWER

The research took place in an urban high school classroom in Miami, Florida, comprised of 20 (18 Black, 2 Latino/a) 11th graders who volunteered to participate in the project that met for approximately 7 hours weekly throughout an entire school year (during class sessions two or three times per week), known as project POWER. The research team consisted of a university professor, a graduate research assistant, the classroom teacher, and the student researchers. All classroom dialogue was videotaped for analysis.

In PAR, student creativity is vital and the role of researchers involves support and critical questioning to compliment and strengthen the analysis, skill-building, and social and intellectual development of the participants. Equally central to PAR work with youth is its aims to affect social change and projects defined by youth are almost inevitably framed as social justice issues (Minkler, 2000). Within the context of a high school history class, project POWER utilized problem-posing pedagogy to dialogically generate several topics for student-research. One of the first questions the class addressed related to the role that public schools play in low-income communities serving historically marginalized youth. Driven by lessons on the history of the U.S. educational system, including but not limited to an in depth analysis of *Brown v. Board of Education*, the initial question was, "How has the school system worked for us and how has the system worked against us?" A number of testimonies and reflections emanated from the

students' experiences. The students spoke about lack of voice, "they [administrators] don't take us seriously… they don't allow students to voice their opinion." They spoke about a longing for positive reinforcement from teachers as demonstrated by Larry's quote above. Students also questioned who was defining what they were learning, "they only give us what they want us to know… just give us everything and let us decide what is important to us!" The students also began to question how their social context impacts what actually happens in schools and the degree to which state-level and district-level policy-makers understood this connection. It became apparent to the researchers that the students had limited opportunities to explicitly tell their stories, and it demonstrated to the student-researchers that their stories are not unique and the students had more in common with one another than they had known.

*Relationship Development Between Researchers and Student-Researchers*

The researchers typically shook each student's hand or ensured that they were acknowledged at the door or at their desk. Students tended to appreciate the attention. For example, one student named Eric was absent 45 school days by mid-January. Aware of Eric's sporadic attendance, the researchers made it a point to check-in with him everyday he was present, extend support, and relay the message that his presence was valued. After a couple of months, Eric began to go out of his way to say hello to the researchers and also shared some personal stories and struggles he was experiencing in life. After initially contributing to classroom dialogues with statements such as "school seems like a seven-hour prison sentence," he later repeatedly remarked that the PAR research course was a central reason why he continued to come to school. Eric's experience is unique and each relationship the researchers had with students varied. Nonetheless, the researchers have demonstrated that it is possible to engage with students in a unique way and the quality of their engagement is, in part, a function of the commitment to relationship-building. Student-adult relationships are vital to student learning, development and engagement in school, particularly with historically marginalized youth (Nieto, Bode, Kang, & Raible, 2008). Thus, relationship-building driven by respect is a central form of engagement and practice exercised by the researchers in the classroom.

A key element to forging relationships with students was acknowledging every student as they walked through the door. Although such a practice may seem commonsensical, it is amazing how rare such occurrences are, especially in large urban high schools (Conchas & Rodriguez, 2007). Because of the focus on testing, the social climate of the school is typically tense, driven by rules and regulations such as new time and bell schedules, stricter hallway rules, and new procedures for granting bathroom passes to students (Kozol, 2005). Thus, these new restrictions on human engagement have had a negative impact on opportunities to engage or prioritize relationships. Within the project POWER classroom, the researchers made a deliberate attempt to forge relationships.

*Community Building*

Also integral to the success of the project was the ability of the students to work together in groups. In order to develop and foster this ability, the researchers initiated a series of community building activities. One such community-building ritual involved a progressive unity clap that has roots in the farm worker struggle in the southwest as part of the larger civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s and a community-building strategy used during the Chicano Movement around the same time. Each classroom meeting began and ended with a gradual building of applause, starting with one person clapping and continuing until the classroom gels in a simultaneous rhythmic ovation. The progress of the "clap" can be viewed as a metaphor for an observed shift in the classroom climate. Early in the project, the clap was off beat and disjointed,

and the classroom was less than cohesive. Critical student dialogue was sometimes countered with "that's stupid," or other similar remarks from peers. Through dialoguing, relationship development, and community-building exercises, the classroom climate took a positive turn. Before long the clap came together as one rhythmic entity, as the class developed a collective identity. Remarks such as "that's stupid," were replaced with "let's hear her opinion." The class became self-regulating, as one student put it "if we don't let [student's] talk, they are not going to want to participate and we will never hear what they have to say." In the context of the PAR project, as evidenced by the description of the particular research project to follow, this mutual respect was vital to the success of individual groups.

**"What Kinds of Teachers Do We Want?"**

Again, within the context of a high school history class, project POWER utilized problem-posing pedagogy to dialogically generate several topics for student-research. The particular research project to be discussed here was driven by mid school-year lessons on the history of community organization, including but not limited to an in depth analysis of the Chicano student walkouts of 1968. This developed into one of the most significant research projects that was tackled by project POWER and began with an examination of the student-initiated question, "What kinds of teachers do we want?" After engaging the group in an open dialogue about effective and ineffective teachers, students were assembled into work groups by topic of interest. Within the dialogue, students agreed that the following characteristics are vital to being a good teacher: being (a) supportive, (b) motivational, (c) inspiring, (d) respectful, and (e) aware of how to keep a classroom "alive." Once issues were identified, the researchers guided the student-researchers in various possible data collection techniques, data analysis, and presentations possibilities. The student-researchers were then charged with creating a 20 minute presentation that incorporated creative pedagogies such as interactive discussions, multimedia, and skits/plays/scenarios. Groups conducted and analyzed a number of interviews with a purposefully selected sample of teachers and students to complement their presentations.

In the spirit of university collaboration with local high schools, the university professor involved in project POWER arranged for the student-researchers to present their research to classes of pre-service teachers at a major public university. In addition to the classroom dialogue, which sparked the research project, a second dialogue was initiated between the high school students and their future teachers (a university classroom of pre-service teachers) as part of an effort to explore ways in which the K-12 system and universities can build together creatively to improve urban schools. Some examples of remarks contained within student presentations included: (a) "It's important to us for teachers to be inspiring…To inspire is to make you want to do something without getting something in return;" (b) "If the teachers do not respect the students, students will not respect teachers either;" and (c) "The majority of teachers are unsupportive… many of them create tense and stressful classroom atmospheres. As students, we react to the classroom atmosphere."

The overemphasis on test-preparation in the lowest-performing schools across the country has in many ways stifled opportunities to engage in a meaningful dialogue. In fact, observations by the researchers have demonstrated that dialoguing has become a subversive and revolutionary act given the lack of will or opportunity to do so within the school environment. However, through project POWER, the researchers and student-researchers have demonstrated that when given the opportunity, students are ready to engage. This can occur when an environment is created that is genuinely committed to fostering dialogue and student engagement.

## Towards Youth Engagement

In large part, the purpose of project POWER is to set a foundation for building a large-scale dialogue about education as a constitutional right for youth, involving educators, researchers, students, and communities who have been historically marginalized by the educational system. By engaging youth directly in action research projects and co-creating spaces for critical dialogue, project POWER demonstrates how our nation's youth can enact their will and struggle for their position as agents of social change in their schools and communities. The "What kinds of teachers do we want?" research project described here exemplified this potential. After the culminating dialogue between the student-researchers and pre-service teachers, pre-service teachers offered the following comments, among others: (a) "I would never have thought for one second that they were from an [underperforming] school. That in itself shows my own personal bias towards lowering my standards for that group before even having met them;" and (b) "Meeting with students and dialoguing about what they need and want in the classroom must be a part of the curriculum… we should visit schools of different demographics to talk and ask questions to students." The researchers involved in project POWER firmly believe from their involvement in the year-long project that despite the constraints and pressures facing the most marginalized schools, liberatory engagement with youth is possible in the school context.

## References


Conchas, G. Q., & Rodriguez, L. F. (2007). *Small schools and urban youth: Using the power of school culture to engage students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Cordova, T. (2004). Plugging the brain drain: Bringing our education back home. In J. Mora & D. R. Diaz (Eds.), *Latino social policy: A participatory research model* (pp. 25-53). New York: Haworth Press.

Freire, P. (1974). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York: Continuum.

Fry, R. (2003). *Measuring the challenge*. Washington, DC: Pew Hispanic Center. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED477379)

Kozol, J. (1992). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York: HarperCollins.

Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America*. New York: Crown Press.

Minkler, M. (2000). Using Participatory Action Research to build healthy communities. *Public Health Reports, 115*(2-3), 191-197.

Nagda, B. A., & Gurin, P. (2007). Intergroup dialogue: A critical-dialogic approach to learning about difference, inequality, and social justice. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 2007*(111), 11.

Nieto, S., Bode, P., Kang, E., & Raible, J. (2008). Identity, community, and diversity. In F. M. Connely, M. F. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 176-197). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Noguera, P. A. (1996). Responding to the crisis confronting California's Black male youth: Providing support without furthering marginalization. *The Journal of Negro Education, 65*(2), 219-236.

Orfield, G., Losen, D., Wald, J., & Swanson, C. B. (2004). *Losing our future: How minority youth are being left behind by the graduation rate crisis*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Civil Rights Project. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED489177)

Rodríguez, L. F. (2008). Struggling to recognize their existence: Examining student–adult relationships in the urban high school context. *The Urban Review, 40*(5), 436-453.

Stables, A. (2003). Learning, identity and classroom dialogue. *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 4*(1), 1-18.

U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *No child left behind.* Retrieved November 7, 2007, from http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml

# Pro-Literacy: A Historical Evaluation and Presentation of Strategies That Have Influenced the Development of the Volunteer Based Adult Education Program

Chaundra L. Whitehead
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** This paper will present a brief history and work of Pro-Literacy and identify the aspects that serve as a model for other volunteer organizations. Pro-Literacy is an adult literacy program that has been successful in sustaining growth and promoting literacy nationally.

Pro-Literacy is a non-profit, 501(c) (3) educational corporation. According to the Internal Revenue Service, a 501(c) (3) is a type of non-profit organization exempt from some federal taxes; religious, educational, and scientific organizations often fall under this categorization (United States Department of the Treasury, 2009). Its mission is to sponsor educational programs and services designed to "empower adults and their families by assisting them to acquire the literacy practices and skills they need to function more effectively in their daily lives and participate in the transformation of their societies" (Laubach Literacy Staff, 2003, p.11).The organization is the result of combining of previously established organizations. Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) was founded by Ruth Colvin in 1962, and Laubach Literacy Action (LLA) was founded by Frank C. Laubach in 1955. Both of the founders continue to work with Pro-Literacy. The two merged in 2002 and represent the largest literacy program nationally, and the majority of literacy tutors are trained by affiliates of these two programs (Belzer, 2006). Prior to their unification, LVA and Laubach were the two major national adult literacy volunteer organizations. Pro-Literacy provides support for hundreds of programs in libraries, community centers, faith-based organizations, corrections facilities and adult schools.

According to Laubach Literacy Staff (2003), few U.S. adults are truly illiterate. The definition of illiteracy has changed many times over the past few decades. The National Adult Literacy Survey of 1993 defined literacy this way: "Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goal, and to develop one's knowledge and potential" (as cited in Laubach Literacy Staff, 2003, p.13). This definition does not tie literacy to one standard ability or grade level, but recognizes that literacy is related to the needs of each individual. Pro-Literacy's concern is the number of adults with low literacy skills who are unable to find and retain employment, support their children's education, and participate in their communities (Leon-Guerrero, 2005).

The purpose of this research is to identify the aspects of Pro-Literacy that have been most successful in sustaining the volunteer based organization. The identification of positive variables that have influenced the program's substantial accomplishments will assist in providing a model for the success of other community based volunteer organizations. There are specific variables that increase an organization's likelihood for mission achievement. According to a study conducted by Experience Corps, a volunteer teaching program for seniors (as cited in Raley, 2006) volunteers' motivation, enjoyment of challenges and rewards, training, teamwork and day-to-day support were all critical to success of the organization. Mattessich (2001) presents 20 factors influencing successful collaborations. Of the 20, many factors, such as shared vision,

Whitehead, C. L. (2009). Pro-literacy: A historical evaluation and presentation of strategies that have influenced the development of the volunteer based adult education program. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 146- 150). Miami: Florida International University.
http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

sufficient funds, staff, materials, and time, are present in Pro-Literacy. An examination of the history and procedures of Pro-Literacy has revealed three characteristics that allow it to continue as one of the world's largest non-profit education organizations. The key aspects that have maintained Pro-Literacy's position in the global adult literacy arena are the following: (a) training aspects, (b) size and growth, and (c) funding. These variables are essential to maintaining a successful community based volunteer organization.

## Training Aspects

The use of volunteers in adult literacy programs offers many benefits; however, volunteers must be properly trained to be useful. Costs associated with training, space, and supplies are overheads to the organization. The good intentions of volunteers are not sufficient to ensure positive outcomes (Belzer, 2006). Training the volunteers is a costly and well planned process. Affiliates of the LVA program believe it is very important for volunteers to be well trained and to be provided with the tools to help them meet the needs of the individual students. They are also required to follow a pre-set course of volunteer training (Hohensee, 2000). Historically, LLA has had a sub-skills orientation to reading instruction. LLA's instructional approach, based on phonics, form a basis for the *Laubach Way to Reading* set of skills books for basic reading and the *Laubach Way to English* for ESL (English for Speakers of other Languages) instruction. The LLA educational components consist of one-on-one tutoring and some small group instruction in basic literacy skills and ESL; tutor training in-service; a certification process for trainers of literacy tutors; local council and state office support in the from of materials for readers and reference materials; and public policy advocacy (Tenebaum & Strang, 1992). The LVA method is learner centered, more holistic, and observes a constructivist approach to literacy learning.

Pro-Literacy requires its volunteer tutors to attend a pre-service training. Training varies from 10-18 hours. In compliance with the Pro-Literacy guidelines, the initial training session provides information on the mission of the organization, and introduces some technical skills, definition of literacy, a description of the average adult learner characteristics, and the Learner Experience Approach (LEA). In addition, tutors are taught traditional approaches to teaching reading, lesson planning, and maintaining student files. Although LLA and LVA have been merged for many years, their former member organizations are still conducting their own distinct tutor training based on their previous affiliations (Belzer, 2006). Pro-Literacy is still in the process of combining the two methods of training into one cohesive program.

Training is the most important part of a volunteer based organization. Most programs that utilize volunteer tutors require completion of pre-service training and many provide some in-service supports as well (Belzer, 2006). All of the methods and techniques taught in training are not always properly executed during tutoring sessions. Follow-up in-service and mentoring, such as those conducted by Pro-Literacy program directors, is valuable to the reinforcement of the trained methods. If volunteers are not properly trained, they may not have the skills necessary to supply the needs of the organization. Tutor training of volunteers for LVA-affiliated programs have positive social and economic benefits (Belzer, 2006). The training for teaching reading is based to some extent on the LVA tutor handbook, *Tutor* (Belzer, 2006). This book also serves as beginning material for the tutor and student.

Volunteering must benefit the volunteer. It is an opportunity to try something new and learn new skills necessary to succeed in business (Reynolds, 1998). The skills learned in the training for Pro-Literacy, such as record keeping, filing, organizing, goal-setting, teaching, writing, creative thinking, improvising and coaching, can be useful in most life situations. A

number of mediating factors—including educational attainment and attitudes toward school for both tutors and students, and the reading level, goals and interests of students—make drawing a straight line between tutor training and tutor practice difficult (Belzer, 2006). The flexibility of scheduling is an attractive factor for both tutors and students, who also hold full time jobs.

Reliable research on the effectiveness of specific types of volunteer tutor training in adult literacy programs is almost non-existent. The studies that have been done are not well documented and appear to be biased toward a particular published program or courseware that wishes to be shown effectual (Skinner, Gillespie, & Balkam, 1997). A well-structured pre-service training program does have a major impact on the instruction and retention of volunteers. Pro-Literacy maintains its own records of the productivity of its tutors and the service it provides to its learners, for internal and external reporting purposes. They also maintain structured training methods with their affiliates and continue development of training for their volunteers. Their method of training has an influence on maintaining Pro-Literacy's volunteer base. Well trained and well-supported volunteers are more useful and dedicated to the organization.

## Size and Growth

During the 1960s, adult education and life-long learning became the focus of many library systems in America. Librarians began to design literacy programs at their individual locations nationwide, and they were all independent of each other. However, as LLA and LVA expanded, they eventually secured affiliates in most county library systems. To meet the needs of more students in the LLA and LVA, the programs had to acquire more staff. Rapid expansion brings with it the risk of losing consistency in day-to-day operations (Tenebaum & Strang, 1992). This is one of the challenges of a volunteer based organization; however, it is a good problem, because it represents increase in clients and services. As an organization increases in size, it may consider changing some volunteer positions to paid staff positions, as the LVA has done. Pro-Literacy affiliates that offer adults instruction in basic literacy, GED preparation, math, and English as a second language are now found in all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia. The main contributing factor of growth was the combining of the two organizations. Organizations that share a common vision and serve the same population should consider joining to pool resources and lead their perspective fields of service. Over the past forty years, LLA and LVA have moved from infancy to a dominant fixture in most American city and county libraries as Pro-Literacy.

## Funding

> Pro-Literacy has a strong mission statement, which includes the following commitment: We are committed to strengthening and improving our organization. We continue to search for efficiency and creativity in the delivery of our programs; to grow and expand in order to stay on the rising tide of illiteracy; to discover new ways of harnessing society's existing resources for the achievement of literacy (Cheatham, Blakenship, Ruth, & Laminack, 1993, p.156).

As a testament to the organization's intention to harness resources, Pro-Literacy has a large number of corporate and foundation partners who provide continued annual support. For example, Verizon sponsors an online adult literacy training program for the tutors and staff of Pro-Literacy. The Verizon Literacy Network provides self paced courses that are ideal for tutors to train from home or in the community. This is only one example of how Pro-Literacy uses resources of corporations in order to further their mission. There are numerous international, national and local organizations which regularly support the efforts of Pro-Literacy to eliminate illiteracy. To receive funding from many of these corporations and foundations, a spotless public

image must be maintained. Organizations must be aware of funding regulations enacted by the federal government. The National Literacy Act sets forth a framework for program accountability for all federally assisted adult education and literacy programs (Tenebaum & Strang, 1992). Detailed and transparent recordkeeping is required, because financial backers want to know that their funds are reaching the intended audience and being used in a proper fashion.

One strategy used by Pro-Literacy to acquire funds is having affiliates report information to the national headquarters on grant-making institutions in their local area. Then if the corporation is regional or national, a fund development officer from Pro-Literacy will contact the company to try to obtain a larger grant, so that the whole state, region, or national affiliates benefit. This strategy allows local affiliates to keep their local funds in their community, while also encouraging potential funds for multiple affiliates (Lytle, 2007). As a general rule, financial backers are interested in gains made by learners of diverse racial, ethnic, and/or socioeconomic backgrounds; learners with limited English speaking skills; those who have passed the GED test or enrolled in a community college; and those who have progressed through a related workplace program (Skinner et al., 1997). Community based volunteer programs must continually seek grants, funding and donations from organizations large and small. A substantial source of support for Pro-Literacy is the Ameri-Corps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) program. All of the sites receive funds from the association, United Way. The United Way is a major partner of Pro-Literacy, and funded both LLA and LVA (Tenebaum & Strang, 1992).

The LLA and LVA operated their own publishing divisions prior to joining forces. Selling published materials is a viable source of income for a non-profit organization, especially an adult literacy organization that already has these materials to provide to their own affiliates. In 1991, 40% percent of LVA's national budget of 2.2 million was derived from the sales of LVA publications (Tenebaum& Strang, 1992). According to the LLA's 1990 national budget, 7.5 million dollars was received from the sale of its New Readers Press publications (Tenebaum & Strang, 1992). If an organization has a service or product that could be packaged and sold for profit, they should heavily consider using this as a source of income.

Although the financial strategies and corporate sponsors may make the Pro-Literacy program seem financially secure, this may not be the case for all locations. Affiliates range in size from 10 to 300 students. Over 200 accredited affiliates have different communities with different needs. The annual budgets at various sites at that time could range from under $20,000 to over half a million dollars (Tenebaum & Strang, 1992). There is a bottom line: volunteer literacy programs must do what they can with what is feasible (Skinner et al., 1997). Each program has to take their budget and make it work to fit the needs of their program. In addition to seeking national funds, local affiliates also hold fundraisers, such as bake sales, book sales, or dinners, and seek local businesses for sponsorship.

## Conclusion

An understanding of one organization's strategies and success can provide a strong model for similar organizations. In the case of Pro-Literacy, they have a well established history, large presence in the adult literacy arena, and a valuable public image, all of which make it a model organization. Pro-Literacy has established hundreds of affiliates in libraries, community centers, faith-based organizations, corrections facilities and adult schools. The key aspects that have sustained Pro-Literacy are their training methods and continued development of training for their volunteers, presence in most communities, and their ability to continually receive funding from government and humanitarian organizations. It is evident that these strategies have implications

beyond Pro-Literacy, and can be applied to other volunteer organizations who wish to enact positive social change. By integrating structured volunteer training programs, a plan for growth, and actively securing funding, an adult education or any other volunteer based organization can be sure to sustain some level of increased service, participation and success.

## References


Belzer, A. (2006). Improving the effectiveness of volunteers in community-based adult literacy education. In S. B. Merriam, B. C. Courtenay, & R. M. Cervero (Eds.), *Global issues and adult education* (pp. 369-379). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Belzer, A. (2006). Less may be more: Rethinking adult literacy volunteer tutor training. *Journal of Literacy Research, 38*(2), 111-140.

Cheatham, J., Blankenship, C., Ruth, J., & Laminack, L. L. (1993). *Tutor- A collaborative approach to literacy instruction* (7th ed.). Syracuse, NY: Literacy Volunteers of America.

Hohensee, M. (2000). Strategies to encourage volunteer tutors to utilize AIM (Assessment, Instruction, Mastery) to improve instruction. Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education.

Laubach Literacy Staff. (2003). *Teaching adults – A literacy resource book*. Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press.

Leon-Guerrero, A. (2005). *Social problems – Community, policy, and social action*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lytle, C. (2007, Winter). Introducing a new fundraising concept. *Litscape*. A publication of Pro-Literacy America, 3.

Mattessich, P. W. (2001) *Collaboration: What makes it work. A review of research and literature on factors influencing successful collaboration* (2nd ed.). St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

Raley, B. (2006). *Rewards of giving: An in depth study of older adults' volunteer experiences in urban elementary schools*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

Reynolds, J. (1998*). Volunteering-how service enriches your life and how its unexpected halo effect boosts your career.* New York: St. Martins Griffin.

Skinner, L., Gillespie, & Balkam, L. (1997). Adults who learn differently: Help through a volunteer literacy program. *Annals of Dyslexia, 47*, 183-202.

Tenebaum, E., & Strang, W. (1992). *The major national adult literacy volunteer organization- a descriptive review. Final report.* Rockville, MD: US Department of Education, Office of Planning and Policy.

United States Department of the Treasury, Internal Revenue Service – Charities and Non-Profits. (2009). [Data File]. Available from the IRS website, http://www.irs.gov

# "I Am Not Stupid, I Just Don't…"- A Qualitative Study of Expatriates' Cross-Cultural Experiences

Yang Yang
Florida International University, USA

**Abstract:** This qualitative study explored the unique experiences of expatriates in adjusting to cross-cultural situations and confronting challenges in global journeys. Personal narratives written by previous or current expatriates were collected as qualitative data and content analysis was conducted. The results clarified three themes contributing to the complex process of cross-cultural adaptation.

Increased globalization in almost every arena has led to more frequent and deeper interactions among people from different cultural backgrounds. However, unsuccessful cross-cultural interactions cause a lot of problems. For example, under performance on global assignments is costly for both multi-national organizations and employees. Diplomatic blunders often fail international development projects. Poor adjustments cost individuals psychological well-being.

The current study aimed to examine the unique experiences of expatriates in such cross-cultural journeys as well as their perceptions and reactions when facing potential challenges. An expatriate is an individual who travels voluntarily to a foreign country usually for specific objectives, such as educational, professional, or personal opportunities, with intention of returning to his/her home country (Church, 1982; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Expatriates usually include scholars, students, corporation managers, ministers, and relief workers. Expatriates stand in the front line of cross-cultural encounters because they have face-to-face interactions with members of a new culture in daily situations. Their experiences provide valuable information about cross-cultural communication process, building a foundation for those who plan to live overseas in the future.

## Conceptual Framework

Much literature related to the cross-cultural experiences of individuals has examined expatriates' adjustment to new sociocultural environments. Two relevant theories, U-Curve theory (Lysgarrd, 1955) and bicultural model of acculturation (Berry, 1986, 1997) served as the conceptual frameworks for the current study. Individuals' adaptive experience in a new cultural environment is an acculturation process involving continuous changes in attitudes, emotions, and conducts (Marin, 1992). Lysgaard (1955) described such overall change patterns as a U-Curve. Individuals start out with excitement and high functioning, followed immediately by confusion and decreased competency, and finally regain optimism and satisfaction by acquiring more knowledge of the new culture.

Researchers especially point out that when individuals realize the familiar cues are removed in a new cultural situation, they experience sudden increased stress responses, known as cultural shock (Oberg, 1960). Culture shock is mostly considered a natural progression followed by adjustment (Kim, 2001; Norell, 2000), which involves learning, reflecting, and developing familiarity, comfort, proficiency in regard to expected behaviors, assumptions, and values inherent in the new culture. According to Filmeridis (2003), several researchers have classified

Yang, Y. (2009). "I am not stupid, I just don't…"-A qualitative study of expatriates' cross-cultural experiences. In M. S. Plakhotnik, S. M. Nielsen, & D. M. Pane (Eds.), *Proceedings of the Eighth Annual College of Education & GSN Research Conference* (pp. 151-156). Miami: Florida International University. http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/

two common types of adjustment: psychological and sociocultural. Psychological adjustment focuses on an individual's subjective attitudes and emotional satisfaction in a new cultural environment; whereas sociocultural adjustment focuses on an individual's behavior and ability to interact with members of the host culture. These two parallel dimensions of adjustments are related, although in varying magnitude according to different studies (see Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Therefore both measures should be considered to gain comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural adjustment (Norell, 2000).

Bicultural model of acculturation (Berry, 1986, 1997) concerns individuals' cultural identification during the cross-cultural experiences. Contrast with mono-cultural model, which suggests that individuals possess one cultural identity at the cost of the other, bicultural model argues that embracing a second culture does not necessarily involve abandoning the original culture (Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martinez, 2000). Instead, identification with one culture is independent of identification with another culture (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). In other words, bicultural individuals are able to develop an identification to fit in with the norms and values of the host culture, while maintaining the sense of identity with their original cultural contexts. By doing so, bicultural individuals internalize and maintain two cultures, manage the accessibility to both of them (Norell, 2000), and negotiate both of them comfortably without giving up their identification with either culture (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993).

The key to managing and negotiating between two cultural identifications is recognizing the context and shifting identification according to the context (Bennett, 1993). Bicultural individuals make deliberate choices of actions in specific situations rather than following the prevailing norms of the co-national culture (Kim, 2001). As a consequence, they maintain flexibility to go back and forth between the two and tend to be successful in resolving and reconciling contradictions (Bennett, 1993; Filmeridis, 2003; Kim, 2001).

## Methodology

Personal journals were collected as data for this study, which allowed individuals to talk to a stranger (i.e., the researcher) about key experiences and events important for the research (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Denzin, 1989). The aim was to "obtain detailed evidence as to how social situations appear to [social] actors in them and what meanings various factors have for participants" (Angell, as cited in Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 134). All personal journals were acquired from a volunteer-reviewed online magazine named *Tales From a Small Planet* (n.d.). Online documents were used due to their easy access and convenience (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). One journal from each participant was used and analyzed as data. The length of the journal ranged from 1100 to 2200 words. Four participants were expatriates who either were living abroad or used to live abroad but had returned to their home countries. The participants were females, two single and two married. Christina grew up in the suburban U.S. Midwest and had spent 6 of the last 10 years in Casablanca, Morocco, with her Moroccan husband. Patricia was a freelance writer from Perth, Western Australia, who moved to Singapore in her early twenties with her husband – a Singaporean. Jennifer was a freelance writer from Rochester, New York. She worked as a corporate journalist in Denmark for 2 years. Nichole was living in a tiny German Dorf and working as an English instructor. She lived in San Francisco and Manhattan before. She was employed by local and national television, independent film companies, and assorted corporate environments.

Coding procedure followed three steps of operations, suggested by Seidel and Kelle (1995): (a) noticing relevant phenomena, (b) collecting examples of those phenomena, and (c) analyzing those phenomena in order to find commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures.

The following measures were taken to increase the trustworthiness. Peer review was conducted, with one student reviewer and one faculty reviewer. The author continuously wrote a researcher journal in the audit trail to keep track of the development of her own thoughts and feelings evoked during the process. Besides, rich descriptions and details were included in the final paper, which also aimed to "adequately and convincingly support the findings of the study" and to show that "the author's conclusion 'makes sense'" (Merriam & Associates, 2002, p. 5).

## Results

Three common themes emerged from content analysis: (a) facing challenges, (b) struggling, and (c) adjustment. These three themes represented four participants' perceptions, feelings, and reactions, through which they ascribed meaning to their cross-cultural experiences.

### *Theme 1: Facing Challenges*

This process usually occurred during participants' initial contact with a new environment when they experienced difficulties in the new life. Christina encountered serious problems in such basic needs as dietary choices. She and her Moroccan relatives and friends had very different preferences on food and the way of eating, which caused direct confrontations several times. Unlike the direct confrontations Christina faced, Patricia had another kind of challenge in her transition of career and life situations in Singapore. When starting to work at home, she was left alone because, as she said, "no colleagues to greet in the morning, no department meetings, no one popping up in front of my desk to suggest a coffee break. There's just me, my computer and a quiet flat. " Besides, Jennifer and Nichole both suffered from language barriers. Jennifer would talk with friends or laugh at a joke in Danish one minute, and the next minute, all of a sudden she could not understand anything anyone was saying, which continuously brought Jennifer real difficulties. Nichole was so lost in the face of German language that she felt like living in early childhood again when words and sounds made no sense to her.

### *Theme 2: Struggling*

This process involved participants' different psychological and behavioral reactions to the difficulties they faced. Participants expressed various types of emotions and behaved in line with their emotions. Moroccan relatives teased Christina about her American way of eating and her gaining too much weight, which made her feel insulted immediately even though she did not say it loud: "Did they not know that although we [Americans] are a direct and honest bunch, we bite our tongues when it comes to weight and other physical flaws?" Patricia, on the other hand, was discouraged by the lack of social interaction. Local friends and former colleagues were so busy that they rarely asked her out. She felt like her husband was the only person she knew in Singapore. Facing the language barriers, Jennifer justified not learning Danish by both the difficulty of the language and few chances of using it. Meanwhile, Nichole had to defend herself loudly to keep the language incompetence from compromising her self-esteem: "'You're not stupid; you just don't speak German,' I had to sternly remind myself."

### *Theme 3: Adjustment*

This was a process in which participants regained a sense of control by trying out all possible approaches to go through difficulties. In addition, they reflected on the environment, the success, failures, and changes within them. Christina recognized the differences between Moroccan and American norms of eating and communicating over time. She started to feel comfortable to apply Moroccan behavior patterns when necessary. Similarly, Patricia stopped worrying and feeling bad and reached out to meet a new social group called Young Childless Female Expatriates, which consisted expatriates from all over the world in Singapore. She was filled with joy by such social interaction: "There's a huge smile plastered on my face during the

taxi ride back home." Both Jennifer and Nichole made steady improvement on language learning. Yet what's more important was, when looking back, both of them made more out of this process. Jennifer concluded that "learning a second language turned out to be one of those many things about living abroad that was as mind-expanding as it was difficult. In the end there's great joy in knowing the meaning of *tosproget Amerikaner* – bilingual American." Nichole finally regained her confidence by overcoming language difficulties: "Remember, I'm not a bumbling fool. I just don't speak German – well, not just yet."

## Discussion

The three themes that emerged help to understand the prevalent issues faced by expatriates in their cross-cultural experiences. In this section, the findings from the present study and previous research are discussed.

*Theme 1: Facing Challenges*

Accounts from all participants showed that in their initial contact with a new culture, they experienced some of the most common types of difficulties. More importantly, they were somehow shocked or at least surprised by such encounters because of the lack of knowledge of and few prior experiences with a new cultural context (Oberg, 1960). Such cultural contradictions caused expatriates' intense discomfort during intercultural contacts (Lysgaard, as cited in Filmeridis, 2003). Specifically, inconsistence of the culinary and verbal customs between the host culture and original culture caused increased tension on both sides and usually led to expatriates' or immigrants' discomfort (Regis, 1989). Relocation meant separating from extended family members and previous friends and usually caused a lack of social support (Norell, 2000; Sonderegger & Barrett, 2004). Language acquisition was one of the most common challenges facing by expatriates and immigrants because it impeded their functioning at work and daily life (Yeh et al., 2003).

*Theme 2: Struggling*

At a certain time during their cross-cultural experiences, all participants struggled with both their social performances and personal stress (Lysgaard, as cited in Filmeridis, 2003). The current report supported that contradictions of dietary and verbal customs caused expatriates' discomfort (Regis, 1989). Yet, the finding from the current study showed that the consequences could be more severe for some expatriates (i.e., the contradiction could cause the sense of insult and lead to arguments or gaffes in social interactions with the members of the host culture). The lack of social support brought powerlessness as well as withdrawal, which is in line with Norell's (2000) work. Similarly, language and communication barriers are believed to impose emotional burdens and psychological distresses on individuals (Yeh et al., 2003), which was supported by the present study. However, the current study also suggests a direct and close connection between individuals' language ability and self-esteem (or the lack of both).

*Theme 3: Adjustment*

The present study demonstrates that psychological and sociocultural adjustments are related. Reaching out for social interactions gave individuals immediate relief, which supports that sharing difficulties and feelings with those who have similar cross-cultural adjustment experiences makes individuals more connected with each other (Yeh et al., 2003). Language improvement helped individuals function well or at least adequately. Thus, they felt more comfortable and became more socially active than before. This is consistent with Rumbaut's (1995) finding that English-language competence is associated with lower rates of depression in Latino students.

As for an individual's identification with the host and the home culture, the current study generally supports bicultural model of acculturation (Berry, 1986, 1997). All participants spent efforts and certain amounts of time to adapt to a new culture and then establish their host cultural identity. Meanwhile, through this process, their identity with original culture did not diminish at all. Instead, exposure to a new culture is believed to increase the awareness of self, and psychological growth occurred through a series of crises and resolutions, which thus may reaffirm their original identity (Adler, 1975). In another words, an individual's identification with his or her culture of origin remains the same or does not diminish as one's acculturation into a new host culture (Kim, 2001).

## Conclusion

The current study has illustrated different dynamics in expatriates' lives. However, the influence of a new culture was evident in the experiences shared by the participants. A few lessons referring to expatriates' cross-cultural experiences and the future research directions on such issues should be mentioned. First, this study indicates that adapting in a new culture could be a very complex process. Although all participants in the current study finally regained their competency in a culture, some of their accounts reminded that this may not always be the case. During the struggling period, several participants suffered from severe psychological problems. This was similar to the prior findings that relocating to a new country and learning social norms of a new culture are often linked with psychological distress and depression (Inman, Ladany, Constantine, & Morano, 2001; Sondergger & Barrett, 2004). Unfortunately, often times, individuals rarely reach out actively to seek assistance due to various reasons. The future research should focus on what factors may trigger individuals' actions (or inactions) of seeking help without systematic support. In order to do so, more in-depth interviews, case studies, and observations are needed because such approaches could facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the adaptation process (Filmeridis, 2003).

## References

Adler, P. (1975). The transnational experience: An alternative view of culture shock. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 15*(4), 13-23.

Bennet, J. (1993). Cultural marginality: Identity issues in intercultural training. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 109-135). Yarmouth, MA: Intercultural Press.

Berry, J. W. (1986). Multiculturalism and psychology in plural societies. In L. H. Ekstrand (Ed.), *Ethnic minorities and immigrants in a cross-cultural perspective* (pp. 37-51). Lisse, The Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46*, 5-68.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2007). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (5th ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Church, A. T. (1982). Sojourner adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin, 91*, 540-572.

Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data: Complementary research strategies*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Denzin, N. K. (1989). *Interpretive interactionism*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Filmeridis, K. K. (2003). A study on cross-cultural adjustment: The American community in India (Doctoral dissertation, Columbia University Teachers College, 2003). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65, 1852.

Hong, Y., Morris, M. W., Chiu, C., & Benet-Martinez, V. (2000). Multicultural minds: A dynamic constructivist approach to culture and cognition. *American Psychologist, 55*, 709-720.

Inman, A. G., Ladany, N., Constantine, M. G., & Morano, C. K. (2001). Development and preliminary validation of the cultural values conflict scale for south Asian women. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 48*, 17-27.

Kim, Y. Y. (2001). *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 114*, 395-412.

Lysgaard, S. (1955). Adjustment in a foreign society: Norwegian Fulbright grantees visiting the United States. *International Social Science Bulletin, 7*, 45-51.

Marin, G. (1992). Issues in the measurement of acculturation among Hispanics. In K. Geinger (Ed.), *Psychological testing of Hispanics* (pp. 235-251). Washington, DC: APA.

Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1989). *Designing qualitative research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S. B., & Associates. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Norell, S. K. (2000). Cross-cultural adjustment in American and British accompanying spouses on international assignments: The roles of personality and culture (Doctoral dissertation, Boston University, 2001). *Dissertation Abstracts International*: *Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, 61,* 5058.

Oberg, L. (1960). Culture shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology, 7*, 655-685.

Regis, H. (1989). A theoretical framework for the investigation of the role and significance of communication in the development of the sense of community among English-speaking Caribbean immigrants. *Howard Journal of Communications, 2,* 57-80.

Rumbaut, R. G. (1995). The new Californians: Comparative research findings on the educational progress of immigrant children. In R. G. Rumbaut & W. A. Cornelius (Eds.), *California's immigrant children: Theory, research, and implications for educational policy* (pp. 17–69). San Diego, CA: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies.

Ryder, A. G., Alden, L. E., & Paulhus, D. L. (2000). Is acculturation unidimensional or bidimensional? A head-to-head comparison in the prediction of personality, self-identity, and adjustment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 79*, 49-65.

Seidel, J., & Kelle, U. (1995). Different functions of coding in the analysis of textual data. In U. Kelle (Ed.), *Computer-aided qualitative data analysis: Theory, methods and practice* (pp. 52-61). London: Sage.

Sonderegger, R., & Barrett, P. M. (2004). Patterns of cultural adjustment among young migrants to Australia. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 13*, 341-356.

Tale From a Small Planet. (n.d.). Retrieved November 8, 2008, from http://www.talesmag.com/tales/archives/moretales_wagons.shtml.

Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (1993). Where's the ''culture'' in cross-cultural transition? Comparative studies of sojourner adjustment. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 24*, 221–249.

Yeh, C. J., Arora, A. K., Inose, M., Okubo, Y., Li, R. H., & Greene, P. (2003). The cultural adjustment and mental health of Japanese immigrant youth. *Adolescence, 38*, 481-500.

# College of Education and Graduate Student Network 2009 Research Conference Symposia

## Symposium 1: Institutional Student Learning Assessment in the 21st Century: Definition, Interpretation, Application, and Perception at Florida International University

*Chairperson:* Jacqueline Peña
*Speakers:* Katherine Perez, Jacqueline Peña, Deanne Butchey, Teresa Lucas, Michelle Odai, Jennifer Doherty-Restrepo, and Brian Schriner

*Abstract:* Since students are the center of a college or university, student learning should be at the center of all assessment discussions when analyzing the role that assessment plays within an institution and its accreditation process. With students at the center, faculty play a key role in developing a culture of assessment and explicating the role of assessment in student learning and development. This symposium focuses on the institutionalization of assessment at Florida International University within the national ideology of assessment and accreditation. The symposium will include an overview of the national assessment discussion and the institutionalization of assessment at FIU, a presentation of faculty's use of assessment results for student learning improvement, and a discussion of faculty's experiences and perceptions concerning the institutional assessment process.

## Symposium 2: Approaches to Revealing Researcher Bias

*Chairperson:* Dr. Ann Nevin
*Speakers:* Peter Barbatis, Joan M. Osborne, and Laura Iossi

*Abstract:* In this symposium, three doctoral students will share their experiences in uncovering their potential researcher bias. Through the various processes of self-reflection, discourse, and connections to the literature, the symposium hopes to show others how they might approach the task of revealing their biases. When researchers can acknowledge and search their various professional and personal identities, they can shift from their current perspectives to understand the perspectives of others. The eyes with which researchers see, as well as the personal identities with which researchers interpret their perceptions, can be riddled with scotomas (blind spots or barriers) that come from the researchers' respective traditions, their contexts, and their personal histories. Once those identities are named, clarity in seeing the study context and study participants can increase. Researchers can become empowered to set up procedures to mitigate the influence of researcher bias in all phases of the research process.

## Symposium 3: The Relationship among Mothers' Background, Exposure to Oral Language, and the Language and Literacy Development of Pre-Kindergarten Children

*Chairperson:* Dr. Laura Dinehart
*Speakers:* Maria Marin, Jacqueline Peña, Martin Wasserberg, and Laura Dinehart

*Abstract:* The symposium looks beyond the curriculum effects to see how maternal background relates to preschool children's language abilities before exposure to any curricula, especially to the oral language-based English-only *Literacy Express* full day curriculum. Then, the symposium looks at how the amount of exposure to the mostly oral, *Literacy Express* curriculum affects the children's language development regardless of maternal background.

**Symposium 4: Blended Teaching and Learning**

*Chairperson:* Dr. Sarah M. Nielsen
*Speakers:* Jesus Fernandez, Ed Hill, and Sarah M. Nielsen

*Abstract:* This symposium will explore blended learning, its present and future in higher education, and specifically how it works in practice in a private, four-year university serving local and international students, many of whom are academically underprepared. Students must be prepared to learn using pedagogical methods such as active learning, problem solving, and collaboration that parallel their future workplaces (Bonk et al., 2006); each speaker will address how these methods are used in their courses. Also, speakers will explore blended learning from the teacher's perspective, and what challenges are faced in course delivery to make the best use of onsite and online time. Specific courses in general education and technology will be discussed as they relate to these issues.

**Symposium 5: Re-presentin' Misrepresentations: Algebra Project and the Young People's Project Youth "Write" and "Research" with Video**

*Chairperson:* Maria Lovett
*Speakers:* Three high school students and Maria Lovett

*Abstract:* This symposium explores and demonstrates a methodology driven by digital media production to serve teaching, learning and research that operate in a paradigm of social justice. Video Action Research and Pedagogy (VARP) aims at making critical interventions within both pedagogy and research, and the intersections of both… The VARP methodology connects literacy and media literacy with hands-on video production. In this symposium students will share projects they produced with elementary students from Olinda Elementary entitled: *Who am I?* and *Letters to the President*. They will also show samples from their longer VARP documentary project that investigates connections between the civil rights movement and advocacy for quality education as a constitutional right for all children today. Finally, students will demonstrate a "behind the scenes" look at how they collect data, edit material and distribute their findings.

**Symposia 6 & 7: Voices from EDF4634 Social and Cultural Foundations Students**

*Chairperson:* Dr. Louie F. Rodriguez

*Abstract:* The purpose of these two symposia is to provide COE undergraduate students in my course, EDF4634 Social and Cultural Foundations, the opportunity to demonstrate their learning by discussing and screening their five-minute video documentaries produced during the fall 2008

semester. Given that foundations courses have been under scrutiny and in some cases completely eliminated, this demonstration of student learning is a timely way to demonstrate to significance of foundations courses to the academic community.

*Symposium 6. Abstract:* This panel will address issues of teachers, teachers' work, and teacher quality, particularly teachers serving urban schools and communities. Panelists will discuss the complex role teachers face, particularly in the context of budget cuts, poverty, and public opinion. The first video takes a multidimensional look at what constitutes teacher "work," particularly as teachers struggle with low wages, FCAT challenges, and public respect. The second video explores the complex challenges teachers face such as students with special needs, limited resources, and school culture. The third video explores the issue of qualified vs. unqualified teachers, particularly in schools that serve low-income children. In addition to the video content, panelists will also share why they selected their particular topic, what they learned, and discuss the implications for teacher development.

*Speakers:* Jaclyn Valla, Elizabeth Espinel, Ellen Meyer, Priscilla Montalva, Marcos Castro, Grace Altamirano, Tanna Rodriguez

*Symposium 7. Abstract:* This panel will address issues of racism, inequity, and school dropout. The first video on racism explores a social, cultural, and historical evolution of race and racism in education by highlighting key court decisions in U.S. history such as Mendez v. Westminster, Brown v. the Board of Education, and the Little Rock 9. Secondly, the video explores how race and racism persists in U.S. education by exploring cases such as Jena 6. The second video is a comparative documentary on resource inequities between a public and private school in Miami. As alumni of one of the high schools under analysis, the panelists attempt to dispel some of the myths associated with private and public school differences. The final two videos explore the issue of school dropout. Using various forms of media, these two videos provide an on-the-ground perspective of the impact of dropping out on youth (and young adults) as well as explore some of the causes of dropout. This final panel is particularly timely as the nation struggles with a 30-50% dropout rate across the nation. In addition to the video content, panelists will also share why they selected their particular topic, what they learned, and discuss the implications for teacher development.

*Speakers:* Christopher Farmer et al., Natalie Quincosa, Jessica Valentin, Anailys Acosta, Charisse Gonzalez, Danielle Leys, and Natalya Espana, Stephanie Santagati, Marisela Cardona, Kristine Sierra, Janette Martinez

**Symposium 8: Entrepreneurship Education: Transfer of Knowledge or Development of Skills?**

*Chairperson:* Carlos A. Albornoz
*Speakers:* Dr. Thomas G. Reio, Jr. and Carlos Albornoz

*Abstract:* With the sponsorship of the Entrepreneurship Academy Institute of FIU a group of professors began the research of best ways to develop entrepreneurial skills. As part of this effort, they joint forces with a group of professors from engineering to explore if

entrepreneurship education combined with technology education might encourage creativity, risk taking, and entrepreneurial attitudes. In this symposium, speakers will explain boundaries and challenge of entrepreneurship education as well as they will present main conclusions of their research and experience in the field.

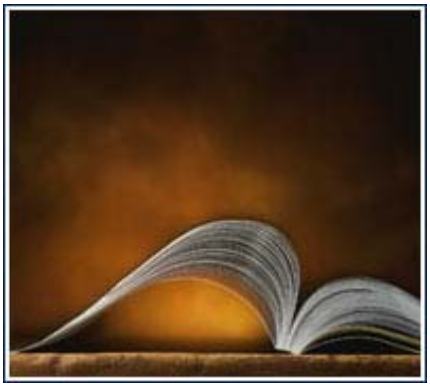
# Appendices

**The 8th College of Education & GSN Research Conference 2009 Program**

**The 9th College of Education & GSN Research Conference 2010 Call for Papers**

**The 9th College of Education & GSN Research Conference 2010 Call for Symposia**

# The Eighth Annual College of Education and Graduate Student Network Research Conference
# Saturday, April 25, 2009



## *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 and Graduate Student Network 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.

---

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | 8:00 – 8:30 a.m.<br>Registration & Light Refreshments | GC 243 |
| | 8:30 – 9:15 a.m. | GC 243 |

Welcome

Tonette S. Rocco
*Chair, Conference Steering Committee*

Kingsley Banya
*Interim Dean, College of Education*

Opening Keynote:

# CRITICAL RACE THEORY: THE CURE FOR OUR COLORBLINDNESS IN EDUCATION

## LORENZO BOWMAN, J.D., Ph.D.
## The University of Georgia

Dr. Lorenzo Bowman's career in education began over 20 years ago when he made the decision to leave his engineering career to pursue a career in higher education. Over the course of his career in higher education, Dr. Bowman has held both teaching and administrative assignments. He served as Dean of the School of Business for DeVry University Georgia from 1997 to 2003. Dr. Lorenzo Bowman is currently an Adult Education faculty member in the Department of Lifelong Learning, Administration, and Policy of the College of Education at the University of Georgia. He also currently serves as the program coordinator for the College of Education's graduate off campus programs. His research interests include race, gender, and sexuality issues in adult education. He received his Ph.D. in Adult Education from the University of Georgia, a J.D. and a M.S. in Management (concentration in Human Resources Management and Organizational Behavior) from Georgia State University, and a B.S. (Magna Cum Laude) in Industrial Engineering Technology from Southern Polytechnic State University. He has been a member of the State Bar of Georgia since 1993.

Dr. Bowman is the author of a number of journal articles and presentations on critical race theory and race issues in adult education, continuing legal education, and research. Recent publications include "Race and Continuing Legal Education: From the Functional Approach to the Critical Approach" (*Adult Learning, 16*(3/4), 14-17) and "The Exclusion of Race from Mandated Continuing Legal Education Requirements" (*The Seattle Journal for Social Justice, Seattle University's College of Law, 8*(1), to be published in 2009).

| 9:20 – 10:20 a.m.<br>*Symposia 1 and 2 & Concurrent Sessions 1, 2 & 3* | | |
|---|---|---|
| Symposium 1 | Institutional Student Learning Assessment in the 21st Century: Definition, Interpretation, Application, and Perception at Florida International University | GC 243 |
| | *Chair*: Jacqueline Peña, Florida International University<br>*Discussants*: Katherine Perez, Jacqueline Peña, Deanne Butchey, Teresa Lucas, Michelle Odai, Jennifer Doherty-Restrepo, and Brian Schriner<br><br>Since students are the center of a college or university, student learning should be at the center of all assessment discussions when analyzing the role that assessment plays within an institution and its accreditation process. With students at the center, faculty play a key role in developing a culture of assessment and explicating the role of assessment in student learning and development. This symposium focuses on the institutionalization of assessment at Florida International University within the national ideology of assessment and accreditation. The symposium will include an overview of the national assessment discussion and the institutionalization of assessment at FIU, a presentation of faculty's use of assessment results for student learning improvement, and a discussion of faculty's experiences and perceptions concerning the institutional assessment process. | |
| Symposium 2 | Approaches to Revealing Researcher Bias | GC 305 |
| | *Chair:* Ann Nevin, Florida International University<br>*Discussants:* Peter Barbatis, Joan M. Osborne, and Laura Iossi<br><br>In this symposium, three doctoral students will share their experiences in uncovering their potential researcher bias. Through the various processes of self-reflection, discourse, and connections to the literature, the symposium hopes to show others how they might approach the task of revealing their biases. When researchers can acknowledge and search their various professional and personal identities, they can shift from their current perspectives to understand the perspectives of others. The eyes with which researchers see, as well as the personal identities with which researchers interpret their perceptions, can be riddled with scotomas (blind spots or barriers) that come from the researchers' respective traditions, their contexts, and their personal histories. Once those identities are named, clarity in seeing the study context and study participants can increase. Researchers can become empowered to set up procedures to mitigate the influence of researcher bias in all phases of the research process. | |
| Session 1 | Math Education<br>Moderator: Debra Mayes Pane | GC 314 |
| *What Teaching Strategies Can I Employ to Improve Student Achievement in the Addition of Fractions with Different Denominators?*<br>Teresita A. Nieves, Florida International University<br><br>*Motivational Strategies to Increase Completion of Assignments in Mathematics Classes*<br>Rebeca Alea, Florida International University | | |

| Session 2 | Bilingual Education<br>Moderator: Greg Salters | PS-A |
|---|---|---|
| *The Effects of Proper Implementation of Bilingual Programs in Elementary Schools in the United States*<br>Elvia M. Hernandez, Florida International University<br><br>*Can Executive Skills Help Underachieving Bilingual Students? Pedagogical Implications*<br>Lianhong Gao, Florida International University | | |
| Session 3 | Writing Research<br>Moderator: Alexis McKenney | PS-B |
| *Four Components of a Manuscript Reporting Qualitative Empirical Studies: A Brief Overview*<br>Masha Plakhotnik & Tonette S. Rocco, Florida International University | | |
| 10:25 – 11:25 a.m.<br>*Symposium 3 & Concurrent Sessions 4, 5, 6 & 7* | | |
| Symposium 3 | Blended Teaching and Learning | GC 243 |
| | Chair: Sarah M. Nielsen, DeVry University<br>*Discussants:* Jesus Fernandez, Ed Hill<br><br>This symposium will explore blended learning, its present and future in higher education, and specifically how it works in practice in a private, four-year university serving local and international students, many of whom are academically underprepared. Students must be prepared to learn using pedagogical methods such as active learning, problem solving, and collaboration that parallel their future workplaces (Bonk et al., 2006); each speaker will address how these methods are used in their courses. Also, speakers will explore blended learning from the teacher's perspective, and what challenges are faced in course delivery to make the best use of onsite and online time. Specific courses in general education and technology will be discussed as they relate to these issues. | |
| Session 4 | Cultural Issues<br>Moderator: Judith Bernier | GC 305 |
| *Reducing the Discipline Gap Among African American Students: Learning in Classroom Communities of Practice*<br>Debra Mayes Pane, Florida International University | | |
| Session 5 | Culture and Learning<br>Moderator: Antonio Delgado | GC 314 |
| *Hispanics: Does Our Language (Spanish) Define Who We Are?*<br>Elsie E. Paredes, Florida International University | | |

| Session 6 | Issues in Higher Education<br>Moderator: Steve J. Rios | GC PS-A |
|---|---|---|

*The University as a Genre and Activity System*
Eduardo Hernandez, Florida International University

*An Exploratory Qualitative Study of the Proximal Goal Setting of Two Introductory Modeling Physics Students*
Vashti Sawtelle, Florida International University

| Session 7 | Teaching and Learning Entrepreneurship<br>Moderator: Greg Salters | PS-B |
|---|---|---|

*Revisiting Entrepreneurship Education Literature: Implications for Learning and Teaching Entrepreneurship*
Carlos A. Albornoz & Tonette S. Rocco, Florida International University

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

## Lunch Panel Discussion

### Think 360 – The Hows and Whys of Global Learning

*Moderator:* Hilary Landorf – Director, Office of Global Learning Initiatives, Florida International University
*Panelists:* Dan Bentley-Baker – Instructor, English, Florida International University
Ophelia Weeks – Associate Professor, Biological Sciences, Florida International University
Deanne Butchey – College of Business Administration, Florida International University
Stephanie Doscher – Associate Director of the Office of Global Learning Initiatives, Florida International University

FIU has chosen global learning as the focus of our Quality Enhancement Plan, a key portion of the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS) reaffirmation of the university in 2010. The purpose of FIU's Global Learning QEP is to educate for global citizenship - to ensure that every FIU graduate has the educational opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to actively address issues and challenges in an interconnected world. Panelists will discuss the meaning of global learning, why global learning should be intrinsic to every student's education at FIU, and how to implement global learning across the curriculum.

| 1:05 – 2:05 p.m.<br>*Symposium 4 & Concurrent Sessions 8, 9, 10 & 11* | | |
|---|---|---|
| Symposium 4 | Re-presentin' Misrepresentations: Algebra Project and the Young People's Project Youth "Write" and "Research" with Video | GC 243 |
| | *Chair:* Maria Lovett, Florida International University<br>*Discussants:* Three high school students and Maria Lovett<br><br>This symposium explores and demonstrates a methodology driven by digital media production to serve teaching, learning and research that operate in a paradigm of social justice. Video Action Research and Pedagogy (VARP) aims at making critical interventions within both pedagogy and research, and the intersections of both… The VARP methodology connects literacy and media literacy with hands-on video production. In this symposium students will share projects they produced with elementary students from Olinda Elementary entitled: *Who am I?* and *Letters to the President*. They will also show samples from their longer VARP documentary project that investigates connections between the civil rights movement and advocacy for quality education as a constitutional right for all children today. Finally, students will demonstrate a "behind the scenes" look at how they collect data, edit material and distribute their findings. | |
| Session 8 | Leadership and Engagement<br>Moderator: Carlos A. Albornoz | GC 305 |
| *A Historical Perspective of Employee Engagement: An Emerging Definition*<br>Michael Bradley Shuck, Florida International University<br>Karen Wollard, Florida Atlantic University | | |
| Session 9 | Issues in Adult Education<br>Moderator: Joan Wynne | GC 314 |
| *Pro-Literacy: A Historical Evaluation and Presentation of Strategies That Have Influenced the Development of the Volunteer Based Adult Education Program*<br>Chaundra L. Whitehead, Florida International University<br><br>*The Role of Forgiveness in Adult Learning and Education*<br>Jerry Griffin, Florida International University | | |
| Session 10 | Student-Teacher Relationships<br>Moderator: Marc Weinstein | PS-A |
| *Project POWER:*<br>*Promoting Our Will Through Education and Research*<br>Martin J. Wasserberg & Louie F. Rodriguez, Florida International University | | |
| Session 11 | Cross-cultural Issues<br>Moderator: Rehana Seepersad | PS-B |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *"I Am Not Stupid, I Just Don't…"-*<br>*A Qualitative Study of Expatriates' Cross-Cultural Experiences*<br>Yang Yang, Florida International University<br><br>*Can the Undocumented Student Speak?*<br>Eduardo Hernandez, Florida International University | | |
| 2:10 – 3:10 p.m.<br>*Symposia 5 and 6 & Concurrent Sessions 12, 13 & 14* | | |
| Symposium 5 | Voices from EDF4634<br>Social and Cultural Foundations Students | GC 243 |
| | *Chair:* Louie F. Rodriguez, Florida International University<br>*Discussants:* Jaclyn Valla, Elizabeth Espinel, Ellen Meyer, Priscilla Montalva, Marcos Castro, Grace Altamirano, Tanna Rodriguez<br><br>This panel will address issues of teachers, teachers' work, and teacher quality, particularly teachers serving urban schools and communities. Panelists will discuss the complex role teachers face, particularly in the context of budget cuts, poverty, and public opinion. The first video takes a multidimensional look at what constitutes teacher "work," particularly as teachers struggle with low wages, FCAT challenges, and public respect. The second video explores the complex challenges teachers face such as students with special needs, limited resources, and school culture. The third video explores the issue of qualified vs. unqualified teachers, particularly in schools that serve low-income children. In addition to the video content, panelists will also share why they selected their particular topic, what they learned, and discuss the implications for teacher development. | |
| Symposium 6 | The Relationship among Mothers' Background, Exposure to Oral Language, and the Language and Literacy Development of Pre-Kindergarten Children | GC 305 |
| | *Chair:* Laura Dinehart, Florida International University<br>*Discussants:* Maria Marin, Jacqueline Peña, Martin Wasserberg, and Laura Dinehart<br><br>This panel will address issues of teachers, teachers' work, and teacher quality, particularly teachers serving urban schools and communities. Panelists will discuss the complex role teachers face, particularly in the context of budget cuts, poverty, and public opinion. The first video takes a multidimensional look at what constitutes teacher "work," particularly as teachers struggle with low wages, FCAT challenges, and public respect. The second video explores the complex challenges teachers face such as students with special needs, limited resources, and school culture. The third video explores the issue of qualified vs. unqualified teachers, particularly in schools that serve low-income children. In addition to the video content, panelists will also share why they selected their particular topic, what they learned, and discuss the implications for teacher development. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Session 12 | Race , Education, and the Law<br>Moderator: Marc Weinstein | GC 314 |
| *The Exclusion of Race from Mandated Continuing Legal Education Requirements: A Critical Race Theory Analysis*<br>Lorenzo Bowman, The University of Georgia, Tonette S. Rocco, Florida International University, and Elizabeth A. Peterson, National Louis University | | |
| Session 13 | Technology in Education<br>Moderator: Michael Bradley Shuck | PS-A |
| *Integrating Technology in a Statistics Course for a Special Program at Florida International University*<br>Ramon Gomez, Florida International University | | |
| Session 14 | English Language Learning<br>Moderator: Linda Bliss | PS-B |
| *The Effects of Repeated Readings on Reading Abilities of English Language Learners with Specific Learning Disabilities*<br>Katrina Landa and Patricia Barbetta, Florida International University<br><br>*An Historical Look at Gender in the ESL Classroom*<br>Patricia Malloy McCaughan, Florida International University | | |
| 3:15 – 4:15 p.m.<br>*Symposia 7 and 8 & Concurrent Sessions 15, 16 & 17* | | |
| Symposium 7 | Voices from EDF4634<br>Social and Cultural Foundations Students | GC 243 |
| | *Chairperson:* Louie F. Rodriguez, Florida International University<br>Discussants*:* Christopher Farmer, Natalie Quincosa, Jessica Valentin, Anailys Acosta, Charisse Gonzalez, Danielle Leys, and Natalya Espana, Stephanie Santagati, Marisela Cardona, Kristine Sierra, Janette Martinez<br><br>This panel will address issues of racism, inequity, and school dropout. The first video on racism explores a social, cultural, and historical evolution of race and racism in education by highlighting key court decisions in U.S. history such as Mendez v. Westminster, Brown v. the Board of Education, and the Little Rock 9. Secondly, the video explores how race and racism persists in U.S. education by exploring cases such as Jena 6. The second video is a comparative documentary on resource inequities between a public and private school in Miami. As alumni of one of the high schools under analysis, the panelists attempt to dispel some of the myths associated with private and public school differences. The final two videos explore the issue of school dropout. Using various forms of media, these two videos provide an on-the-ground perspective of some of the causes and the impact of dropping out on youth (and young adults). This panel is particularly timely as the nation struggles with a 30-50% dropout rate across the nation. In addition to the video content, panelists will also share why they selected their particular topic, what they learned, and discuss the implications for teacher development. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Symposium 8 | Entrepreneurship Education: Transfer of Knowledge or Development of Skills? | GC 305 |
| | *Chair:* Carlos A. Albornoz, Florida International University<br>*Discussants:* Thomas G. Reio, Jr. and Carlos A. Albornoz<br><br>With the sponsorship of the Entrepreneurship Academy Institute of FIU a group of professors began the research of best ways to develop entrepreneurial skills. As part of this effort, they joint forces with a group of professors from engineering to explore if entrepreneurship education combined with technology education might encourage creativity, risk taking, and entrepreneurial attitudes. In this symposium, speakers will explain boundaries and challenge of entrepreneurship education as well as they will present main conclusions of their research and experience in the field. | |
| Session 15 | Post-Secondary Attainment<br>Moderator: Jesus Fernandez | GC 314 |
| *From Foster Care to College:*<br>*Perceptions of Young Adults on Their Academic Success*<br>Steve J. Rios, Florida Atlantic University | | |
| Session 16 | Parent-Teacher Communication<br>Moderator: Sarah M. Nielsen | PS-A |
| *The Effect of Using Portfolios on Student-Parent and Parent-Teacher Communication*<br>Joel Davis, Florida International University | | |
| Session 17 | Issues in Leadership<br>Moderator: Linda Bliss | PS-B |
| *Engagement Leadership: A New Developmental Model*<br>Michael Bradley Shuck, Florida International University<br><br>*The Role of Leadership Style in Employee Engagement*<br>Laura C. Batista-Taran, Michael Bradley Shuck, Cinthya C. Gutierrez, and Sofia Baralt, Florida International University | | |

4:20 – 5:00 p.m.
*Award Presentations and Raffle (Must be present to win)*
GC 243

Lorraine R. Gay Award for Excellence in Research/Scholarship
Adriana McEachern
Award for Best Graduate Student Paper

Barnes & Noble Award
Adriana McEachern
Award for Best Faculty-Student Paper

GSN Award: Best Student Conference Paper 2009
sponsored by
College of Education-Graduate Student Network (COE-GSN)
Jacqueline Peña, President, Graduate Student Network

Closing
Tonette S. Rocco,
*Chair, Conference Steering Committee*

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT PROGRAM SPONSORS

## ACT

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.

## Barnes & Noble

The FIU Bookstore, operated by Barnes & Noble Booksellers, has been servicing the FIU campuses for over twenty years. We sell all required and recommended textbooks for your classes both new and, used copies when available. For additional information go to our webpage at: fiu.bncollege.com.

## Delta Iota Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota International

Promoting Excellence in the Profession of Counseling. For additional information go to our webpage at: http://www.csi-net.org/

## 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.

## OfficeMax

A leader in both business-to-business office products solutions and retail office products. The company provides office supplies and paper, in-store print and document services through OfficeMax ImPress™, technology products and solutions, and furniture to consumers and to large, medium and small businesses.

## Pearson Education

The nation's leading educational publisher of textbooks, educational materials, and professional technical reference books.

## South Florida Organizational Development Network

Dedicated to promoting the practice of OD and sharing OD practices with our community.

## Wal-Mart

Wal-mart provides a great selection of high-quality merchandise, friendly service, and every day low prices.

## Waves Spa

A healing spa that specializes in The Rolf Method of Structural Integration, Brennan Healing, Customized Massage, Eminence Organics Facial and EB Ion Cellular Cleanse Detox.

# CONGRATULATIONS ON THE 8TH COERC

Adriana G. McEachern, Ph.D., N.C.C., C.R.C., L.M.H.C.
Founder and Faculty Advisor
DELTA IOTA CHAPTER
mcearcher@fiu.edu

Chi Sigma Iota

Member, Association of College Honor Societies

Counseling Academic & Professional Honor Society International

Chi Sigma Iota, the international honor society for professional counselors, counselor educators, and students promotes scholarship, research, professionalism, leadership and excellence in counseling, and recognizes high attainment in the pursuit of academic and clinical excellence in the profession of counseling.

## South Florida OD Network

Regional Chapter
"Professional Organization Development Organization"

Offering Monthly Meetings, Information on Job Openings, Networking, Mentoring, and Education to those interested in the field of Organizational Development.

Check out our OD Certificate Program! To learn more contact us at:

954-341-2522
www.sflodn.org
Email: info@sflodn.org

OfficeMax

Christine Druckman
Account Manager
OfficeMax Enterprise Solutions
Christinedruckman@officemax.com

Tel. 800-726-4736 x 4614; Cell 305-772-4677; Fax 954-433-4613
Customer Service
Tel. 800-472-6473; Fax. 800 572 6473
10004 Premier Parkway, Miramar, FL 33025

# *Call for Manuscripts 2010 for the 9th Annual College of Education and Gradute Student Network Research Conference at Florida International University Saturday April 24, 2010*

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

**Conference Mission:** The purpose of the Florida International University Annual College of Education and Graduate Student Network 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 7, 2009**

Authors Notified of Submission Status – **Monday, February 1, 2010**

Authors Send Revised Manuscripts to the Proceedings Sub-Committee –**Monday, February 22, 2010**

Camera-Ready Manuscripts - **Monday, March 29, 2010**

## 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 7, 2009**. The title of the subject line of the email message should be: "COERC 2010". 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:
*Manuscript title in **14 pt. Bold letters.**
*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, February 1, 2010-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 22, 2010 -**
**- 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: aehrd@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 29, 2010**
**-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 24, 2010 8:30 a. m. to 5 p. m.** ***Ninth Annual COE-GSN 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**

Brief Manuscript Title 1

Title typed double space in Uppercase and Lowercase Letters and Centered between the Right and Left Margins

First author's name
Author's Email and Phone number
College of Education, Department of XXXXX

(List in order of contribution)
Second author's name, Third author's name, etc.

"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 29, 2010,** 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)

*Eighth Annual College of Education and GSN Research Conference*
*Saturday April 24, 2010 8:30 a. m. to 5 p. m.*
**Call for Manuscripts 2010**

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
- □ Cover page, blind copy labeled correctly (e.g. author.cover.doc)
- □ MS Word is used
- □ Margins are 1 inch on all sides
- □ Length of text (including references) is six single spaced pages; an extra two pages maximum may be added for tables, figures, and/or pictures.
- □ Times New Roman 12pt type font used
- □ Pages are numbered in the footer of the lower right hand corner of each page
- □ Spelling and Grammar are checked
- □ Submission Instructions are followed

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.

**Sample Blind Manuscript**

**Title of Manuscript, Centered, in 14 point Bold, with All Important Words Capitalized**

**Abstract**: 25-50 words in block form

Indent and Text starts here, single-spaced. Text and References should be six pages maximum in 12 pt. Times New Roman font; an extra two pages may be added after the References for tables, figures, and/or pictures.

In footer, put the page number

# The 9th Annual College of Education and Graduate Student Network Research Conference

## *Saturday April 24, 2010*

**Honoring Inquiry** **Promoting Mentoring** **Fostering Scholarship**

### COERC 2010 Symposia: Call for Proposals

The COERC 2010 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 2010 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 4, 2010. Authors will receive feedback by February 1, 2010. The 9th Annual College of Education and Graduate Student Network Research Conference will be held on Saturday, April 24, 2010. For more information about the Annual College of Education and GSN Research Conference, please, visit **http://coeweb.fiu.edu/research_conference/**