Abstract

Although there have been increases in Black undergraduate enrollment, the 6-year graduation rates (42%) remain low compared to other racial/ethnic groups; Asians (67%), White (60%), and Hispanics (49%); NCES, 2010). Using an ex-post facto design, this study investigated personal and institutional factors that relate to Black undergraduate students’ self-efficacy of persistence to the senior year at Florida International University. Black refers to a person having origins in any racial/ethnic groups of Africa and the Afro-Caribbean (IPEDS, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Data was collected through Qualtrics, an online tool available to students, using the Student Institutional Integration Survey (SIIS) a 71 item questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to collect background information about the sample (N = 236). Pearson R was conducted to indicate the degree of relationship between the variables, and multiple linear regressions were used to identify variables that are predictors of persistence. Independent samples t-test and analyses of variance were computed to determine whether differences in perceptions of personal and institutional factors that relate to persistence to the senior year in college could be identified by gender and ethnicity. No significant relationship was found between self-efficacy and personal demographic factors. However, self-efficacy was significantly correlated with family support and institutional and goal commitment. Both men and women and the five largest Black ethnic groups strongly agreed that all personal and institutional factors on the SIIS were related to persistence in college.

Findings from this study support the tenets of academic and social interaction theories that suggest that students’ interaction with peer and faculty, relationships with family and friends, and involvement in institutional activities and organizations are related to their persistence in college.

Implications for Practice

The implications for retention practice drawn from this study address the significance of personal and institutional factors in relation to Black ethnic undergraduate students’ perceptions of themselves, their social and academic interactions with their peers, faculty, and the academic learning environment in general. These perceptions and experiences ultimately influence their commitment to the institution and ultimate persistence in college.

The findings of the present study support the utility of colleges seeking student feedback concerning undergraduate experiences, and providing more faculty-student interactions, additional opportunities for interracial/ethnic peer interactions and family support activities to increase student persistence.

The Role of Attachment in Faculty Mentoring

by Rimjhim Banerjee
Chair: Dr. Thomas G. Reio, Jr.;
Committee: Drs. Tonette Rocco,
Martha Pelaez-Nogueras, and Mary Levitt

Abstract

Mentoring in the workplace is linked to critical organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to turnover. Psychosocial support and career support are provided by mentors to protégés. Mentors receive career and personal benefit from the experience as well. Because one’s attachment style defines one’s ability to form and manage close relationships, attachment theory contributes to the understanding of socio-emotional functioning. This dissertation examined the relationships between attachment and mentoring (independent variables), and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to turnover (dependent variables).

A nonexperimental, correlational study was conducted where an internet-based self-report survey instrument was administered to mentors (N = 52) and protégés (N = 50) of a formal faculty mentoring program. Hypotheses were tested through correlational and hierarchical regression analytic procedures. Results of this study partially supported the hypotheses. For both
mentors and protégés, secure attachment and mentoring were positively associated with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and negatively associated with intent to turnover. Mentoring was also positively associated with protégés’ job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to turnover. Furthermore, in the case of mentors, after statistically controlling for gender and ethnicity in the regression models, secure attachment and mentoring, specifically psychosocial mentoring, predicted unique incremental variance in job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intent to turnover. For protégés, while secure attachment and mentoring predicted unique variance in job satisfaction, only secure attachment predicted unique variance in organizational commitment, and intent to turnover. Zero-order correlations as well as the regression models indicated medium to large effect sizes, supporting the empirical and practical relevance of understanding the impact of attachment and mentoring on organizational outcomes. Responses to open-ended questions by mentors converged with the quantitative results and additionally indicated that mentors experienced learning from their protégés. They experienced job satisfaction by providing both career support and psychosocial support. Responses to open-ended questions by protégés indicated that they experienced satisfaction as they received psychosocial support from their mentors in the form of trust, friendship, advice, and help.

Implications for attachment research, HRD research and practice are highlighted. The study specifically informs the field of faculty mentoring research and may be used by higher education administrators to inform retention efforts through the development of mentoring programs.

Implications for Practice
As HRD continues to influence employee development to build an improved work environment (Kuchinke, 2002), additional insight into how formal mentoring programs can be more effective and consequently affect employee attitudes and behavior is crucial. For faculty mentors, the present study informs about the contribution of secure attachment styles and psychosocial support to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions. Based on this study’s findings, academic departments in universities could select faculty with secure attachment styles as mentors, who have strong propensity to derive maximum job satisfaction, and feel more committed to the university. On the same note, academic departments in universities in their efforts to nurture, promote, and retain promising junior faculty, could go beyond selecting mentors based on professional characteristics alone. Formal faculty mentoring program planners could broaden their mentor selection process by not just focusing on professional experience, position held, seniority, and demographic considerations.

The present study’s findings about the positive relation of psychosocial support to job satisfaction and organizational commitment and its negative contribution to turnover intentions inform planners of intervention programs to develop interpersonal competencies of mentors and protégés that could improve the giving and receiving of psychosocial support, such as listening skills, providing and receiving feedback, and role modeling. Those with insecure attachment styles could especially benefit from such intervention programs as well. Academic departments could also provide faculty who are not naturally inclined to benefit from mentoring relationships with alternative developmental activities.

The Use of Computer Graphic Organizers for Narrative Writing by Elementary School Students with Specific Learning Disabilities

by Mary Kristina Gonzalez-Ledo
Chair: Dr. Patricia Barbetta;
Committee: Drs. Diana Valle-Riestra, Elizabeth Cramer, Kyle Bennett, and Linda Spears-Bunton

Abstract
Writing is an academic skill critical to students in today’s schools as it serves as a predominant means for demonstrating knowledge during the school years (Graham, 2005). However, for many students, learning to write is a challenging, complex process (Lane, Graham, Harris, & Weisenbach, 2006), such as students with specific learning disabilities (SLD) who have substantial writing challenges largely related to the nature of their disability (Mayes & Calhoun, 2005).
This study investigated the effects of using computer graphic organizer software on the narrative writing compositions of four, fourth- and fifth-grade, elementary-level boys with specific learning disabilities.

A multiple baseline design across subjects was used to explore the effects of using the computer graphic organizer software on four dependent variables: total number of words written, total planning time, number of common story elements, and overall organization. Data were collected and analyzed during baseline and intervention.

Prior to baseline, participants were taught the fundamentals of narrative writing. Throughout baseline and intervention, participants were read a narrative writing prompt and were allowed up to 10 minutes to plan their writing, followed by 15 minutes for writing, and 5 minutes of editing. During baseline, all planning was done using paper and pencil. During intervention, planning was done on the computer using a graphic organizer developed from the software program Kidspiration 3.0. Compositions were written and edited using paper and pencil during baseline and intervention.

The results of this study indicated that computer graphic organizers had a positive effect on the narrative writing abilities of elementary aged students with SLD. With variation, participants wrote more words (from 54.74 to 96.60 more), planned for longer periods of time (from 4.50 to 9.50 minutes more), and included more story elements in their compositions (from 2.00 to 5.10 more out of a possible 6). There were none to nominal improvements observed in overall organization across the four subjects.

The results suggest that teachers of students with SLD should considering use computer graphic organizers in their narrative writing instruction, perhaps in conjunction with remedial writing strategies. There remain multiple ways this research can be extended. For example, future investigations might include other types of writing genres, other stages of writing, participants of varied demographics and the use of graphic organizers combined with additional remedial writing instruction.

Implications for Practice
The current study found that the use of a computer graphic organizer overall had positive effects on improving the narrative writings of elementary aged students with SLD. Due to this success, educators should consider the introduction of computer graphic organizers as early as elementary school. Kidspiration 3.0 (2011) was a successfully utilized tool that could be introduced during the writing block at many schools easily by uploading the software in a computer lab or classroom set of computers.

Another recommendation would be to introduce the use of Kidspiration 3.0 (2011) in conjunction with remedial instruction in writing. Utilizing strategies that help fill the academic gaps such as peer tutoring, small group instruction, or perhaps direct instruction could be beneficial. Upon completion of the current study it has become evident that the participants had more obvious academic gaps. Therefore the combination of the use of this computer graphic organizer in conjunction with intensive remedial instruction in writing might be advantageous.

Island Diasporas: Perceptions of Indo-Caribbean Protégés Regarding their Cross-Cultural Mentoring Experiences in the United States
by Rehana Seepersad
Chairs: Dr. Tonette Rocco; Committee: Drs. Glenda Musoba, Hilary Landorf, and Mary Levitt

Abstract
In cross-cultural mentoring, mentors and protégés from different cultures confront social and cultural identities, goals, expectations, values, and beliefs (Cross & Lincoln, 2005) in efforts to “achieve a higher level of potency in education and society” (Mullen, 2005, p. 6). Cross-cultural mentoring research explores attitudes, behaviors, linguistics and motivators of the more visible
The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the perceptions of Indo-Caribbean protégés regarding their cross-cultural mentoring experiences in the United States. Phenomenology is “the systematic attempt to uncover and describe…the internal meaning structures, of lived experience [by studying the] particulars or instances as they are encountered” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10). Criterion and snowball sampling were used to recruit fifteen participants for this study. A semi-structured interview guide was used to gather data and Creswell’s (2007) simplified version of Moustakas’s (1994) Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data was used to analyze the data.

Three themes emerged from this data analysis: (a) “Sitting at the feet of gurus that formed foundational knowledge, (b) Guru-Shishya: Learning and Discipleship, that instilled relational knowledge, and (c) Samavartan sanskar: Building Coherence, the resulting developmental knowledge. Protégés’ and mentees’ goals and professional expectations determined what they wanted out of their cross-cultural mentoring relationships and what they were willing to endure within those relationships. Because participants valued achievement and continuous improvement, mentor support was an integral to them making meaning and developing a sense of coherence in their lives.

Implications for Practice
This research contributes to the understanding of Indo-Caribbean’s perceptions of the effects of their cross-cultural mentoring experiences in the United States. As a less visible immigrant culture, it is possible for mentors to overlook cultural differences, and assume that protégés and mentees are all the same. However, because of socio-historic and cultural differences, protégés from cultures different from their mentors may have different expectations, ideals, relational bonds, and communication patterns.

The findings from this study imply that cross-cultural mentoring relationships may be an informative platform for reflective practice through which adult educators may examine espoused theories regarding culturally integrative and responsive practices in relation to their own mentoring practices (Cervero, 1989). By reflecting upon interpersonal and cross-cultural relationships, mentors may come to understand how cultural competence influences multicultural classrooms and learners. Understanding the needs of learners in a culturally pluralistic society with multitudes of foreign-born students, immigrants and professionals allows mentors to be more supportive and responsive to protégés developmental and relational needs. Cross-cultural mentorships require culturally integrative mentoring practices, tools to help identify roles, responsibilities and best practices to provide learner-centered guidance, to accommodate feedback and to help minority learners build connections and community (White, 2006).

Spirituality and Transformational Leadership in Education
by Omar Riaz
Chair: Dr. Peter Cistone; Committee: Drs. Nathan Hiller, Mohammed Farouk, and Roger Gonzalez

Abstract
A myriad of research has been conducted on the effectiveness of transformational leadership within organizations (Avolio, Waldman & Yammarino, 1997; Nemanich & Keller, 2007; Twigg & Parayitam, 2007). Although several studies have accounted for various antecedes (e.g., personality traits, values) of transformational leadership (Bono & Judge, 2004; Judge & Bono, 2000; Resick, Whitman, Weingarden & Hiller, 2009), little empirical work has accounted for the ambiguity in understanding how transformational leaders influence followers within this model of leadership (Yukl, 1999).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relation between school principals’ self-reported spirituality and their leadership style as reported and experienced by the teachers they work with. A correlational research design
(Newman & Newman, 1993) was chosen to understand the relationship between school principals’ spirituality and transformational leadership. Web-based survey instruments were utilized to collect the data. Six principals completed the modified Spiritual Well-Being Scale. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) was administered to 6 principals and 69 teachers. Multiple regression analysis was utilized to examine the relationship between principals’ self-reported spirituality and their transformational leadership behaviors. The relationship between their self-reported spirituality and transactional leadership behaviors was also explored.

The study’s results supported the finding that school principals’ self-reported spirituality was significantly related to their transformational leadership behaviors, \( F(5, 68) = 2.68, p < .05 \). However, the relation between transactional leadership and principals’ spirituality was not significant, \( F(3, 70) = 2.68, p = .221 \). The transactional leadership measures appeared to offer little additional predictive power beyond that contributed by a knowledge of the transformational leadership measures. Of the transformational leadership measures, the transformational measure for individualized motivation was most strongly related to spirituality. Individualized motivation was found to account for a significant amount of unique variance, \( p < .01 \), independent of the other seven transformational and transactional leadership behaviors. Based on the findings, Bass and Avolio’s (2004) Full Range Leadership Model was adapted to incorporate the concept of spirituality within the leadership continuum.

Implications for Practice
Incorporating the spiritual dimension within the transformational leadership continuum enables leaders to find deeper meaning in their work by heightening self-awareness and the desire to establish a connection with a transcendent source of meaning. Within the context of the educational climate, the spiritual dimension enables school leaders to think more holistically, act responsible in judgments, challenge others, learn more clearly their own worldview and points of view, and regard their own professional work as one that builds and enhances not only their own character and identity, but those with whom they interact.

It is common knowledge that educational leaders face ongoing series of dilemmas and challenges and often find themselves in need of constructive strategies to ensure smooth functioning of the complex organizations they manage and lead. Spiritually-oriented educational leaders place a premium on establishing genuine connections with those who work with them, including fellow school leaders, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and the larger community. These connections further help create a safe and trusting environment where personal risk-taking is valued and where leaders find themselves surrounded by people who are vested in what they do.

The Effectiveness of a Conceptually-Based Health and Wellness Course in Developing Health Related Factors, Exercise Self-Efficacy and Knowledge of Health Issues and Exercise Performance Among Diverse College Students
by Ilida Medero
Chair: Dr. Glenda Musoba;
Committee: Drs. Benjamin Baez, Charmaine DeFrancesco and Roger Gonzalez

Abstract
The purpose of the study was to investigate the physiological and psychological benefits provided by a self-selected health and wellness course on a racially and ethnically diverse student population. It was designed to determine if students from a two-year Hispanic serving institution from a large metropolitan area would enhance their capacity to perform physical activities, increase their knowledge of health topics and raise their exercise self-efficacy after completing a course that included educational and activity components for a period of 16 weeks.

A total of 186 students voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. An experimental group was selected from six sections of a health and wellness course, and a control group from students in a student life skills course. All participants were administered anthropometric tests of physical fitness, a knowledge test and an exercise self-efficacy scale at the beginning and at the conclusion of the semester.
ANCOVA analyses with the pretest scores being the covariate and the dependent variable being the difference score indicated a significant improvement of the experimental group in five of the seven anthropometric tests. Similar ANCOVA analyses also showed an increase in two of the three sections of the exercise self-efficacy scale indicating greater confidence to participate in physical activities in spite of barriers over the comparison group. The experimental group also increased in knowledge of health related topics over the comparison group at the .05 significance level.

Results indicated beneficial outcomes gained by students enrolled in a 16-week health and wellness course. The study has several implications for practitioners, faculty members, educational policy makers and researchers in terms of implementation of strategies to promote healthy behaviors in college students and to encourage them to engage in regular physical activities throughout their college years.

Implications for Practice
The current trend in colleges and universities throughout the United States is an increase in students’ body fat composition as well as a significant decline in their average fitness levels (Pribis et al., 2010; Suminsky & Petosa, 2002). Therefore, a conceptually based health and wellness course may be the ideal setting for the adherence to exercise. The findings of the present study indicate that participation in a conceptual health and wellness course can be very beneficial for college students. Health and wellness faculty and instructional designers should consider making health and wellness courses conceptually based, rather than exclusively physical activity or exclusively lecture.

The study results suggested that women might be less active than men as indicated in their fitness results. It is imperative that educators in higher education promote health and wellness courses that appeal to women, especially if these courses are not required by the institution. Health and wellness educators need to stress the difference between the style of physical education in K-12 and at the university level.

Self-efficacy is considered a very important factor for behavior change to occur. Findings from the current study did not indicate a significant difference between the experimental and comparison groups in the external and internal barriers for exercise self-efficacy. It is imperative that educators employ interventions that will lessen the perceptions of barriers or obstacles, which prevent students from participation in physical activity.

Predictors of Success: Medical Laboratory Assistance in Science Degree Program
by Nilia M. Madan
Chair: Dr. Thomas G. Reio, Jr.;
Committee: Drs. Lynn Ilon, Glenda Musoba and Eric Brewe

Abstract
Hospitals and healthcare facilities in the United States are facing serious shortages of medical laboratory personnel, which if not addressed, stands to negatively impact patient care. The problem is compounded by a reduction in the numbers of academic programs and resulting decrease in the number of graduates to keep up with the increase in industry demands. Given these challenges, the purpose of this study was to identify predictors of success for students in a selected 2-year Medical Laboratory Technology Associate in Science Degree Program.

This study examined five academic factors (College Placement Test Math and Reading scores, Cumulative GPA, Science GPA, and Professional [first semester laboratory courses] GPA) and demographic data to see if any of these factors could predict program completion. The researcher examined academic records for a 10-year period (N =158). Using a retrospective model, the correlational analysis between the variables and completion revealed a significant relationship (p < .05) for CGPA, SGPA, CPT Math and PGPA, indicating that students with higher CGPA, SGPA, CPT Math, and PGPA were more likely to complete their degree in two years. Binary logistic regression analysis with the same academic variables revealed PGPA was the best predictor of program completion (p < .001). Additionally, the findings are consistent with the academic part of the Bean and Metzner Conceptual Model of Nontraditional Student Attrition, which points to academic outcome variables such as GPA as affecting...
attrition. Thus, the findings in this study are important to students and educators in the field of Medical Laboratory Technology, because PGPA is a predictor that can be used to provide early in-program intervention to the at-risk student, thus increasing the chances of successful, timely completion.

Implications for Practice
The correlational analyses indicated that those who demonstrated higher CPGA, SGPA, and CPT-Math scores were more likely to complete their academic program within the two-year time span designed for the program. Thus, these are variables that can be used to identify at-risk students prior to starting the first semester. Thus, lower GPAs and CPT-Math scores are indicators of potential academic performance issues that can impact PGPA. Similar findings were also reflected with the ANOVA analyses in that those of different ethnic origins (i.e., Caribbean group) had lower group means in the CPGA, SGPA, CPT-Reading, and PGPA, suggesting preliminarily that there may be an issue of poorer high school preparation. Thus, instructors might address possible issues through proactively offering peer tutoring or structured learning assistance in their first semester in program.

Second, Professional GPA was a significant predictor of program completion; therefore, it can be used to identify at-risk students and initiate remediation early in the program. This remediation may take different forms and can range from targeted tutoring to use of computer software to taking a closer look at the curriculum and identifying areas where critical thinking can be further infused in the curriculum. Curriculum enhancements may take the form of cooperative projects with math and science professors to identify areas where critical thinking can be emphasized in the student prior to starting the medical laboratory technology program. Targeted tutoring could be useful as well to support course-specific issues, such as poor performance on hematology laboratory or laboratory mathematics and quality control.

Goma Curriculum, a Character Education
Paradigm: Composing a Text for Shaping
Classroom Character Culture
by Alicia Ritchey-Brown
Chair: Dr. Linda Spears-Bunton;
Committee: Drs. Delia Garcia,
Joan Wynne and Kyle Perkins

Abstract
The written text, and approaches to reading it, serves well as an analogy for the classroom space as a “text” that teachers are able to compose; and students are able to read, interpret meaning(s) of, and make responses to and about (Rosenblatt, 1988). Researchers point to ways in which the classroom can be conceptualized as a “text” to be evoked, experienced, and read (Friere & Macedo, 1987; Powell, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1988).

The present study analyzed secondary data including: 10 transcripts of “teacher talks” and six self-reports. The data described six teachers’ classroom experiences subsequent to professional development centered on Goma character education curriculum that was used during a summer youth program located in South Georgia. Goma, an acronym that stands for Goal, Objective, Method, and Attitude, is a character education paradigm derived from The Inclusive Community Building Ellison Model, the theoretical framework used for this study. The Model (Hunt, Howard, & Rice, 1998) identifies conflict resolution as one of its five foci, and Hunt (2006) conceived Goma as part of a 7-step unitary process, also named the 7-Step pathway, to demonstrate how conflict resolution is accomplished within a variety of contexts.

Analysis of the data involved: (a) a priori coding of “teacher talks” transcripts using the components of the Goma 7-Step pathway as coding categories, (b) emergent coding of “teacher talks” transcripts for the types of experiences teachers evidenced, and (c) emergent coding of teachers’ self-reports for categories of teachers’ instructional activities. Results of the study showed a positive influence of Goma curriculum on participating teachers and their instructional practices. Teachers were shown to have had cognitive, instructional, emotional, and social experiences that were most evident when they
reported changes in their attitudes toward their students, themselves, and their instructional practices. The present study provided implications for classroom teachers wherein all aspects of teachers’ instructional practices can be guided by principles of positive character; and can be used to help compose kinds of “texts” that may likely contribute to a classroom character culture.

Implications for Practice
Participating teachers confirmed an on-going dialogue between the behaviors of themselves and their students. In this way, when the behaviors of the teacher and the resulting responses from the students are not complimentary, the teacher is able to reassess, make adjustments, and apply additional relevant strategies or behaviors to motivate the learner toward richer, fuller, more advanced responses. The additional strategies could involve nurturing the learner, through social interaction, cognitive enhancement, emotional delivery, and/or instructional delivery. And with a persisting affirming and inclusive attitude held by teachers, students, over time, would likely be able to move from disconnect to becoming a part of a sustained community of successful learners, comprising both the teacher and other students. Teachers, perhaps, should expand their notions of who they are as educators. This would involve redefining teachers as character educators who teach specific disciplines or subject area content. Further, teachers would be encouraged to move beyond a narrow view of themselves as subject area experts, where character education as considered a separate discipline outside of their teaching domain.

Researchers argue that the teacher or staff member is the person responsible for demonstrating proper moral behavior (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kehn, & Smith, 2006). If teachers are in fact responsible for modeling appropriate behaviors for their students, then it would seem reasonable that teacher education programs and professional development initiatives would infuse a character-driven component within its framework. This component could involve an emphasis on teaching both pre-service and in-service teachers the importance of modeling acceptable character. Additionally, teacher education and continuing education programs could also focus on educating both pre-service and in-service teachers with an emphasis on training teachers to reflect upon how they can create a classroom culture that is conducive to relationship building where disconnections in any classroom relationship is minimized.

Career Technical Education Adjunct Faculty Teacher Readiness: An Investigation of Teacher Excellence and Variables of Preparedness
by Jorge Guerra  
Chair: Dr. Roger Gonzalez;  
Committee: Drs. Benjamin Baez, Thomas G. Reio, Jr. and Teresa Lucas  

Abstract
The purpose of this research was to examine the relationship between teaching readiness and teaching excellence with three variables of preparedness of adjunct professors teaching career technical education courses through student surveys using a correlational design of two statistical techniques; least-squares regression and one-way analysis of variance. That is, the research tested the relationship between teacher readiness and teacher excellence with the number of years teaching, the number of years of experience in the professional field and exposure to teaching related professional development, referred to as variables of preparedness.

The results of the research provided insight to the relations among the variables of preparedness and student assessment of their adjunct professors. Concerning the years of teaching experience, this research found a negative relationship with how students rated their professors’ teaching readiness and excellence. The research also found no relationship between years of professional experience and the students’ assessment. Lastly, the research found a significant positive relationship between the amount of teaching related professional development taken by an adjunct professor and the students’ assessment in teaching readiness and excellence.

This research suggests that policies and practices at colleges should address the professional development needs of adjunct professors. Additionally, they should address designing a model that meets the practices of
inclusion for adjunct faculty and making professional development a priority within the organization. Lastly, implementing that model over time would be useful for preparing adjuncts’ readiness and excellence.

Implications for Practice
Although there are no certain prescriptions for good teaching and no foolproof techniques for guaranteeing quality, there are three potential areas for improving the quality of college adjunct professors. First, helping the novice lecturer to become more technically expert; second, providing appropriate leadership; and third, using methods of evaluating teaching that will serve efforts for improving quality. College students’ experiences of teaching and assessment seem to matter more than particular teaching methods in determining student learning effectiveness (Ramsden, 1995). Enhancing the professional development opportunities for adjunct professors in these areas may be useful for improving learning outcomes and the overall educational achievement of students enrolled in workforce programs.

Living on Both Sides of the Fence: A Phenomenological Study of Human Resource Development Professionals as Downsizing Survivors and Strategic Human Resource Development Facilitators
by Claire Nackoney
Chair: Dr. Tonette Rocco;
Committee: Drs. Marc Weinstein, Hilary Landorf, and Thomas G. Reio, Jr.

Abstract
This phenomenological study explored how HR professionals who identified themselves as facilitators of strategic HRD (SHRD) perceived the experience of being an organizational agent-downsizing survivor. Criterion and snowball sampling were used to recruit 15 participants for this study. A semi-structured interview guide was used to interview participants. Creswell’s (2007) simplified version of Moustakas’s (1994) Modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen Method of Analysis of Phenomenological Data was used to analyze the data. Four main themes and corresponding sub-themes emerged from an inductive data analysis. The four main themes were (a) the emotionality of downsizing, (b) feeling responsible, (c) choice and control, and (d) possibilities for growth.

Participants perceived downsizing as an emotional organizational change event that required them to manage their own emotions while helping others do the same. They performed their roles within an organizational atmosphere that was perceived as chaotic and filled with apprehension, shock, and a sense of ongoing loss, sadness, and grieving. They sometimes experienced guilt and doubt and felt deceptive for having to keep secrets from others when planning for downsizing. Participants felt a strong sense of responsibility to protect employees emotionally, balance employee and organizational interests, and try to ensure the best outcomes for both. Often being there for others meant that they put on their game faces and took care of their own emotional needs last. Participants spoke of the importance of choosing one’s attitude, being proactive rather than reactive, and finding ways to regain control in the midst of an organizational crisis. They also perceived that although downsizing was emotionally difficult to go through, it provided possibilities for self, employee, and organizational growth.

Implications for Practice
This study deepens practitioners’ and scholars’ understanding of the perceptions and experiences of a special group of downsizing survivors, those in HR-related roles who are change recipients and change agents involved in facilitating SHRD before, during, and/or after downsizing. Recommendations for organizations and HRD practice include the following: (a) create an explicit employment contract, (b) develop and publish a downsizing strategy, (c) communicate early and often with employees, (d) build positive psychological capital, (e) provide more formal support to HR professionals as agent-survivors, and (f) involve HR professionals as true strategic partners in all three phases of downsizing. These recommendations were derived from this study, the literature, and from the author’s own long experience in the field of HRD.
Examining the Validity of the GRE General Test Scores and Undergraduate GPA for Predicting Success in Graduate School at a Large Racially and Ethnically Diverse Public University in Southeast Florida

by Myung Sook Hyun
Chair: Dr. Thomas G. Reio, Jr.; Committee: Drs. Benjamin Baez, Paulette Johnson, and Tonette Rocco

Abstract
The purpose of the study was to determine the degree of relations among GRE scores, undergraduate GPA (UGPA), and success in graduate school, as measured by first year graduate GPA (FGPA), cumulative graduate GPA, and degree attainment status. A second aim of the study was to determine whether the relationships between the composite predictor (GRE scores and UGPA) and the three success measures differed by race/ethnicity and sex.

A total of 7,367 graduate student records (masters, 5,990; doctoral: 1,377) from 2000 to 2010 were used to evaluate the relationships among GRE scores, UGPA and the three success measures. Pearson's correlation, multiple linear and logistic regression, and hierarchical multiple linear and logistic regression analyses were performed to answer the research questions.

The results of the correlational analyses differed by degree level. For master's students, the ETS-proposed prediction that GRE scores are valid predictors of first year graduate GPA was supported by the findings; however, for doctoral students, the proposed prediction was only partially supported.

Regression and correlational analyses indicated that UGPA was the variable that consistently predicted all three success measures for both degree levels. The hierarchical multiple linear and logistic regression analyses indicated that at master's degree level, White students with higher GRE Quantitative Reasoning Test scores were more likely to attain a degree than Asian Americans, while International students with higher UGPA were more likely to attain a degree than White students. The relations among the three predictors and the three success measures were not significantly different between men and women for either degree level.

Findings have implications both for practice and research. They will provide graduate school administrators with institution-specific validity data for UGPA and the GRE scores, which can be referenced in making admission decisions, while they will provide empirical and professionally defensible evidence to support the current practice of using UGPA and GRE scores for admission considerations. In addition, new evidence relating to differential predictions will be useful as a reference for future GRE validation researchers.

Implications for Practice
The study has four types of practical implications that may affect educational decision making processes that use UGPA and GRE scores. While evidence of the present study supports the use of both UGPA and GRE scores in admission considerations, it will be helpful if graduate school administrators are informed of the study's specific findings to use as a reference in making educational decisions. First, UGPA consistently predicted all three success measures, FGPA, CGPA, and degree attainment status, for both master's and doctoral degree levels. Second, GREQ and UGPA predicted a degree attainment status within a given time limit for both master's and doctoral degree levels. Third, differential predictions were found for Asian Americans and International students. Fourth, no differential predictions were found among African American, Hispanic, and White students for either master's or doctoral degree level in the relations involving the three success measures and the composite predictor. Fifth, no differential predictions were found between men and women for either master's or doctoral degree level.

Perceptions of Character Education in a Seventh-Day Adventist School
by Marva Tyrell
Chair: Dr. Erskine Dottin; Committee: Drs. Linda Spears-Bunton, Gail Gregg, and Thomas G. Reio Jr.

Abstract
Character education has been viewed by many educators as having significant historical, academic, and social
value. Many stakeholders in education argue for character development as a curricular experience. While understanding the degree to which character education is of worth to stakeholders of institutions is important, understanding students, teachers, and administrators perspectives from their lived experiences is likewise significant.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain a deeper understanding of character education within a Biblical framework environment by examining the live experiences of students, administrators, and teachers of a Seventh-day Adventist School. Phenomenology describes individuals’ daily experiences of phenomena, the manner in which these experiences are structured, and focuses analysis on the perspectives of the persons having the experience (Moustakas, 1994). This inquiry was undertaken to answer the question: What are the perceptions of students, teachers, and an administrator toward character education in a Seventh-day Adventist school setting?

Ten participants (seven students and three adults) formed the homogeneous purposive sample, and the major data collection tool was semi-structured interviews (Patton, 1990; Seidman, 2006). Three 90-minute open-ended interviews were conducted with each of the participants. Data analysis included a three-phase process of description, reduction and interpretation.

The findings from this study revealed that participants perceived that their involvement in the school’s character education program decreased the tendency to violence, improved their conduct and ethical sensibility, enhanced their ability to engage in decision-making concerning social relationships and their impact on others, brought to their attention the emerging global awareness of moral deficiency, and fostered incremental progress from practice and recognition of vices to their acquisition of virtues.

**Implications for Practice**

The findings, therefore, support a conceptual model for guiding the teaching of character education from a Seventh-day Adventist perspective. The model is also relevant for non-Seventh day Adventists who aspire to teach character education as a means to improving social and moral conditions in schools.

### The Development of a Procedure for the Creation and Validation of an Instrument for the Attainment of Competencies at an Intercultural University in Mexico

*by Martha Fernanda Pineda*

**Chair:** Dr. Hilary Landorf;  
**Committee:** Drs. Joan Wynne, Mohammed Farouk, and Benjamin Baez

**Abstract**

This study took place at one of the intercultural universities (IUs) of Mexico. The IUs are institutions of higher education that have been created to serve primarily indigenous students from different ethnic groups. The IUs are considered a way of responding to historical and recent demands of indigenous people (Schmelkes, 2009) for access and representation in Mexican higher education.

Despite numerous problems and contradictions in policy and practice (Bertely, 1998; Pineda & Landorf, 2010; Schmelkes, 2009; Dietz, 2008), the intercultural universities are pioneers in higher education in Mexico. Their existence and operations are invariably challenging (Schmelkes, 2009; Fábregas, 2008). Some of the challenges range from funding and curriculum development (Schmelkes, 2009) to overcoming unequal educational experiences of their students (Ahuja, Berumen, Casillas, Crispín, Delgado et al., 2004; Schmelkes, 2009). To address the latter, the IUs have embraced performance-based assessment (Casillas & Santini, 2006). Performance-based assessment embraces a shared model of power and control related to learning and evaluation using more democratic processes (Anderson, 1998). With performance-based assessments, students have the possibility of being active stakeholders in the assessment of their learning and of exercising self-assessment, both individually and as a group (Anderson, 1998; Stevens & Levi, 2005). Performance-based assessment also allows students to move away from a model of educational accountability based on high stakes testing and perpetuated by bureaucratic systems (Mathison & Ross, 2008). Such a model has pernicious
effects on those students who live in poverty (Treviño, 2006) and/or may not have had the same schooling opportunities (Pineda, 2010; Schmelkes, 2009; Treviño, 2006). However, while conducting a review on the IUs performance-based assessment strategies of the IUs, an instrument with valid and reliable estimates to measure the students’ attainment of the competencies was not found.

Using Sen’s Human Capabilities Approach (HCA) as theoretical framework and a sequential mixed design (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009) as research method, the purpose of this study was to develop a process to create a performance-based instrument (a holistic rubric) with significant acceptable validity and reliability estimates to measure students’ attainment of competencies. The major chosen to pilot this process was the Intercultural Management for Development (IMD) undergraduate program. The rubric was created with the participation of IU senior students and the researcher during two focus groups. During the focus groups, content validity estimates were obtained. To estimate inter- and intra-rater reliability, Spanish-speaking professors of higher education in Mexico and the United States piloted the rubric using students’ research projects.

According to participating IU seniors, the evidence that demonstrates the attainment of competencies is a complex set of professional and academic behaviors, skills, and principles as embodied in performances. These performances can be portrayed in the students’ final research projects as applied abilities, but they can also be desirable potential behaviors, skills, and principles that student’s value and, ideally, will possess as they develop personally and professionally. Once coded into levels of attainment, each of the performances (actual or desired) can be used to develop a holistic rubric.

There is evidence that supports that the rubric resulting from this process yielded significant validity and significant reliability estimates. These were measured in the form of content validity and inter- and intra-rater reliability estimates. In both instances, the percentage of agreement met the necessary 80%, which is sufficient to meet the minimum reliability requirement (Newman, Newman, & Newman, 2010).

The proposed process was particularly welcomed among students. They expressed the need for a more organized, participatory, and fair assessment experience, pointing out that a previous attempt to standardized attainment descriptions in which they did not have input, failed. Education articulated through the HCA is empowering (Unterhalter & Brighouse, 2007). This process was based on the students’ feedback only, either as originators of the description of attainment (focus group one) or as expert judges, giving feedback on those descriptions (focus group two). By doing so, students were given the opportunity to determine what constitutes a credible evidential basis (Messick, 1994) of the attainment of competencies.

This study aimed to contribute to the quality of the assessment of student learning by providing a process to develop performance-based assessment instrument with significant validity and reliability estimates, and that can be used across the IU network. A more flexible, constructivist and participatory approach to assess student learning in the form of performance-based assessment may provide a useful alternative to standardized testing (Anderson, 1998; Moskal, 2000). It is hoped that the process and the resulting instrument allow IU students to demonstrate their attainment of competencies in a performance-based and participatory manner.

Implications for Practice
The results of this study generated practice implications for student assessment in higher education. These implications were derived on the basis of their consistency with the study’s results and with theory of and research on formative assessment. The implications were also consistent with human capabilities approach literature.

The process that this study used yielded confirmatory data on the applicability of performance-based assessment in higher education. This study also yielded data to substantiate the need for performance-based assessment with a formative assessment framework. A characteristic of formative assessment is that student
assessment data are used by both educators and students to inform learning and teaching (Bloom, Madaus, & Hastings, 1981; Brookhart, 2007; Guskey, 2007; McMillan, 2007). The process presented in this study has the potential to yield formative data.

Another implication for practice that emerged from this study is the importance of including students when determining assessment content and procedures. In addition, increased and more effective communication with various stakeholders would be beneficial.

A Comparison Study Of The English III/ American Literature Success Of African American High School Students And That Of Students Whose Home Language Is Haitian Creole

by Sharon Samuels
Chair: Dr. Linda Spears-Bunton
Committee: Drs. Maria Lovett, Kyle Perkins, and Lynne Miller

Abstract
Students whose home language is Haitian Creole (SWHLIHC) are a very visible group in most of Miami Dade County public schools. There is a large number of Haitian Americans in Miami Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties, and they share the social issues of immigrants who came before and after them. They also share the experience of being Black in America with other African Americans (Belizaire & Fuertas, 2011; Ceptus, 2005; Nicolas, 2010; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001; Portes & Stepick, 1987, 1993). Not all Haitian American students share the language and socio economic issues of SWHLIHC. Some students of Haitian descent in the MDCPSS are from different SES, and homes within which English is the main language spoken.

Even so, SWHLIHC are virtually invisible when it comes to studies that address their academic performance. They are also invisible in the works that make up the bulk of the high school English curriculum. This is so to a greater extent than for other African Americans. This study sought to compare the English III success of SWHLIHC with that of the more visible African American high school students in MDCPSS.

The study was guided by two important theories on how students interact with and learn from literature. They are Reader Response Theory and Critical Literacy. The study used an ex post facto design with hypotheses (Newman et al., 2006). One way analysis of variance (ANOVA), two way ANOVAs, and chi square tests were used to examine the two groups’ performances on the 10th grade reading FCAT, performance in English III, and promotion to English IV. One way ANOVA was used to test whether there was a significant difference in the means of the samples. Similarly, two way ANOVAs were used to analyze the effect of the independent variables, ethnicity, gender, and ESOL levels on the expected outcome: reading FCAT score, English III grade, and promotion to English IV.

The results of this study illustrate that there is a significant difference between both groups on reading FCAT score, English III grade, and promotion to English IV; SWHLIHC is more successful in English III, while African American students are more successful on the reading FCAT.

Implications for Practice
Findings suggest that the literature is correct in reporting that minority students are not achieving maximum success on standardized tests. The results found in response to the question on FCAT passes imply that SWHLIHC are indeed in need of interventions that might make them more comfortable with the subject matter of this test. In this objective setting, where the test is graded according to rubric and scorers do not have discretion in assigning points, African American students outperform SWHLIHC. Although they do not perform on the same level as White students, they are able to maneuver more successfully through the reading passages than SWHLIHC.

Findings further suggest that SWHLIHC are more comfortable in the classroom setting where the grading is more subjective. It can be implied that these students capitalize more on being able to meet teacher expectations. This is indicated by the results that show that SWHLIHC were more successful than African American students in being promoted to the next grade,
A Longitudinal Exploration of the Relationship between Oral Reading Fluency and Reading Comprehension Achievement among a Sample of Diverse Young Learners
by Teri Acquavita
Chair: Dr. Thomas G. Reio, Jr.; Committee: Drs. Charles Bleiker, Mohammed Farouk, and Joyce Fine

Abstract
Exploring the relationship between early oral reading fluency ability and reading comprehension achievement among an ethnically and racially diverse sample of young learners from low-income families, attending elementary school within a large public school district in southeast Florida is the purpose of this longitudinal study. Although many studies have been conducted to address the relationship between oral reading fluency ability and reading comprehension achievement, most of the existing research failed either to disaggregate the data by demographic subgroups or secure a large enough sample of students to adequately represent the diverse subgroups.

The research questions that guided this study were: (a) To what extent does early oral reading fluency ability measured in first, second, or third grade correlate with reading comprehension achievement in third grade? (b) To what extent does the relationship of early oral reading fluency ability and reading comprehension achievement vary by demographic subgroup membership (gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status) among a diverse sample of students?

A predictive research design using archived secondary data was employed in this nonexperimental quantitative study of 1,663 third grade students who attended a cohort of 25 Reading First funded schools. The data analyzed derived from the Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills Oral Reading Fluency (DIBELS ORF) measure administered in first, second, and third grades and the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test of the Sunshine State Standards (FCAT-SSS) Reading administered in third grade.

Linear regression analyses between each of the oral reading fluency and reading comprehension measures suggested significant positive associations by grade. Hierarchical regression analyses supported the predictive potential of all three oral reading fluency ability measures toward reading comprehension achievement, with first grade oral reading fluency ability explaining the most variance in third grade reading comprehension achievement.

Male students produced significant overall differences as compared to female students, as did the Other student subgroup (i.e., Asian, Multiracial, and Native American) when compared to Black, White, and Hispanic students. No significant differences were found between students from low and moderate socioeconomic families. These findings are vital toward adding to the literature of diverse young learners.

Implications for Practice
First, the longitudinal results suggest that the best time to focus on working to improve oral reading fluency ability is in the first grade because it is the best predictor of third-grade comprehensive reading achievement in this sample. Thus, interventions might be most advisable at this time. Still, interventions aimed at second or the third grade would be beneficial as well. This is especially relevant for males, and those from the Other student subgroup comprised of Asian, Multiracial, and Native American individuals.

The new Common Core State Standards (CCSS) provide new promise for all students nationally as they are research and evidence based, internationally benchmarked, and aligned with college and career expectations necessary for meeting success in our 21st century globally competitive society (NGACBP, CCSSO, 2010). With the introduction of the CCSS that currently 45 states and Washington, D.C. have adopted, changes to assessment will follow (NGACBP, CCSSO, 2010). The state of Florida, having adopted the Common Core State Standards in July of 2010, is
serving on the Governing Board and as Fiscal agent of the consortium to develop the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) due to begin its administration in the fall of 2014 (Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers [PARCC], 2012). The PARCC, designed for administration throughout the school year, is being aligned to formative instructional practice that will include the integration of literacy components in reading, writing, listening, speaking, and language (PARCC, 2012).

The common core standards and assessments may provide promise of an improved educational plan, but the progress of our most academically and socioeconomically disadvantaged children will require increased support and close monitoring. Effective instructional scaffolding must be provided based on every student's uniquely individual and differentiated needs to halt academic failure by promoting success that will serve to reduce and eventually eliminate the current gap in achievement that exists between advantaged and disadvantaged students.