The Relationship between Parental Involvement and the Persistence of First-Generation Hispanic Millennial College Students

by Anthony Cruz
Chair: Dr. Baez; Committee:
Drs. Musoba, Weinstein, and Stolzenberg

Abstract

The Hispanic population has grown to over fifty million making Hispanics the largest minority group in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). However, the growth pattern in the Hispanic population is not mirrored in higher education enrollment and retention. Hispanic college students who started attending college in the year 2000 and after are part of a larger group of students called the Millennial generation. The literature suggests that Millennials have a closer relationship with their parents because they have been more sheltered by their parents and therefore have become more reliant on their parents than previous college generations (DeBard, 2004).

This dissertation was undertaken to answer the following research question: What is the relationship between parental involvement and the persistence of first-generation Hispanic Millennial college students? Social capital theory (Coleman, 1988) was used as a theoretical framework to analyze and gain a greater understanding of the factors that correlated with the persistence of first-generation Hispanic Millennial college students. This dissertation used an ex post facto with hypothesis research design. The research hypothesis was that levels of parental involvement would be a positively related to the second-year persistence of Hispanic first-generation Millennial college students.

This dissertation used the data collected from 1179 Hispanic students who participated in the ELS:2002 and enrolled in college. Logistic regression analysis of data from 972 of the students with completed surveys were used to examine the relationship between the dependent variable, which was student persistence to the second year, and the following independent variables: socio-economic status, family income, high school grade point average, gender, financial aid, highest degree ever expected, academic engagement, social engagement, college generation, and parental involvement.

This dissertation's findings show that parental involvement was not statistically associated with persistence to the second year of college, but that high school grade point average, highest degree expected, academic engagement, and the interaction between parental involvement and college generation were. While the findings do not support the hypothesis, they provide some evidence that may be supportive of the argument that recommendations that may affect degree expectations, high school GPA, and academic engagement of first generation Hispanic Millennial college students may be positively related to their college persistence.

A Hermeneutic Phenomenology of Graduate Education Students' Perceptions of Instructor Power in a Higher Education Classroom

by Antonio Delgado
Chair: Dr. Rocco; Committee:
Drs. Reio, Baez, and Landorf

Abstract

Higher education is a distribution center of knowledge and economic, social, and cultural power (Cervero & Wilson, 2001). A critical approach to understanding the higher education classroom begins with recognizing the instructor's position of power and authority (Tisdell, Hanley, & Taylor, 2000). The power instructors wield exists mostly unquestioned, allowing for teaching practices that reproduce the existing societal patterns of inequity in the classroom (Brookfield, 2000). The ways instructors' power influences educational transactions must first be illuminated (Brookfield, 1995).

The purpose of this hermeneutic phenomenological study was to explore students' experiences with the power of their instructors in a higher education classroom. A hermeneutic phenomenological study intertwines the interpretations of both the participants and the researcher about a lived experience to uncover layers of meaning because the meanings of lived

experiences are usually not readily apparent (van Manen, 1990). Fifteen participants were selected using criterion, convenience, and snowball sampling. The primary data gathering method were semi-structured interviews guided by an interview protocol (Creswell, 2003). Data were interpreted using thematic reflection (van Manen, 1990).

Three themes emerged from data interpretation: (a) structuring of instructor-student relationships, (b) connecting power to instructor personality, and (c) learning to navigate the field of higher education. How interpersonal relationships were structured in the higher education classroom shaped how students perceived power in the higher education classroom. As participants were consistently exposed to exercises of instructor power in the higher education classroom, they attributed those exercises of power to particular instructor traits rather than systemic exercises of power. As participants progressed from undergraduate to graduate studies, they perceived the benefits of expertise in content or knowledge development as secondary to expertise in successfully navigating the field of higher education. Ultimately, participants expressed that higher education is not about what you know; it is about learning how to play the game.

The Development of Rubrics to Measure Undergraduate Students' Global Awarenes and Global Perspective: A Validity Study

by Stephanie Paul Doscher
Chair: Dr. Landorf; Committee:
Drs. Cistone, Wynn, and McEachern

Abstract

In order to think critically and make responsible decisions as citizens in an increasingly interconnected world, undergraduates must be globally aware and possess a global perspective (Adams & Carfagna, 2006). Knowledge of interrelationships among issues, trends, and systems across the globe has been called *global awareness* (Lemke, 2002). The ability to examine the world via diverse cultural, intellectual, and spiritual points of view has been called *global perspective* (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009). Higher education

institutions across the United States have developed global learning initiatives to support student achievement of these outcomes, but assessment options are extremely limited. A review of research found a lack of instruments designed to measure global awareness and global perspective in the context of an authentic performance assessment.

The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to demonstrate the extent to which evidence supported the validity and reliability of scores yielded from rubrics developed to measure undergraduates' global awareness and global perspective. The study utilized a pretest/posttest nonequivalent group design. Parallel pretest/posttest forms required students to respond to two open-ended questions concerning complex case narratives. Trained faculty raters utilized the rubrics to measure students' global awareness and perspective. Multiple linear regression was used to ascertain the rubrics' ability to discern and compare average learning gains of undergraduate students enrolled in two global learning courses and students enrolled in two non-global learning courses. Inter-rater agreement of at least .80 was required to meet the minimum reliability requirement.

The study's results supported the finding that the global awareness and global perspective rubrics yielded scores that were highly reliable measures of students' development of these outcomes. Among scorers using the global awareness rubric, inter-rater agreement exceeded the minimum requirement on both the pretest (.89, $p < .0001$) and the posttest (.95, $p < .0001$). Inter-rater agreement among scorers using the global perspective rubric was also high for both the pretest (.92, $p < .0001$) and posttest (.91, $p < .0001$). Evidence also supported the finding that the rubrics yielded scores that were valid measures of students' global awareness and global perspective. Regression analyses found little evidence of main effects; however, post hoc regression analyses revealed significant interactions between student pretest scores and the treatment, enrollment in a global learning course, in predicting global awareness posttest scores, $F(3, 216) = 4.354$, $p = .005$, and global perspective posttest scores $F(3, 216) = 4.464$, $p = .005$. This cross-over interaction supported the finding that the rubrics could be used to detect learning differences

between the treatment and control groups as well as differences within the treatment group. This study adds to the research literature on global learning by providing much-needed empirical information regarding the development and validation of rubrics designed to measure undergraduate students' global awareness and global perspective through authentic performance assessment.

Examining Argumentative Coherence in Essays by Undergraduate Students of English as a Foreign Language in Mainland China and Their English Speaking Peers in the United States

by Lianhong Gao
Chair: Dr. Dwyer; Committee:
Drs. Perkins, Baez, and Lucas

Abstract

This study was conducted in an attempt to provide insights toward deepening understanding of the association between culture and writing. To do this, concepts of culture and coherence and the relationship between them were examined through a mixed methods research design in the research context of Contrastive Rhetoric by comparing the coherence quality in argumentative essays written by EFL (English as a Foreign Language) undergraduates in mainland China and their English speaking U.S. peers. The complex concept of argumentative coherence was defined by synthesizing five linguistic theories: Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion theory, Carroll's (1999/2007) theory of coherence, Enkvist's (1990) theory of coherence, Topical Structure Analysis (Lautamatti, 1978) and Toulmin's Model (Toulmin, 1956/2003). Based upon the synthesis, 16 variables were generated. Across these 16 variables, Hotelling t-test statistical analysis was conducted.

In essays written by the two groups of participants, statistically significant differences were found in 6 of the 16 argumentative coherence variables; pronominal reference, substitution, synonymy, conjunction, extended parallel progression and data.

To complement the statistical analysis, 24 Chinese participants and 7 of their U.S. peers were interviewed. Participants' responses were analyzed by means of constant comparison, open coding and axial coding to investigate linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural factors in cross-cultural writing. The interrelation between these three factors was further probed by both qualitative data analysis and correlational statistical procedures, which showed that cultural factors were associated with rhetorical choices demonstrated by specific lexical and grammatical devices. The U.S. students used more pronominal reference, which was identified to be associated with their culture of stressing personal feelings. Implications for conceptualizing argumentative coherence and contrastive rhetorical research were provided.

The Effect of Young Adult Literature on Adolescents' Rape Myth Acceptance

by Victor Malo-Juvera
Chair: Dr. Spears-Bunton; Committee:
Drs. Bliss, Barbetta, and Shrage

Abstract

Adolescents are at elevated risk for sexual assault victimization and perpetration and most are assaulted by someone they know (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000). Often, these assaults are date rapes – non-consensual sex which occurs in the context of a romantic relationship. Rape myths are prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists that create an environment hostile to rape victims (Burt, 1980). Rape myth acceptance has been correlated with self professed proclivity to rape (Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel & Siebler, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to measure the effects of a reading response based instructional unit of the novel *Speak* on adolescents' rape myth acceptance. Participants were eighth grade students ($N = 139$) from seven language arts classes in a Miami-Dade County Public School System Title I middle school. Two teachers at the school implemented the 5-week program, each teaching both treatment and control classes.

The study used a pretest-posttest design with classrooms randomly assigned to treatment or control. Rape myth acceptance was measured using a researcher created scale, the Adolescent Date Rape Myth Scale (ADRMS). The ADRMS was significantly correlated with an established scale, the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale ($p = .01$; Burt, 1980). Pretest ADRMS scores yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .82. Factor analysis revealed the ADRMS measured two constructs of rape myth acceptance: (a) She Wanted It and (b) She Lied. ANCOVA using pretest ADRMS scores as covariates revealed that the program significantly reduced treatment participants' rape myth acceptance ($p < .001$; $\acute{\eta}^2 = .15$).

This study is significant because it examined the effect of young adult literature on rape myth acceptance, it developed and factor analyzed an inventory specifically designed to measure date rape myth acceptance in adolescents, and it showed that literature may be able to affect students' attitudes and belief systems.

Microteaching Lesson Study: Mentor Interaction Structure and its Relation to Elementary Preservice Mathematical Teacher Knowledge Development

by Roxanne V. Molina
Chair: Dr. Fernandez; Committee:
Drs. O'Brien, Wynn, and Dinehart

Abstract

With numerous national and international reports demonstrating that US students are lagging in mathematics achievement, reform measures are needed to improve the teaching of mathematics. One approach is to improve the mathematics preparation of elementary teachers through the inclusion of Microteaching Lesson Study (MLS), a blend of Japanese lesson study with microteaching principles, in their mathematics methods courses. MLS involves repeated cycles of MLS group planning, teaching and observing, debriefing, revising a research lesson and writing a reflective report on the process. Several studies have shown positive benefits for both practicing and preservice teachers involved in lesson study and adaptations similar to MLS. However, very little research exists on key elements of the MLS process such as the role the MLS mentor plays on preservice teacher learning, as part of MLS debriefing sessions.

This study investigated three possible MLS mentor interaction structures during the debriefing sessions, while the process was implemented with 72 elementary preservice teachers who completed MLS as part of the course requirements of a mathematics methods course at a southern urban university. An additional 31 elementary preservice teachers enrolled in the same course, but who did not participate in MLS, served as a comparison group for a portion of this study. A sequential mixed-methods research design was used to analyze the relationship between MLS mentor interaction structure and growth in preservice teachers' mathematics teacher knowledge. Data sources included a pre and post assessment, group developed lesson plans and final report, a feedback survey with Likert-type and open-ended questions, and transcripts of audio-recorded debriefing sessions. The pre and post assessment was analyzed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the Likert-type feedback survey questions. Group lesson plans, final reports, and transcripts of debriefing sessions along with the open-ended questions from the feedback survey were coded in a three step process and analyzed for themes as described by Miles and Huberman (1994).

Similar to M. Fernandez (2005, 2010), results from the analysis for growth in content knowledge revealed participants grew in their understanding of the mathematics topics used in this study irrespective of their interaction structure. Growth was greater for preservice students who participated in MLS when compared to those who did not complete MLS in their course. Findings from the analysis of lesson plans for growth in pedagogical content knowledge revealed the most growth in this area occurred with participants assigned to the interaction structure in which the MLS mentor participated in the first two debriefing sessions. Analysis of the transcripts of the discourse during the debriefing sessions and the feedback survey support the finding that the elementary preservice teachers assigned to the interaction structure in which the mentor participated in the first and second debriefing session

benefited more from the MLS experience when compared to elementary preservice teachers assigned to the other two interaction structures (MLS mentor participated in only the first debriefing session and MLS mentor participated in only the last debriefing session).

An Investigation of the Relationships between Selected Characteristics and Leadership Outcomes of Athletic Training Education Program Directors

by Michelle L. Odai
Chairs: Drs. Farouk and Musoba;
Committee: Drs. Musoba, Lopez, and DeFrancesco

Abstract

There is currently no evidence describing what characteristics make an Athletic Training Program Director (PD) an effective leader. An influx of accredited programs resulted in a rapid increase in the demand for PDs, yet training and preparation for these positions has failed to evolve. Although Certified Athletic Trainers (ATs) are trained in

Specific content areas, they may not always be prepared for the administrative and leadership responsibilities associated with the role of PD (Leone, 2008). This dissertation examined the relationships between selected characteristics and leadership outcomes of Athletic Training Program Directors.

Each PD participant (*n*=27) completed a demographic questionnaire to obtain the leader's academic preparation, accreditation experience and leadership training history. Each participant also completed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to obtain leadership styles, behaviors, and outcomes. Overall, the PDs reported utilizing transformational leadership most often and passive avoidant leadership least often. There was no significant difference between PDs with master's and doctorate degrees on the overall leadership outcome. However, participants with a doctorate degree scored significantly different on the effectiveness component of leadership outcome compared with participants with a master's degree. Those participants who had completed academic coursework on leadership scored significantly different on the leadership outcome compared to those who had not completed academic coursework on leadership.

Findings from this study indicate that changes to the current requirements for the role of PD may be warranted. Consideration should be given to increasing the minimum degree requirement and requiring academic coursework on leadership. Future research may be useful in determining specific degree guidelines and types and amounts of leadership training that would be beneficial to Athletic Training PDs.

Early Career Special Education Teachers' Perceptions of School Site Induction Support

by Yvette Perez
Chair: Dr. Blanton; Committee:
Drs. Cramer, Valle-Riestra, and Garcia

Abstract

Recent research highlights teacher attrition as one of the most challenging problems facing public schools and their attempts to provide a quality teacher for every student (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). The teacher shortage is particularly daunting in special education where teachers are over twice as likely to leave the field. The first few years of teaching are the most critical in determining whether or not a beginning teacher will stay in the teaching profession (Whitaker, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to examine early career special education teachers' views of the components of induction support they received at their school site, including what they considered most valuable to their retention and development as a quality teacher. The participants included 87 early career special education teachers with five or less years teaching experience who were employed by Miami Dade County Public Schools during the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, six teachers were chosen from the survey participants for follow up interviews. These participants indicated on the survey a desire to remain in the field of special education and volunteered to be contacted for the follow up interviews. This subset was chosen to obtain a more

robust perspective on the factors that contribute to special education teachers remaining in the field.

A mixed-methods sequential explanatory design consisting of two distinct phases was chosen to complete the study. The first phase of the study involved quantitative methods via a survey developed and piloted by the researcher. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, *t*-test and discriminant analysis. The second phase of the research study was qualitative in nature and involved giving early career special education teachers a voice through the guided interviews of six participants using a constant comparison method for analysis.

Results of the study showed that generally, these early career special education teachers value induction, and that satisfaction with their induction experience is related to their desire to remain in the special education profession. In addition, special education teachers in this study indicated that they received support from some colleagues; however, the overall school culture was not necessarily supportive. The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of research that attempts to describe effective supports for early career special educators and identify specific induction factors that encourage teacher retention.

The Relationship Between Educational Placement, Instructional Practices, and Achievement Gains of Black Students with Specific Learning Disabilities in Secondary Urban School Settings

by Deidre Marshall Phillips
Chair: Dr. Cramer; Committee:
Drs. Barbetta, Shealey, and Wynn

Abstract

Black students, in general, are underserved academically and overrepresented in special education. Black students with disabilities are further overrepresented in more restrictive educational environments. This project was undertaken because although the academic performance of students with learning disabilities has been shown to be related to the percentage of courses taken in the general education setting, the research on placement of Black students with disabilities, particularly at the secondary level, as it relates to academic achievement has been lacking (Bouck, 2006; Rea, McLaughlin & Walther-Thomas, 2002).

This study examined educational placement, instructional best practices, and achievement gains of Black students with SLD in urban secondary settings using an ex post facto with alternative hypotheses research design. Achievement, placement, and demographic data were collected and analyzed on 314 eighth grade students. FCAT scale scores were used as a source of student achievement data. The Teacher Instructional Practices Survey was developed and used to collect and analyze data from the teachers of the participants on instructional best practices.

Results indicated a significant difference in math but no significant difference in reading gains of Black students with SLD serviced in inclusive settings as compared to resource settings. Also, no significant relationship was found between achievement gains and the use of instructional best practices as measured by the survey. However, a relationship was found between educational placement and the use of instructional best practices. Results may suggest that educational placement plays a role in math instruction but not reading instruction. It is recommended that future research in this area include classroom observations and factors other than test scores to measure growth in achievement.

The Examination of the Relation among Secondary Principals' Leadership Behaviors, School Climate, and Student Achievement in an Urban Context

by Valmarie Rhoden
Chair: Dr. Reio; Committee:
Drs. Garcia, Fine, and Dottin

Abstract

The national percentage of inadequate high schools and high school dropouts calls for reform and improvement so that students can complete a basic high school education in a supportive educational climate. With this

goal, principals should have the freedom to develop and initiate their leadership skills and "Challenge the Process" by experimenting and taking risks with new approaches. This is an educational imperative since accountability pressures, such as those mandated by No Child Left Behind, and ambitious educational goals have placed principals at the center of school reform.

To investigate secondary principals' leadership behaviors in relation to school climate and student achievement, with online survey methods, 165 secondary principals from the three largest school districts in South Florida were asked to complete three instruments: the Leadership Practices Inventory, School Climate Inventory-Revised, and a researcher-designed Demographic Survey. Fifty-eight principals (response rate 34.5%) returned the survey instruments via SurveyMonkey. With IBM SPSS 19, zero-order correlational analyses tested the strength and directions of relations among the leadership behavior, school climate, and demographic variables. Multiple linear regressions were carried out to determine the degree to which the principal demographic and reported leadership practices predicted reading and mathematics student achievement. ANOVAs tested possible group differences between the demographic and research variables. Subsequent partial correlational analyses tested the strength and direction of relations among leadership behaviors, climate, and achievement

The findings of this study showed a positive relation among principals' leadership behaviors and reading and mathematics achievement. After controlling for gender and years at current school, partial positive correlations were found among some leadership behaviors and climate and student achievement. Thus, this research adds to the body of literature that stresses the importance of school leadership and its relationship to a supportive school climate for high school students' successful learning. Study results should aid policymakers and educators in providing a leadership profile for school leaders who challenge the status quo and can create schools that enhance student learning and are relevant to the needs of today's students, families, and society.

An Examination of the Effects of a Summer Book-Reading Program on the Language and Early Literacy Outcomes of Toddlers from High-Risk Environments

by Mary Anne Ullery
Chair: Dr. Dinehart; Committee:
Drs. Bleiker, Valle-Riestra, and Kenny

Abstract

The current study examined the impact of an early summer literacy program and the mediating effects of the home literacy environment on the language and literacy outcomes of a group of children at risk for long-term developmental and academic delays. Participating children (n=54) were exposed to an intensive book-reading intervention each summer (June through mid August) over a 3-year period.

The current study implemented an ex post facto, quasi-experimental design. This nonequivalent group design involved a pretest and posttest over three time points for a non-randomized treatment group and a matched non-treatment comparison group.

Results indicated that literacy scores did improve for the children over the 3-year period; however, language scores did not experience the same rate of change over time. Receptive language was significantly impacted by attendance, and race/ethnicity. Expressive language was impacted significantly by gestational age and attendance. Results also indicated that language outcomes for young children who are exposed to a literacy program were higher than those who did not participate; however, only receptive language yielded significance at the p<.05 level. These study results also found that activities in the home that support literacy and learning do indeed impact language and literacy outcomes for these children, specifically, the age at which a child is read to, the number of books in the home, a child's enjoyment of reading, and whether a child looks at books on his or her own impact language scores.

This study concluded that at-risk young children do benefit from center-based literacy intervention. This literacy experience, however, is also driven by the

children's home environment, their attendance to the program, whether they were premature or not and the education level of their caregiver.

History Education and the Construction of National Identity in Iran

by Maryam Soltan Zadeh
Chair: Dr. Farouk; Committee:
Drs. Landorf, Lovett, Mesbahi, and Khamsi

Abstract

This study examined the representation of national and religious dimensions of Iranian history and identity in Iranian middle school history textbooks. Furthermore, teachers' use of textbooks in classrooms, students' responses, their perceptions of the country's past, and their definitions of national identity were studied through a case study in a school in the capital city of Tehran. The study follows a critical discourse analysis framework by focusing on the subjectivity of the text and examining how specific concepts, in this case collective identities, are constructed through historical narratives and how social actors, in this case students, interact with, and make sense of, the process. My definition of national identity is based on the ethnosymbolism paradigm (Smith, 2003) that accommodates both pre-modern cultural roots of a nation and the development and trajectory of modern political institutions.

Two approaches of discourse analysis and case study were employed. Gee (2005) and Fairclough's (2003) methods of discourse analysis were integrated to examine textbooks' inclusions and exclusions, value judgments, and construction of identity. The textbooks selected were those published by the ministry of education universally used in all middle schools across the country in 2009. In the case study, survey and interview participants were ninth grade students who had just finished a complete course of Iranian history in middle school. Observations were done in history classes in all three grades of middle school.

The findings show that textbooks present a generally negative discourse of Iran's long history dominated by foreign invasions and incompetent kings. At the same time, the role of Islam and Muslim clergy gradually rises as they rescue the country from its despair throughout history, becomes prominent in modern times, and finally culminates in the Islamic Revolution as the ultimate point of victory for the Iranian people. Throughout this representation, Islam becomes increasingly dominant in textbook narratives of Iranian identity and by the time of the Islamic Revolution morphs into its single most prominent element. On the other hand, case study participants have created their own image of Iran's history and Iranian identity that diverges from that of the textbooks especially in their perceptions of modern times. They have internalized the generally negative narrative of the textbooks, but have not accepted the positive role of Islam and Muslim clergy. Their notion of Iranian identity is dominated by feelings of defeat and failure, anecdotal elements of pride in the very ancient history, and a sense of passivity and helplessness.