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## Journal for the Advancement of Educational Research International

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Journal for the Advancement of Educational Research International  
**Association for the Advancement of Educational Research International**

*Achieving Excellence through Inquiry*

**Fall 2018**

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**Journal for the Advancement of Educational Research International**

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## **Editor's Note: In This Issue**

The *Journal of The Advancement of Educational Research International* (JAERI) is tasked with providing a venue for scholars to share research projects, position statements and policy studies that contribute to a betterment of the educational experiences for today's youth. It is my pleasure to begin my term as editor with a range of insightful works that cover a wide variety of areas. I take this opportunity to express my excitement in this position as I look forward to future high-quality articles that increase the awareness and reputation of our journal.

Starting off, Dr. Cassandra Conway and Dr. Phillip Mutisya present an insightful article that focuses on the challenges facing faculty teaching at Historically Black Colleges and Universities with regards to mentoring. They offer the perspective that mentoring in these institutions needs to be revised in order to better support our colleagues. The article discusses some methods for achieving this goal.

In the second article, Dr. Nelson Ngoh offers an insightful examination on the impact of faculty evaluations on the tenure and promotion process. He argues that there are a number of issues that can make student evaluations of faculty problematic and unfair to both the individual and the processes. The article discusses recommendations on methods to improve the faculty evaluation process.

In the third article, Dr. Joyce Robinson presents an evaluation of phonics-based reading instruction and whole language reading instruction. This study examined growth in reading skill in first- and second-grade English Language Learners in an international school. The article discusses the effectiveness and implications of these two strategies.

In the fourth article, Drs. Doris and Sherwood Thompson embark on a discussion of how equity and quality education contribute to positive outcomes for our children in today's schools. Through a reminder of what quality education is and looks like in practice, they offer evidence of how improving teaching for underserved children opens their opportunities for increased learning outcomes.

In the fifth article, Dr. Dixie Abernathy provides the first phase of a multi-year project that examines the self-efficacy within leadership qualities in novice and future school leaders. She presents data to illustrate the levels of self-efficacy in cohorts of students enrolled in an online Master in Educational Leadership program. This study provides the foundation for tracking growth in current and future students in her program.

In the sixth article, Dr. Cicely Cottrell explores the relationship between suspension and juvenile delinquency in high school students through the use of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health survey. The analysis reveals various factors that contribute to these students' suspensions. The article discusses the implications of these findings, as well as recommendations for practice.

In the seventh article, Dr. Timothy Siegler uses an interesting combination of biology and education to examine the cultural awareness of a group of students enrolled in a cultural diversity course. Through the use of AncestryDNA test data, he examined what this type of information meant to the participants' view of their identity. His study affirms the view that multicultural education is essential in our schools.

In the eighth article, Dr. Louis Tietje and Dr. Steven Cresap provide an open discussion on the need to advance opportunities to teach for social justice. Through a review of the main tenets of social justice, they use cartoons to help remind educators of

the importance of promoting social justice, but also the key challenges that underlie teaching this difficult concept.

In the ninth article, Dr. Tony Sweatt provides evidence from a qualitative study of African American teachers that they have been marginalized by privileged leaders within their predominantly white rural schools. An examination of the communication approaches by the school leaders supports the notion that they are actively oppressing some groups of teachers. The study discusses the implications of its findings for education officials.

For the last article, Dr. Louis Tietje addresses the question: “Why bother teaching public policy analysis?” To this end, he utilizes the gun violence debate as a way to examine the societal and cultural hurdles that hinder the promotion of effective policy.

On behalf of the entire Publication Board and Editorial Advisory Board of the *Journal for the Advancement of Educational Research International* (JAERI), we offer our gratitude to Dr. Phillip Mutisya for his tireless work as the AAERI Journal Interim Editor. He offered his leadership in organizing this edition and ensuring its contributions not only promote excellence, but also bridge educational research across many fields of educational practice and foundational disciplines.

I look forward to a bright future and hope you find value in this edition. Thank you.

Rob Ceglie PhD  
Incoming AAERI Journal Editor

# Academic Mentoring: A Prerequisite for Faculty at HBCUs

Dr. Cassandra Conway, South Carolina State University  
Dr. Phillip Mutisya, North Carolina Central University

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## ABSTRACT

This article provides a perspective on faculty mentoring at Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCU). The purpose of this effort is to: 1) establish a useful dialogue on providing academic mentoring to faculty as professionals, and 2) generate some recommendations that are effective and critical to faculty's academic mentoring, especially at HBCUs. HBCUs are important because of their unique challenges with distinct cultural contexts, and yet their faculty members are expected to produce quality professional experiences comparable to the other majority institutions.

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## INTRODUCTION

In general, mentoring at academic settings has not always had significance, especially in higher education. The culture of higher education tends to be guided by an individualized interactive process that is not only competitive but lonely. Not only has the culture changed in higher education, but the existence of the HBCU has been challenged by some legislators on the state and national levels, resulting in some HBCUs being closed over the last ten years or suffering greatly due to a relatively lower allocation of funds compared to other institutions of higher education. Many years ago, HBCUs were established to open the doors to a quality education for individuals who otherwise would not receive one. With the changes in higher education and some HBCUs going through financial exigency and other challenges due to a lack of funding on the state and private level, the plight of the faculty member has become a path in which some faculty have to be creative in obtaining the necessary professional development opportunities due to scant funding. Therefore, there may be more faculty at HBCUs who cannot attend state, national, and international conferences that provide the opportunities to present research papers, submit refereed journal articles or book chapters, and network with peers. Without a certain number of experiences that can give the faculty member more visibility, the faculty members at certain HBCUs may have a sense of loneliness or may feel that their professional lives have been stunted. It seems to be the expectation of some that faculty at HBCUs may need creativity to open doors to opportunities. Yes, creativity can open some doors to opportunities, but financial support is still a needed resource. In the latest book published entitled, *Faculty Mentorship at Historically Black Colleges and Universities*, Sligh Conway (2018) noted that the HBCU has been the beacon of light in serving the faculty who teach there. Likewise, this author noted that as researchers, professors, and administrators, there has to be a collaborative effort to continually provide faculty with quality academic mentoring.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this article is to draw a distinction between general mentoring and academic mentoring. The intended outcome of the discussion in the chapter is to establish a conceptual view that can be useful in inducting faculty as professionals in their careers as academics in HBCU settings. The framing of the discussion is aimed at developing a conceptual dialogue that can aid in developing effective faculty professionally that can empower new and seasoned faculty in developing a culture of nurturing collegial academic learning. This, in turn, can aid in the academic mentoring of faculty at HBCUs.

## **BACKGROUND**

Mentoring in most higher education academic institutions, especially predominantly white institutions (PWIs), tend to be for students involving academic advising. Therefore, academic mentoring in this respect focuses more on mentor- protégé, thus, the outcome is more on role-modeling rather than peer mentoring. This works well for mentor- student or mentor-protégé relationship, but not for faculty to faculty interacting in a peer-to-peer mentoring process. Thus, mentoring in general has been viewed in various ways depending on the culture of the organization. This depends on whether it is part of cultural induction through rites of passage in most traditional cultural groups or religious practice. Mentoring is defined by some authors as

...continuous, rather than a one –time event. The roles of the mentor are directed toward the improvement of three functions: skills, performance, and development. The goals of peer mentoring are to: provide an open atmosphere for dialogue; enhance and improve motivation for job performance; provide assistance with process skills and direction toward available resources, and develop potential for professional development; provide a practical view and assist in focusing more sharply on particular roles and responsibilities, along with updated approaches in carrying out responsibilities...” (Kutliek, Earnest, & Ernest, 2001, p. 1).

Other authors tend to focus on the outcomes involved in mentoring. (Apple, Ellis, & Hintze, 2016; Holliday, 2001).

Furthermore, Clutterbuck (2004) conducted extensive research that included different models of mentoring published in the book, “Everyone Needs a Mentor”. Decades of research and a case study of his experiences were documented. Clutterbuck (2004) defined two models of mentoring with unique emphases on career and professional development. Years of mentoring and positive suggestions related to using mentoring have been documented relentlessly in the literature (Clutterbuck, 1991). However, academic mentoring has yet to emerge fully. Academic mentoring would be a viable approach in engaging faculty in professional development that would lead to shared governance and effective collaboration. Most faculty hired after finishing the terminal degree tend to teach the way they were taught which makes it challenging for a new faculty in any discipline. An observation for over 14-30 years by the authors of this chapter shows that professional development of faculty at HBCUs lack effectiveness because the approach is usually pedagogy centered and not andragogy centered. This

approach fails because the faculty do not feel engaged in activities designed to meet their needs. Most adults learn well when the engagement is based on andragogy, which is adult-to-adult or peer-to-peer (Chandler & Ginsberg, 2011; Chan, 2010; Kram, 2005; Mutisya & Rotich, 2014; McCauley, Hammer, & Hinojosa, 2017). Kapoor (2018) noted that in order to succeed, most individuals will need "...to integrate a multigenerational workforce approach through reciprocal mentoring" (p. 1).

Most effective learning occurs between peer-to-peer and in a group setting. Another observation that is usually what is known as the hidden curriculum in HBCU institutional academic settings is that leadership is based on symbolism. In symbolic leadership the style of leadership is usually top-down (Boss and Manager) relationship. Such type of leadership fosters dependency mindset and not growth mindset, whereby everyone takes responsibility for their performance and their role autonomously. Thus, when it comes to making decisions a faculty member feels less responsible because the leadership does not approve or affirm the decision. However, if the leadership style of the institution is bottom-up, the faculty feel empowered and autonomous in making decisions that are effective in solving problems that are in their control because they take ownership and feel free or at liberty to perform at their best (Mutisya & Rotich, 2014; Sligh Conway, 2018).

## **ACADEMIC MENTORING**

The most effective approach in engaging faculty in academic mentoring requires training by engaging faculty in a peer to peer as colleagues and develop relationships that lead to developing collegiality. Faculty leadership training designed with academic mentoring in mind fosters an intellectual climate that motivates the communities in the institution to work collaborative. Today's challenge in higher education institutions is to retain and graduate students which requires recruiting and retaining highly effective faculty who are continuously empowered by an intellectual climate that provides opportunity to grow. However, this type of leadership has to be developed through academic mentoring training that fosters a growth mindset (Chandler & Kram, 2005; Mutisya & Rotich, 2014).

Academic mentoring can give faculty opportunities to work alongside another faculty with the same level of experiences or less. It opens doors to intellectual discourse that can further faculty members' professional development which can yield positive outcomes during the tenure and promotion processes on the academic level. For the authors, academic mentoring over the years has proven effective as both authors have assisted one another by being available to assist in joining grant, research, and publication endeavors. One of the authors, Sligh Conway, began a faculty tenure and promotion committee as a personal gesture to assist faculty at one HBCU. Over the last 5 years, this committee has been successful as the faculty who are a part of this group, five total, have published more than six refereed publications collaboratively. In the last year, some of the committee members have been able to move on from this committee to find other opportunities. Mentoring does not mean that the faculty remains as a part of the committee; it suggests that the mentor-mentee partnership is one that is reciprocal and the mentoring may occur at different times or at certain times when needed. Academic mentoring is not a static form of mentoring. It does what the purpose is and continues to foster the overall idea of moving the faculty member in a direction that assists in professional development.

## **TESTIMONIALS/ACADEMIC MENTORING/HBCUS**

The authors share academic mentoring experiences that have yielded the HBCU as a beacon of light in achieving professional goals. One author, Dr. Sligh Conway, noted:

Academic mentoring has been a changing aspect of my life. The HBCU experience has been a beacon of light, in spite of some of the times where financial resources were scant; the opportunities extended at an HBCU have been wonderful and I treasure the interactions with faculty members who have opened doors at HBCUs and Predominantly White Institutions. I think it's not whether the institution is an HBCU or a PWI, it is what you do with the experience and how open are you to work hard to achieve the professional development opportunities. It has not always been easy to find people to provide academic mentoring. When the opportunities were provided; however, I took the experiences and made more from those experiences. A small experience can lead to something big. I have been a resilient person in all levels of personal and professional tasks so not achieving certain things in life was never a question. My task was to succeed in life despite some of the obstacles. Another aspect of academic mentoring is that it does not always occur at the institution where one works. Most of my academic mentoring came from many levels: the university, international, national, and state organizations and associations. Academic mentoring is a viable support measure and it should be at every institution of higher learning for women and men of all ethnic and cultural groups. Mentoring should be seen on an interdisciplinary level as both an enhancement to understanding cultures and as a unique way to bring faculty together to promote excellence. Without academic mentoring, I would not have published successfully, obtained grants, nor would I be the person I am today (Sligh Conway, 2018, Personal Communication on Academic Mentoring).

Dr. Philliph Mutisya noted:

Academic mentoring, for the most part, started when I was in my undergraduate studies and continued throughout my career. In meeting others at the university level and through international, state, and national associations, academic mentoring has proven to have excellent outcomes. From the beginning of my academic career until recent years, I can view academic mentoring as positive source and a definite success measure in my career development. Without this type of mentorship, my career at HBCUs would not have been successful. Through partnering with others on different publishing activities, academic mentoring has been worthwhile and a strong force. Publishing with those who care about my success has been a cathartic experience. Like Sligh Conway's testimonial, without academic mentoring at HBCUs, I would not be in the position that I am in at an HBCU as a grant writer, researcher, published in many areas, and a viable addition in the community (Mutisya, 2018, Personal Communication on Academic Mentoring).

## **MENTORING/CULTURAL CONTEXT OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

The cultural context becomes relevant given the cultural environment because diverse cultural environments create complexity in regards to the differences in views of what mentoring means. Peer mentoring given the social and cultural experience and intellectual climate works well in HBCU, however not based on group but two individuals and not many. It is important to be mindful of the internalized negative experiences that some African Americans or the minority cultures have experienced overtime. Having

protracted discussion to address how the mentee and the mentor see their experience in their life tends to create closeness and more trust and less suspicion as they cope with the societal life experiences (Mutisya & Rotich, 2014).

One should note that a “Mentor” is generally viewed as an experienced individual providing support and encouragement to assist others in managing and maximizing their potential and certain skills. However, academic mentoring is a collaborative and reciprocal interaction of two individuals helping each other to progress and succeed in their careers, education, personal development and other interests as peer to peer and not a dominant–subordinate relationship. Although the term mentor is used very often in business and higher education and in youth programs, it is becoming more useful in faculty professional training to improve academic leadership and learning process. However it is important to understand that the mentor normally has more influence to a mentee and plays a wider role than that of supervisor, chair, dean or an administrator in academic settings (Jacobi, 1991; Sligh Conway, 2018).

Academic mentors are usually involved in a one-on-one relationship with a peer to peer as opposed to mentor-protégé (Daloz, 1986). It is usually a partnership between two people (mentor – mentee, and not mentor-protégé), and they may be working in a similar or different field or share similar experiences. It is a helpful in building relationships based upon mutual trust and respect. Mentoring is associated with positive personal and career outcomes. Academic mentoring has consistently contributed to encouraging faculty to collaborate together and in developing collegiality (Johnson & Ridley, 2004). In general, in academic settings, especially at HBCUs, the leaders who view their role as managers, supervisors or boss face resistance from their peers who are supposed to work collaboratively. This conflict is overlooked because it is the awareness of the fact that, if two individuals have the same amount and capacity of education and experience, the only way one can accept guidance is from the other being humble. The humbleness turns into a mentoring experience whereby both mutually accept each other’s role and share power respectfully.

There is an abundance of literature on mentoring, mentoring functions, types of mentoring and mentoring programs. For the most part, mentoring has been identified as a crucial element that can determine the failure or success in a person’s professional or personal life. However, little has been written or said about mentoring at various stages of personal/ professional development. There are other models of mentoring that have shown that self-concept changes over time and develops as a result of experience. Like career development, mentoring can be a lifelong phenomenon (Apple & Hintz, 2016; Jacobi 1991; Levinson, 1978; Sligh Conway, 2018).

The mentor-mentee relationship is meaningful and valuable to both parties for attaining immediate goals and for deepening insights about performance and growth processes. Mentoring is important because any person who is motivated and concerned about achieving personal or professional growth faces the challenge of articulating a substantive direction. Effective academic mentoring facilitates the movement of a mentee from unclear development goals to independence in self-growth; a practical goal should be the mentee’s future success (Apple & Hintze, 2016; Leise, n.d.; Sligh Conway, 2018).

## RECOMMENDATIONS/FUTURE DIRECTIONS

There are unique challenges that the authors discovered while interacting and working with faculty at HBCUs that are faced by most faculty who choose to work at such institutions. One of the unique challenges is the absence of a faculty orientation that prepares the faculty after getting hired. Usually, the assumptions of the culture of the institution tend to assume there is no need to provide training on how to teach because your academic credentials are enough. However, when a faculty joins the institution, the faculty quickly finds moments of loneliness and no one to support him or her on how to deal with the unwritten political climate or how to cultivate collegiality. Such experiences also tend to draw one into cliques and silos that thrive on gossip and suspicion. The suspicions may come from experiences in the larger society which the faculty should have dealt with before coming to the institution and thus, preparing the faculty for the unknown. Hence, while there is a lack of training or an orientation on how to deal with such institution experiences, the expectation is that as a qualified professional you should be able to be successful. The HBCU is a beacon of light and the administrators must continue to foster the development of faculty who can be trained, retained, and matriculated successfully through the stages of professional development. This should be a required assurance extended to faculty who choose to teach at HBCUs as the faculty are an essential part of the institutional environment. Funding should be set aside to provide academic mentoring at HCBUs. Faculty is a part of the strategic plan and investing in the faculty is as important as investing in the students. Both should be seen on the same level with positive gains as the essential goals.

## CONCLUSION

Quality academic mentoring is a viable solution to working with faculty at any university or college. Like Sligh Conway (2018) noted in the book, *Faculty Mentorship at HBCUs*, more case scenarios, testimonials, or interviews of faculty should be conducted to note faculty members' perceptions of academic mentoring at HBCUs. There are many articles and books on mentoring; however, there are fewer attempts to include faculty perceptions of academic mentoring, strategies to use academic mentoring to assist faculty in ascertaining tenure and promotion, and career professional development at HBCUs. More empirical and qualitative studies should be conducted on topics related to faculty academic mentoring. Once the information is gained, the next steps are to apply what is gathered and use the information to grow, retain, and matriculate faculty through the HBCU experience.

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# **Factors that Impact the Evaluation of Teacher Evaluation of Teacher Effectiveness for Reappointment, Tenure and Promotion**

Nelson Ngoh // University of Bridgeport

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## **ABSTRACT**

Institutions of learning hire faculty to teach and carry out certain contractual duties. The onus rests on the institution to retain those who are effectively carrying out the job for which they were appointed and to replace those who are not meeting up with the required assignments. The problem now becomes that of choosing the most appropriate instruments and the best qualified personnel to help evaluate these faculty in order to make the most informed decisions in this respect. This author chose some universities and closely examined the instruments used for this purpose as well as the personnel who are involved in determining the effectiveness of the teachers. The results revealed that some of the questions asked in the Faculty Evaluation Forms were ambiguous and therefore not valid for that purpose. Some of the personnel involved in this process of evaluation were not adequately qualified to determine the right faculty for reappointment, tenure and promotion. The article concludes with some recommendations to ameliorate and improve the validity and reliability of the evaluation.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Evaluation is an important concept in education. Teaching, learning and evaluation are interwoven. Evaluation seems to be the foundation on which teaching and evaluation stand. Most of the time, appropriate decisions as to when or how to teach or learn are based on the results of evaluation. Evaluation carries the notion that the value or worth of someone or something is to be judged. In other words, evaluation is defined as the systematic process of determining the extent to which instructional objectives have been achieved by pupils. Evaluation is equally the means of determining which faculty member is to be hired, reappointed, tenured or promoted. Evaluation is inevitable in teaching and in all fields of activity including reappointment, tenure and promotion where judgments are needed.

It must be noted that the role of evaluation is intrinsic to the teaching-learning situation. Unfortunately, it would appear evaluation of students and faculty alike is all too often done as though it were extraneous to the main purpose of teaching (Ngoh, 2001). Proper care is not taken to select the most appropriate tools as well as the right and experienced individuals to carry out the evaluation. To be valid and reliable, evaluation is expected to exclude casual uncontrolled observation of the individuals concerned and emphasize on already identified and stated objectives.

For this paper, evaluation is the process by which the effects and the effectiveness of the teacher and teaching itself are being determined for the purpose of reappointment,

tenure and promotion to a higher academic rank. In this case it is the systematic process of determining the extent to which the faculty in question has discharged his/her duty as a teacher and as an academician or professional in his/her discipline. In this case, the paper argues that those doing the evaluation of faculty must be very qualified or knowledgeable in the meaning and purpose of evaluation or else the end results would be fraught with bias and subjectivity. Analogously, since you cannot give what you do not have, you cannot effectively evaluate when you do not know or do not have the appropriate experience or knowledge required. Furthermore, it is not only the status of the persons determining the effectiveness of the teacher that is of great importance. The type of instruments provided for this purpose could make the results of the evaluation inauthentic. For example, the type of questions asked about an individual could be misleading.

## **BACKGROUND**

We may start by asking the main purpose of faculty evaluations. Are we right if we give the reason to be simply to promote faculty from Assistant through Associate to Full Professor? What might be the hidden intent of this? Could it be to increase the salaries as they move up the rungs? Could it be to motivate faculty to become more effective teachers? What does it mean to be an effective teacher? Are the authorities worried that the students are not learning well and the quality of graduates from their institutions are not high enough? According to Reeves (2004), Layne (2012) and Feldman & Lynch, (1988), effective teaching results in learning.

It is commonly noted that many students describe effective teachers as those who are interesting, knowledgeable, approachable, and helpful, who present materials well and motivate students by setting high standards. If learning is what is expected of teachers, will these descriptors necessarily lead to learning? What of other intervening variables that can offset these qualities? There are certain situations wherein students do not want to do science because of the stereotypes that science is difficult, or the students do not have the prerequisite background knowledge for that course. Such students fail the course and the faculty bear the blame and the brunt even when they qualify as effective teachers by all standards. It has been said (Weimer, 2013) that students are the ultimate “deciders” when it comes to whether or not they learn. Should faculty be evaluated based on their teaching or students’ learning? Which descriptors are thus most appropriate to be used for reappointment, tenure and promotion?

The main purpose of classroom instruction or teaching is to help pupils achieve a set of intended learning objectives. These educational objectives or outcomes include intellectual, emotional and physical changes. To see if these desired changes (learning) have taken place in the pupils, evaluation must be done. That is, the pupils' learning progress is periodically evaluated by tests and other evaluation devices. Similarly, the academic growth and performance of the faculty are periodically evaluated at many levels by students, colleagues and administrators. Therefore, the interdependent nature of teaching, learning and evaluation should often be recognized, particularly as Hoffman (1962) says that a pupil does not really know what he has learned until he has organized it and explained it to someone else. This should be equally true with faculty. In the process of preparing a file for evaluation, the faculty revisits her/his performance or achievements and realizes the level of his progress in the area of teaching, collaboration with colleagues,

scholarly activities, and their contributions to the institution and the society as a whole. The purpose of this paper therefore is to examine closely the instruments used and the qualification of those involved in the process of evaluating faculty for reappointment, tenure and promotion issues.

The evaluation of the faculty is based on the extent and quality of his/her function within the intellectual life of the University, in addition to fulfilling contractual obligations. The concern or premise here is that we are usually found assessing things that have very little bearing with what the faculty are expected to be or what and how they should be teaching. In many institutions of learning, those involved in the review usually consider faculty performance with respect to four functional areas. These include the faculty duties with students, colleagues, discipline and with the university in general (UB Faculty Handbook, 2002; Queens College – CUNY, 2010).

The faculty's classroom teaching, course innovation and design and availability for and effectiveness in advising is being evaluated by colleagues and students. Performance with students is followed by the faculty's performance with the discipline he/she teaches. Acceptable criteria in this area of discipline is depicted by "evidence of scholarly, professional and artistic growth, such as publications, research, exhibits, and performances; possession of and progress toward advanced degrees: lectures and presentations at other institutions: grants and fellowships; participation in scholarly or professional societies and activities; professional participation in the affairs of surrounding communities and the region" (UB Handbook, 2002).

As mentioned earlier, the faculty is also evaluated based on how well he/she works with other colleagues in the university. This means he/she needs to participate in interdisciplinary activities, where feasible in the university and elsewhere; participate in academic committee work and planning and in team-based instructional experimentation, and the ability to stimulate thought, research or professional activity among colleagues (CUNY, 2018). As regards the university in general, the faculty in question is expected to participate in or encourage clubs, forums, lectures, exhibitions, and performances as well as show effective participation in faculty meetings. This faculty must demonstrate a responsible attitude toward the development and maintenance of library, technical and other resources (F&M College, 2018; Hilderbrand, Wilson, & Dienst, 1971; UB Faculty Handbook, 2002).

In addition to the four areas addressed above, the dean or his designate visits the faculty's class to assess the actual classroom activities and how the faculty handles them. The reports of these areas (teaching, scholarship and performance in the activities of the institution and society) are reviewed by the School/College Personnel Committee and the entire University Personnel Committee before a recommendation for reappointment, tenure, or promotion is made to the provost and/or the president of the university for a final decision. The key question now is how qualified are the individuals involved in this process of evaluation? What experience do they have or how knowledgeable are they in the specific items listed above on which the faculty would be evaluated? How valid are the instruments like the Faculty Evaluation Forms used? (University of Hawaii, 2009; CUNY, 2018).

## **METHOD**

It was noted that most of the universities and colleges across the nation used

basically the same procedure of evaluating their faculty for reappointment, tenure and promotion. For this paper, five institutions were selected including Queens College of the City University of New York (CUNY), Franklin and Marshall College (F&M) in Pennsylvania, University of Hawaii (UH), Fairfield University (FU) and the University of Bridgeport (UB) in Connecticut. This could be considered as convenient sampling. The dossier expectations that were reviewed for these institutions were similar. The faculty member's probationary period is seven years and the documents submitted usually include curriculum vitae, record of courses taught, syllabi and course assignments, and then an account of departmental, institutional, and professional contributions. The instruments like the Faculty Evaluation Forms used by the institutions are different in structure with the questions worded differently too. However, the overall contents of the questions on the evaluation forms were virtually the same. The levels of evaluation—which include the school/college committee, the dean, the university personnel committee and the administration taking part in the evaluation—were practically the same with only a change in terminology. The evaluation forms were used essentially by the students to answer questions about the performance of the faculty in teaching and in carrying out other professional functions. Comments and discussions were then made about the validity or relevance of the contents of the evaluation tools and the appropriateness of the qualification of the personnel involved in the evaluation of these faculty for reappointment, tenure and promotion.

## DISCUSSION

When the questions in the evaluation forms were reviewed, some of them seemed to be out of place and therefore not valid; consequently the results thereof would not be very reliable. That is, by being students, they may not be knowledgeable in some of the concepts expected to be evaluated about their teachers. Some of the questions are simply convoluted and ambiguous, lacking validity. For example, at Franklin and Marshall College, there is a question like “To what extent was class discussion managed in such a way as to permit most members of the class to participate regularly?” Respondents are expected to check off from “very poorly managed” to “very effectively” (0%, 13%, 19%, 69%). Another question is “To what extent did the instructor employ fair and consistent grading standards?” (0%, 6%, 28%, and 67% which is “Never – Always”). One might ask if these students are themselves professionals to know what “fair and consistent grading standards” are and the appropriate ways of managing class discussions. Undergraduate students may find these questions difficult to answer. There is a chance that graduate students in a Teacher Preparation Program might have covered those topics of classroom management and grading styles and could give meaningful answers.

A question such as “did you gain ability to analyze and solve problems?” raises the question as to who is at fault if the student did not gain the expected ability. How effective is the said student in self-evaluation of his ability to learn (‘analyze and solve problems’)? A teacher might teach well but the said student fails to gain the ability because the student was not paying attention. How does this student then effectively evaluate the teacher's effectiveness? How do students determine the “quality of exercises and assignments” if they are not professionals themselves? Do they know the good characteristics of exercises and assignments? The students of course can say how easy or difficult questions are. They

may not be able to even distinguish between difficult questions and the highly recommended challenging questions. Similar questions from the University of Hawaii such as whether “laboratory assignments seem carefully chosen” and “lab equipment was, on most occasions, effectively set up” are also very subjective. Decisions taken about the faculty based on these students’ answers will be a travesty of evaluation.

Underhill (1987) writes elaborately about testing techniques of spoken language. Queens College - CUNY asks students if the instructor’s command of spoken English is good. This question seems to be problematic considering the fact that diversity is highly encouraged in our institutions of learning now. How good are students themselves versed with the language to be able to judge whether the teacher’s spoken language is good? There are some courses filled with international students for whom English is not just the second language but may be the third and even the fourth. Even some of the home students do not display a high command of the English language and are therefore unable to effectively evaluate the language of their teachers. Students’ language of instruction in most cases is therefore questionable. Are these the people to assess the quality of the instructor’s command of spoken English? The most likely thing assessed by these students in some teachers might be the accents of teachers whose language of birth is not English. Accents therefore might contribute greatly to the refusal of reappointment and tenure of many international faculty if evaluators consider students grading of the spoken language.

How is whether “this course is required for a student’s major or minor” by the University of Bridgeport useful in determining the effectiveness of an instructor? I wonder how those who analyze the students’ responses interpret the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers in relationship to faculty effectiveness. Students in another case were asked to say whether the textbook chosen by the instructor was good. What is questionable in this is that said students do not yet know the qualities of a good textbook. How could people who do not know the characteristics of a good textbook be expected to rate an instructor’s ability to choose a valid textbook? In most cases, the students evaluate the book in terms of cost rather than quality. A good quality textbook that is expensive is usually rated as a bad book which means the instructor does not know how to choose a textbook. The professor in question is rated low.

These examples and many more indicate that evaluation of teacher effectiveness is quite often not effective because the students doing the evaluation themselves have no experience or are not knowledgeable in the concepts in the evaluation form. How many students actually know who a good teacher is? Orlando (2013) has described the nine characteristics of a great teacher. For many, especially students, a good teacher is one who does not give many assignments, who does not care or overlooks when students come to class, who stops the class well ahead of time, and one who gives the grades the students want not necessarily what they merit. Teachers who are described as “strict”, time conscious, and whose assignments are valid and there is reliability in their grading results are the “bad guys” and are rated very low.

Students’ comments are usually anonymous and are rarely challenged even at the level of the institutions, let alone in courts (due process). There have been cases where faculty have been questioned, fired or simply not promoted based on one-sided accusations by students and personnel involved. These questionable complaints have pushed some faculty to be “teaching to the test” or grading to please the students because they want students to evaluate them positively. These are poorly trained faculty who do not know that

grading of students' work should be objective and not based on confounding variables.

Colleagues evaluate their peers (peer review), for example, in a class visit. This is usually to assess whether the lesson goals/objectives are clearly stated and met and to describe the classroom environment and how the professor links the relevancy of the class activities to the field at large. This evaluator is expected to describe how the instructor uses instructional materials and other supportive learning/teaching aids, including the use of technological/A-V materials. Other things assessed include the nature of communication between the professor and the students and the professor's rapport with the students. The faculty's classroom management style or the type of disciplinary techniques used are of vital importance and are evaluated too.

The researcher had an opportunity to have access to class visit reports over several years. All these attributes being assessed are based on pedagogy and on assumption that the evaluator is himself/herself knowledgeable in pedagogical techniques. It was noted that some of these evaluators were given this duty just because they are older in service in the department. They themselves are not trained professional pedagogues. They have never done any courses in curriculum development or educational pedagogy and therefore lack the basic concepts and principles of education, teaching and classroom management. All they know is what they have been doing for a long time en guise of teaching. Perhaps they were hired to teach in the university just because they had Ph.D degrees and not necessarily based on any formal pedagogical qualifications. They simply use their long time experience as the standard expected of the colleague being evaluated. These experiences at times are totally not in line with currently acceptable pedagogical principles of teaching. The colleague being evaluated might be current in teaching methods but will be given a bad grade by this evaluator with archaic methods of teaching based only on longevity in service. Who suffers at this point is not the evaluator but the one being evaluated.

It is known that there are some faculty who do not do a good job of teaching. However, the students in that particular course might be a problem themselves. They are lazy and not willing to learn and all they do is to complain about one thing or the other and disrupt the class and thereby giving the impression that this instructor does not know how to teach. The evaluator who cannot distinguish between students' conduct and teacher's ability to create a conducive teaching-learning environment often marks down the instructor. The debate here then is who is qualified to make class visits to properly evaluate peers going up for reappointment and tenure.

There are levels of review that continue with this evaluation for reappointment, promotion and tenure. These levels are composed of faculty and administrators. There is the School or College Personnel Committee (S/CPC) consisting of at least two tenured faculty members from the given college/school or department. Cases arise when there are not enough qualified members to be in the committee in a given department/school and faculty from other departments are invited to sit in committees of different colleges/schools. Decisions or votes from such visiting committee members may not often be very reliable, lacking personal knowledge of the colleagues being evaluated. The recommendation of a S/CPC is based on the documents provided by the candidate and on personal knowledge and interaction with the faculty being evaluated. This committee therefore provides a College/School perspective of the faculty to the dean and to the University Personnel Committee (UPC). The decisions of the S/CPC might be influenced, positively or negatively, by personal knowledge of the colleague. Often too, S/CPC

members might be ignorant or not adequately educated in the area of specialization of the one being evaluated. The concern is whether the members of the committee are pretty versed with the demands of the different disciplines of their colleagues? For example, are language faculty familiar with the expectations of the science disciplines or history subjects? There are cases where the one evaluated has had a misunderstanding with the one evaluating and such strained relationships often lead to poor and biased judgments of the performance of the faculty.

The next level is that of the dean or director of the school or college. The advantage here is that the search for a dean is usually rigorous and ends up with one who is knowledgeable and has acquired experience to be able to say who is an effective teacher. Unfortunately, the shortcomings common with the colleagues who do the class visits and those in the S/CPC might be same with the dean. The dean's review and recommendation based on the direct interaction with the faculty in this case could be marred and biased too. However, the dean's recommendation is guided too by the recommendation from the S/CPC.

After the dean is the University Personnel Committee whose members, mostly tenured faculty and most of them already at the rank of associate professor, are from various schools/colleges of the institution. Often too, UPC members might be ignorant or not adequately familiar with the area of specialization of someone from another department. That is, the other members of this committee may not be very versed with the type of journals available there, the publications and the work-load of a faculty from a different college/school. However, the representative of that department very often helps in explaining the department's perspective when such a question comes up.

As with all the the levels of review, the UPC closely follows the directives of the handbook of the institution. The UPC bases its decision essentially on the information in the candidate's dossier, the peer review report, and recommendations of the S/CPC and that of the dean. Members of the UPC rarely personally know candidates from other colleges/schools of the university. As expected of all other levels of review, the UPC watches out that its recommendation is not influenced by personal knowledge of a particular colleague.

The Provost constitutes the next level of review. He bases his decision on the reports by all levels of review (the C/SPC, Dean and the UPC) below him. He uses his personal academic and professional knowledge to confirm or reject the recommendations made by the other committees. Again as with the other evaluators, there might be cases where the provost is academically deficient in a certain discipline and misinterprets the performance of a faculty under review and takes a questionable decision. The titles of books/articles published might not be considered acceptable as fitting the profile of the discipline of the faculty evaluated, even if they are. The problem here might be resulting from lack of knowledge, for example, by a pure linguist not familiar with science education or social studies concepts and expectations. The faculty evaluated is then rated low.

It is here noted that in many institutions, it is the provost, usually the Vice President of Academic Affairs, that makes the final recommendation about the reappointment, tenure or promotion of the faculty member in question. Such institutions believe that teacher effectiveness is an academic issue and should be appropriately decided by the provost who is in charge of academic affairs. Although the president is usually responsible for administrative affairs of the institution, some institutions include the president of the

university to dictate the final verdict in this process. Basically, what is the academic qualification of these individuals? Some may have only the first degree and others have at best graduate diplomas and have not had the necessary experience.

The role played by the provost or the president might not raise any eyebrow if the said individual were adequately qualified – has adequate credentials in academia and experience themselves in the process leading to tenure or promotion. It has been remarked, for example, that some provosts and presidents have not had the opportunity or responsibility of rising through the ranks of assistant, associate or full professor and they find themselves in the position to determine who should or should not be reappointed, tenured or promoted. The chances of taking appropriate decisions would be very slim.

It was noted that in most of the institutions of learning, the position of a president is purely administrative and that is why most of them are elected and not hired based on academic qualifications. Some presidents tend to make their decisions in these cases based on the financial stance of the institutions since promotion, for example, comes along with increase in financial remunerations. In this case, an individual might be refused promotion to a new rank because the institution has no money to pay for that rank and meanwhile that individual is academically ripe for that rank. It is not uncommon to see an efficient president of an institution with a first degree carrying out his administrative functions very well. Questions usually arise when such individuals challenge the recommendations made by academicians, members of the school or university committees, about the promotion or tenure of a faculty member.

## **CONCLUSION**

As stated earlier, the purpose of this paper has been to examine closely the instruments used and the qualification or eligibility of those involved in the process of evaluation of faculty that merit reappointment, tenure and promotion. How do we know if the faculty is achieving the institution's specific teaching goals and other contractual duties and thus deserve to be retained? Selecting eligible evaluators is the challenge. Faculty evaluations done appropriately by the right students, colleagues and administration provide excellent feedback about student satisfaction of faculty teaching style, but they don't provide the important detail of how much the faculty is teaching.

If the qualification of those doing the evaluation and the instruments used are questionable, wrong data is obtained and, of course, wrong decisions are taken concerning the eligibility of those to be either reappointed, tenured or promoted. Therefore, the more accurately we judge our faculty using valid instruments, the more effective we will be in weeding out poorly performing teachers while maintaining and promoting qualified faculty and directing their teaching. This happens when sound teaching decisions are based on information from accurate, relevant and comprehensive evaluation. The contention here is that the effectiveness of the teacher and teaching depends, to a large extent, on the quality of the evaluation information and tools on which the decisions are based.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Changing the way faculty are assessed can dramatically improve teaching effectiveness. The evaluations done by the right people concerned can have a tremendous

influence on the lives of the faculty being evaluated and the institutions as a whole. Evaluation therefore should not be lightly or casually made by any type of person and using poorly formulated instruments. Carefully collected data by those who understand the intricacies of evaluation would definitely help retain professors who understand the learners, plan better learning objectives and good teaching strategies for them. They will further determine the extent to which the teaching objectives are being achieved and also plan to contribute effectively in the growth of the discipline, profession and the institution. It is then a good idea that such decisions are being taken by a number of capable people who are scrupulously scrutinized to ensure fitness-for-purpose and not by one person. The concept of shared governance should be enforced such that the chances that an individual should take a final decision about a faculty should not exist. The questions in the Faculty Evaluation Forms should be revised to reduce ambiguity and increase validity. These questions should be sensitive to cultural diversity and the level of the students. Qualified evaluators will not include confounding variables in their evaluation. To facilitate the work of the evaluators, the university handbooks ought to be revised to be much more specific in describing requirements for reappointment, tenure and promotion. Vagueness surely leads to poor interpretation of stated criteria thereby resulting in subjectivity which leads to lack of validity and reliability in the evaluation. The qualification of those doing the evaluation at each level must be reviewed so that valid decisions should be made such that reappointment, promotion and tenure should truly reflect academic prowess of a faculty.

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# **Evaluation of Teaching Methods to Improve Reading Performance of English Language Learners**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents an evaluation of two reading methods, phonics-based instruction and whole language learning, for English Language Learners (ELLs) and discusses the learning theories, behaviorism and constructivism that are associated with each method, respectively. The study took place in a K-12 international school, with 110 Grade 1 subjects and 83 Grade 2 students. The author's earlier preliminary investigation of ELL reading teaching methods in the same international school, during the previous year, prompted this paper's follow-up analysis. At issue was a significant decrease in reading achievement of Grade 2 classes after changing the Grade 1 reading curriculum from a phonics-based approach to one of whole language learning. In the year following the whole language in reading classes, the phonics program returned. For purposes of this study, three Grade 1 classes were observed to observe reading achievement based on the different reading methods, including comparisons of whole language with two intensities of phonics instruction. The measurement of reading performance included standardized tests for reading achievement. Statistical analysis used t-tests and one-way ANOVA. The study found that students in Grade 1 profited significantly from having intensive phonics-based instruction as a major part of the reading program. Also, Grade 2 students with accommodating teaching methods in the early years of schooling can make important gains after significant setbacks.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Controversy continues over the best methods for teaching reading English Language Learners (ELLs). Few studies have directly investigated the problem of what works for the fastest-growing student group in the nation, increasing 60% in the last decade compared to the general student population's 7% growth rate (Saunders & Marcelletti, 2013). Additionally, ELL reading performance has continued at lower levels than that of non-ELLs. The need for appropriate reading instruction for ELLs has continued, as historically, ELLs have scored lower than other groups, with the gap growing (Abedi & Ditel, 2004). Reading score averages of ELLs on the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2017 were 37 points lower than those of non-ELLs (Aud, Wilkinson-Flicker, Kristapovich, Rathbun, Wang, & Zhang, 2013). ELL reading programs typically use similar teaching methods to those for non-ELLs, and this practice has been recommended by the Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth (August & Shanahan, 2008), the National Reading Panel (2000), Chall (1983), Moats (2000) and Hempenstall (2014). ELLs are then, in effect, subject to whatever reading methods are chosen for the

reading curriculum for non-ELLs.

Although there is considerable research on teaching ELLs, little attention is paid to evidence for determining effective reading methods. Instead the focus is primarily on ancillary topics, such as classroom grouping, bilingual versus immersion classes, parental involvement and teacher's language of instruction (August & Shanahan, 2008; Braunworth & Franco, 2017; Lenters, 2004).

The two most widely used reading methods currently in reading classrooms for students, regardless of language background, are 1) phonics based, requiring explicit and systematic instruction of sound-symbol correspondences, expected to lead to eventual comprehension mastery and 2) whole language, using indirect learning by having students memorize whole words and figure out other words through immersion in texts, to experience one's own understanding and appreciation of written content.

In opposition to phonics-based teaching, whole language stresses that reading is a natural process and does not need direct instruction; it can be acquired much like the way children learn speech (Goodman, 1986). However, people are not hardwired for an alphabetic reading and writing system and therefore need special training (Daniels, 1996). Using indirect instruction in whole language, teachers are to serve more as coaches on the sidelines, guiding students by responding to their invitations for help (Reyes, 1992).

Problems for ELLs can intensify when a curriculum change is made from direct instruction of phonics to indirect teaching of whole language, without taking into consideration the special learning issues of students who come to school without well-developed English speaking skills. A change in teaching reading methods, from direct phonics instruction to a whole language approach presents a major challenge, with increased chances of negative consequences (Reyes, 1992; Robinson, Alangary, & Khaloui, 1993). Such a situation happened for students in the international school who took part in this paper's study.

Following up a preliminary investigation (Robinson, Alangary, & Kholoui, 1993) in a private, K-12 international school, this study further investigated the effects of teaching methods on reading performance that followed whole language and phonics teaching. The school's reading curriculum changed from using phonics instruction to one of whole language, causing concern because of weak results after testing students following whole language.

For the first time in the six-year history of the school, more than 40% of the Grade 2 students tested below grade level on routine second-grade English reading placement tests during the first week of school. Typically, in past years, under 10% of Grade 2 students fell into this problem area. Analyzing the results of the change from phonics instruction to whole language and then back again to phonics gives an opportunity to help evaluate effective reading teaching method for an ELL student population.

The administration of the school met with the Grade 1 and Grade 2 teams of teachers, along with support staff, to discuss ways to obtain more scientific evidence to evaluate reading teaching methods.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF READING METHODS**

Two learning theories, behaviorism and constructivism, underlie phonics-based instruction and whole language learning, respectively. Examining their different main

principles helps to clarify the strategies for each of the reading methods under discussion.

The phonics-based method draws heavily from behaviorist theory, which focuses on observable behavior as its main objective, while essentially overlooking mental processing. Outward behavior changes because of environmental associations between stimuli and responses. Thorndike studied how people become conditioned to repeat verifiable actions automatically by what became known as stimulus-response theory (Salmoni, Schmidt, & Walter, 1984; Watson, 1924). Additionally, information can be transmitted from a knowledgeable source to one that is less informed. The work of Skinner (1953) on a system of rewards and punishments represents a main contribution to the behaviorist theory and led to practical applications for students to improve their school performance.

Applications of the behaviorist theory include the teacher's responsibility for planning and directing bottom-up reading instruction and providing a sequential skills development plan that moved from learning individual sounds to comprehending texts. Upon completing training and testing, teachers then would have observable evidence of student performance. Measurement includes the following: testing phonological awareness skills of blending, segmenting and manipulating language sounds, teaching letter-sound relationships, fluency, comprehension strategies, grammar, spelling and writing.

Constructivism essentially concentrates on actively constructing, or creating, knowledge; in this way, one makes one's own individual meaning from experiences. Cognitive processing benefits from immersion in whole learning experiences. Teachers act more like sideline coaches, available for help when needed, instead of being transmitters of knowledge. Several key contributors to constructivism include Piaget (1936) and Wadsworth (2004), who considered mental processing as most important. External behavior helps explain understanding what is going on in the mind. John Dewey, part of the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century, stressed child-centered, holistic language study and experiential learning (Graham, 1967). Vygotsky (1978) presented the idea of the need for social interaction experiences as key to "making meaning" for each individual learner.

Aligned with constructivism and spearheaded by Goodman (1986), whole language's classroom practices are based on the belief that reading is part of the natural learning of language as a whole. Much like speaking, then, reading does not require direct instruction, but essentially requires an immersion in rich reading opportunities. Teachers stress indirect learning, whole word immersion and a rejection of any strategies of the phonics instruction method of teaching reading (Goodman, 1986). Using a top-down approach, students immerse themselves in text, based on individual interests, to search for their own meanings. Learning indirectly, students need minimal instruction that is primarily on-demand from teachers. As coaches, teachers guide students by responding to invitations for help. Additionally, group learning and hands-on projects play an important role (Reyes, 1992).

Phonics-based and whole language instruction had swings back and forth in prominence since the early twentieth century, often called the "reading wars" (Chall, 1983). Phonics was favored as the reading method of the early colonialists, and not until the 1930s was it challenged significantly with the "Look-Say" whole word learning strategy that was attributed to Edmund Huey and advocated by John Dewey (Westcott, 2012). In the 1950s, phonics returned again because of lagging reading achievement, ushering in the popularity

of *Why Johnny Can't Read* (Flesch, 1955). By the 1980s, whole language became the established approach, continuing to battle with phonics for prominence until today.

The chart below presents a view of major contrasting strategies for phonics and whole language teaching of reading methods with their associated learning theories, behaviorism and constructivism, respectively.

**Table 1.** Characteristics of Behaviorism vs. Constructivism

| Behaviorism                             | Constructivism                              |
|---|---|
| Phonics Instruction Strategies          | Whole Language Learning Strategies          |
| Teacher-centered                        | Student-centered & teacher as facilitator   |
| Systematic teaching plan                | Unregulated Learning                        |
| Direct Instruction                      | Indirect knowledge acquisition              |
| Part to whole language skills study     | Whole language to need-based skills study   |
| Phonics teaching                        | Phonics skills through immersion in texts   |
| Focus on learning product               | Focus on learning process                   |
| Bottom-up skills teaching               | Top-down skills learning                    |
| Norm referenced assessment              | Process-oriented multi-assessments          |
| Controlled texts for reading difficulty | Interest, not difficulty, for choosing text |

For ELLs, it is important to note that whole language presents special problems, such as difficulty understanding linguistic differences and having little experience inviting a teacher to give help in learning when needed. Learning to read English then for ELLs becomes a challenge, as they do not have the English spoken language as a basis for benefitting successfully from immersion in texts (Delpit, 1988; Robinson, Alangary, & Khaloui, 1993). Other cultural differences exist, such as ELLs' likely expectations that the teacher is supposed to be taking charge of their learning. ELLs typically come from cultures that expect direct and explicit instruction, and asking for help may be uncomfortable for them. They also do not always have enough immersion time in English at home and in the community to develop models of correct English. Therefore, primarily listening activities are in school, being inadequate preparation for these students (Reyes, 1992).

It also becomes apparent that combining the two methods, as some have suggested, presents a situation in which one method will easily dominate, because of the conflicting differences in strategies and underlying principles (Moats, 2000).

## METHOD

### Subjects

For the first analysis, the study used 110 students, selected from the Grade 1 classes. Students had all passed admissions entrance requirements, including the Brigance Screening Test (1987), which were found to be reliable entrance indicators. The second group included the eighty-three Grade 2 students whose standardized test scores of the previous year were analyzed.

### Measures

For the first analysis of the Grade 1 reading achievement, the Iowa Tests of Basic

Skills was used, Form J, measured achievement of the three sets of first grade scores. Grade 2 students took the Gates-MacGinitie Tests, Level B, Forms 1 and 2, to show their progress.

### **Procedures**

Reading Achievement of the Grade 1, referred to as Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3, were observed for reading achievement differences.

**Group 1.** Subjects had an intensive phonics-based reading program, which used direct teaching of skills. Included were reading in basals and literature books, spelling, writing in various contexts. Teachers devoted at least 20 minutes of the 45-minute reading period to skills teaching each day, using the basal reading series, literature books or other adaptable materials. Discussions of the stories and activities followed the story reading that was either silent or oral. Students then developed writing and language skills in the remaining 45-minute language arts period.

**Group 2.** Subjects had a whole language program, which included primarily about 45 minutes reading aloud of stories by students or the teacher, who integrated discussions and drawings or other crafts projects. Teachers did not correct reading errors without students' requesting it. Also included in this time period were writing experiences, limited primarily to unevaluated free journal writing.

**Group 3.** An intensive phonics-based program for these subjects was comparable to that of Group 1, but added ten more minutes of direct skills instruction and practice.

A t-test was used to test the differences among the three groups of Grade 1's reading achievement on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills. For Grade 2, graphs of reading progress and an analysis of variance indicated differences between the four testing times.

## **RESULTS**

### **Experiment 1**

The question or hypothesis for this study was: Do the reading methods, phonics, whole language and intensive phonics have significantly different effects on reading achievement?

Group 3 students receiving an intensive phonics-based reading method, which incorporated extended direct skills teaching, scored significantly higher than Group 2 (whole language) or Group 1 (students who were taught by phonics-based teaching but with less time on direct skills learning than Group 3). Table 2 gives a comparison of the means scores for each group in Grade 1.

### **Experiment 2**

The second question is: Can incorporating direct skills instruction into a reading program cause significant gains for below-grade level as well as average and above-grade level students? Table 3 shows the results of the analysis of variance, noting significant differences between the Grade 2 groups of tests at  $p = 0.00$ . Results of the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Tests (Figure 1) (Figure 2) for second grade students show a steady improvement for almost all students from September - June.

## CONCLUSIONS

These data for both studies support evidence that students who come from "linguistically different" backgrounds, such as the international school's ELL population, respond best to reading instruction that incorporates an intensive phonics program that includes directed teaching of skills. It also suggests that with appropriate teaching methods, students in the early years of schooling can make important gains after significant setbacks.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The data presented in this study adds to the body of research on the effectiveness of phonics for teaching reading to the ELL population in an international school. Considering the growing number of linguistically diverse students in the nation's schools, it is strongly recommended that this study will lead to further investigations of the best reading practices for teaching ELLs to add additional data to this important area.

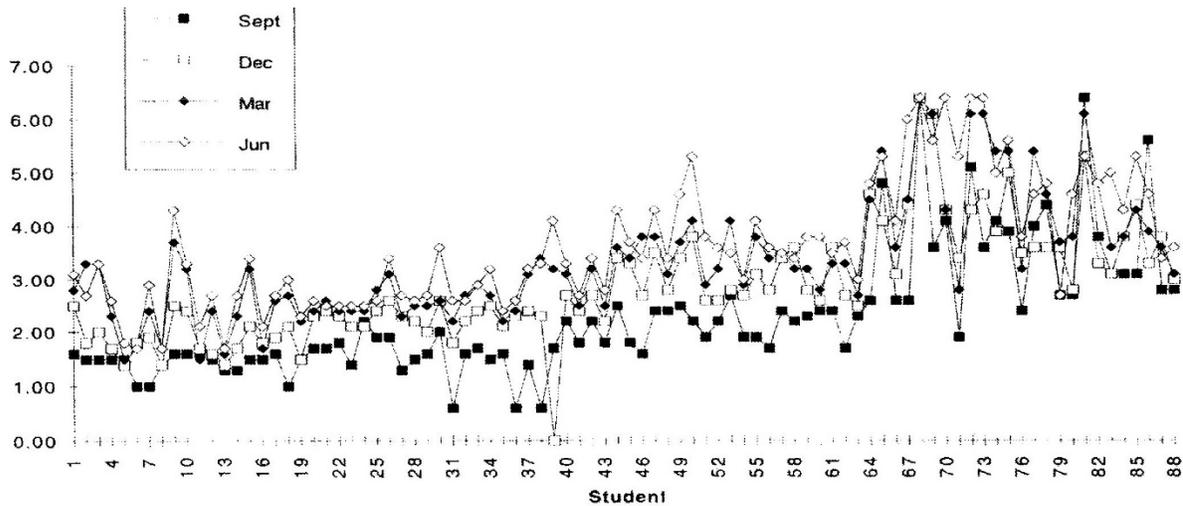
**Table 2.** Iowa Test Scores: Grade 1

| Teaching Area  | Mean Score |
|--|------------|
| Phonics-Based Approach (Including Direct Skills)           | 16.30      |
| Whole Language   | 15.75      |
| Intensive Phonics-Based Approach (Including Direct Skills) | 19.00      |

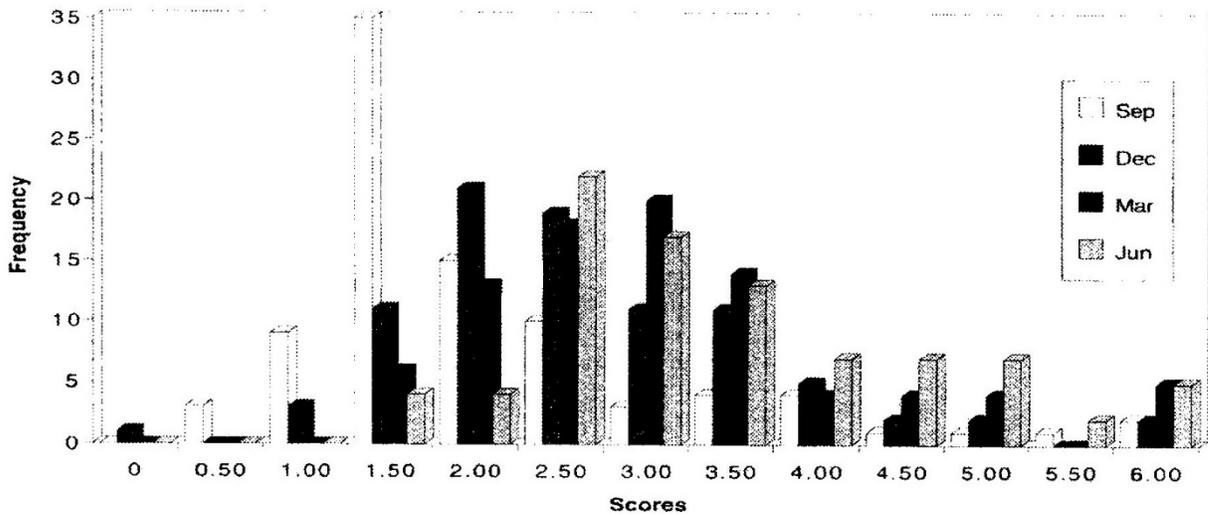
**Table 3.** Analysis of Variance: Grade 2

| Anova: Single-Factor                    |        |        |         |          |         |        |
|---|--------|--------|---------|----------|---------|--------|
| <i>Summary</i>                          |        |        |         |          |         |        |
| Groups                                  | Count  | Sum    | Average | Variance |         |        |
| Sept                                    | 88     | 200.90 | 2.28    | 1.36     |         |        |
| Dec                                     | 88     | 250.50 | 2.85    | 1.12     |         |        |
| Mar                                     | 88     | 292.50 | 3.32    | 1.24     |         |        |
| Jun                                     | 88     | 318.80 | 3.62    | 1.36     |         |        |
| <b>ANOVA</b>                            |        |        |         |          |         |        |
| Source of Variation                     | SS     | df     | MS      | F        | P-value | F crit |
| Between Groups                          | 90.54  | 3.00   | 30.18   | 23.78    | 0.00    | 2.63   |
| Within Groups                           | 441.64 | 348.00 | 1.27    |          |         |        |
| Total                                   | 532.18 | 351.00 |         |          |         |        |
| Statistically significant at $p < 0.00$ |        |        |         |          |         |        |

**Figure 1.** Graph of Gates-Macginitie Reading Test Results: Grade 2



**Figure 2.** Histogram of Gates-Macginitie Grade 2 Scores from the Four Selected Months



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# **Educational Equity and Quality in K- 12 Schools: Meeting the Needs of All Students**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper discusses the importance of equity and quality education in K-12 schools and how employing equity and quality strategies in classroom instructional practices and school culture can positively change children's lives. Educational achievement is a matter of the home, school, and community working in concert to build confidence in a child's life. Without this personal confidence, the child will not perform to her ability and slump down into a state of despair and hopelessness. Heckman (2008) makes a case for investing in children at risk. In a paper titled *The Case for Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children*, he cites 15 points that reduce inequity and raise productivity in schools. This paper examines some of these points and offers additional evidence to broaden the points of reference. A secondary purpose of this paper is to examine select research findings of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report titled *Equality and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

According to the U. S. Census Bureau's (2012, p. 1) most recent school District report, the U.S. has more than 14,000 public school districts and spends more than \$500 billion on public elementary and secondary education each year (combined spending of federal, state, and local governments). Although the United States is listed by the U.S. World Review magazine as the second-best country for education, the U.S. lags behind other countries in math and science.

In the recent Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), which measures reading ability, math and science literacy and other key skills among 15-year-olds in dozens of developed and developing countries every three years, the U. S. placed 38<sup>th</sup> out of 71 countries in math and 24<sup>th</sup> in science (Desilver, 2017). Equality and quality work for all students and help all communities to reduce the social effects of poor educational attainment. One of the hardest-hitting impacts of poor education on communities is the failure of having a well-educated workforce. As such, communities should place more emphasis and higher value on the academic achievement of all students. Without having a well-educated workforce, communities cannot attract new businesses, especially high-tech businesses moving in and establishing jobs. As pointed out by Reference.com (2018), and implicit throughout the educational community, there is a definite correlation between children living in poverty and poor educational attainment.

The impact of poverty on the educational outcome of children is well documented

(Brooks-Gunn Duncan, 2007; Balfanz, Mac Iver, & Byrnes, 2006; Evans, 2004; Rodriguez, & Fabionar, 2010; Ferguson, Bovaird, & Mueller, 2007; Henry, Bryan, & Zalaquett, 2017; Phipps, & Lethbridge, 2007; Stephen et al., 2015). To combat the impact of poverty on schools, school reform and instructional strategies need to be incorporated into the classroom. A few such strategies are collaborative learning, where teachers can design teams to address the most challenging aspects of student learning needs, home learning, and early stimulation for children before entering school (Gordon, 1971). Discovery learning also has merit when teaching children in poverty (Anastasiow, Sibley, Leonhardt, & Borich, 1970). Improving attitudes toward school and teachers in the school increases the performance of at-risk students (Rodriguez, 1990). Rodriguez (1990) maintains that cooperative learning—where students work together in small groups and utilize their strengths to assist other students in the group—has “a consistently positive influence on self-esteem and human relations” (p. 328; see also Slavin, 1980). Using this method, team members rely on their fellow members’ collective performances, and thus, individual accountability is vital to the success of the team.

Students in poverty and students at risk are among an increasing number of students in both rural and urban schools. School leadership is critical to assist this disadvantaged population and to advance equity in education. School leaders should be familiar with the strategies that are successful in motivating students and promote equity and quality teaching and learning methods in the classroom. Equity requires leadership that is dedicated to the success of all students; the mere presence of “leaders” hanging around the school building to pick up a paycheck is not enough. There is an urgent need for school leaders to acquire diversity and equity skills. Equally so, it is important for school districts to employ school leaders who come from the “familiar cultural perspective” (p.19) for the students in the school. Although learning starts at home, the school should be the place where students, regardless of social, economic status, can improve their intellectual skills and become a better student and responsible citizen. Creating equity creates quality schools and high-achieving students.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **What Is Equity?**

When you hear the term equity, does it sound like a euphemism for terms such as access, diversity, civility, equality, integration, or fairness? As a male educator (Dr. Sherwood Thompson), I became familiar with the term in the early 1990s under the tutelage of a senior faculty member in the school of education in a mid-western division one research university. I taught a section of this professor’s Equity in Education course each semester for three years. During that time, and hours of one-on-one discussions with him, I was able to hone my skills and familiarity with the scholarship on this subject, especially his many journal articles and books. Over the years I have refined my understanding of this concept and expanded it to include diversity and quality in education.

As a female educator (Dr. Doris Thompson), I gained significant practice working in the Delta of Mississippi, in one of the most poverty-stricken counties in the United States. I employed many of the strategies of equity and quality teaching and learning techniques as a classroom math teacher and as a senior district leader. I believe that equity and accountability provide for positive opportunities and outcomes for students and

schools. I too believe that the OECD definition captures the spirit of equity in education and thus, I employ it in my research, teaching, and training.

To set the record straight, for this discussion, we will be using the definition provided by the OECD, which expands the term equity in education to include equity and quality education. According to the OECD (2012), “equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusion)”. The OECD definition can be described as incorporating diversity and social justice in its definition. We think this is appropriate for the educational challenges facing 21st-century schools.

This definition is different from the social science terminology, which maintains that equity is one’s relations and interactions with others. Instead, it is viewed as illuminating the link between resources; particularly where there is an imbalance of opportunities among people who have and those who have not.

In an OECD Report titled *No More Failures*, equity in education can be seen through two dimensions: fairness and inclusion (Field, Kuczera, & Pont, 2007). According to the authors, “inclusion means ensuring that all students reach at least a basic minimum level of skills. Equitable education systems are fair and inclusive and support their students in reaching their learning potential, without either formally or informally pre-setting barriers or lowering expectations. Equity as fairness implies that personal or socio-economic circumstances, such as gender, ethnic origin or family background are not obstacles to educational success. We will use this definition as our framework for discussion of equity and quality education in U.S. schools” (p. 15).

### **Background of the Issues of Equity and School Reform**

Equity and access are essential components of quality education for children, but they nonetheless have persisted as barriers in the United States for decades. There is also a notable and distinct difference between equity and equality in education. According to the Center for Public Education (2016), equality in education is achieved when students are all treated the same and have access to similar resources. In contrast, equity is achieved when all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school.

Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, and Pittenger (2014) define equity as policies and practices that provide every student access to an education focused on meaningful learning—one that teaches the deeper learning skills contemporary society requires in ways that empower students to learn independently throughout their lives. This goal is one that most schools and educational systems have for their students; however, conditions exist that prevent some students and groups of students from accessing the resources to achieve this goal. In an equitable school or education system, these skills are taught by competent and caring educators who can attend to each child’s particular talents and needs and also have adequate resources available to provide the materials and conditions for effective teaching and learning. An equitable system also does not treat all students in a standardized way, but differentiates instruction, services, and resources to respond effectively to students’ diverse needs so that each student can develop his or her full academic and societal potential.

Equity concerns continue to endure throughout schools and school districts in the

United States. In the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case that went before the Supreme Court in 1964, the Court declared that education is a right and it must be made available to all on equal terms. This decision marked a huge victory for the civil rights movement, determined that separate was in fact not equal, and forced federal, state and local governments to open public schools to all children in the community. A critical role for the federal government is to promote equity for underserved children and youth, and the nation's most prominent education laws have long had the equal educational opportunity as a central mission (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Unfortunately, this has led many to argue for a view of equity that sets the goal as "adequacy," that is, the principle that all students should receive "an adequate education" regardless of what it takes to provide it (Brighthouse & Swift, 2008).

Demographic diversity also plays a role in educational equity as the United States is a much more diverse nation than it was during the time of the Brown decision. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), this demographic shift is evident: "overall, 266 of these 2,440 counties are less than half white . . . in 19 of the 25 biggest U.S. counties by population, whites make up less than half of the population. Of these, six that were majority white in 2000 are no longer so." Today the White population is about 63 percent of the total and is expected to be less than half by the year 2050. The demographic shift is most evident in our public schools where children of color are already the majority in the western and southern regions of the U.S. (Kena et al., 2015).

### **Working to Bring About Equity**

Over the years, U.S. administrations have fought to improve outcomes for underserved students through major education initiatives; supporting states in their efforts to ensure quality teaching in every classroom, raising standards for all students, building systems to improve instruction, and significantly improving low-performing schools. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) has been an important federal policy for P-12 schools, as it has provided funding to support the education of many of its students who are low income and disproportionately African American and Latino. However, ESEA has changed its emphasis over time from providing funding for targeted academic support of low performing, poor students to the practice that allows the use of allocated Title I funds to promote school-wide change (St. John & Miron, 2003).

In 2001, the U.S. Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), designed to improve schools through a system of standards-based accountability. NCLB's accountability provisions demand each state develop content and achievement standards, measure student progress through tests, and intervene in schools and districts that do not meet the targets. As a result of NCLB's implementation, many states ended their open-ended assessments of research, writing, mathematical problem-solving, and scientific inquiry in favor of of low-level multiple-choice tests that narrowed the curriculum, especially in schools serving low-income children of color and new English learners (Center on Education Policy, 2006). Furthermore, McMurrer (2007) states that these schools often cut back subjects like science, history, writing, and the arts to focus on test prep in reading and mathematics.

Diamond (2012) challenges the notion that claims creating tighter links among academic standards, curricular content and pedagogy, and standardized testing contribute to improved student outcomes and reductions in educational inequality. He argues that

when accountability policies affect instruction more directly in ways that are inconsistent with the intent of these policies, it may work against educational equity. Educational inequality changes must happen in both instructional content and pedagogy. Students in low-income schools receive less access to valued forms of knowledge than do middle- and upper-income students (Camburn & Han, 2011; Smith, Lee, & Newman, 2001). Research supports that pedagogy in low-income schools is more didactic and emphasizes lecture, recitation, and seat work (Gamoran, Secada, & Marrett, 2000), whereas in middle- and upper-income schools, students often receive instruction "that emphasizes critical thinking, problem-solving, and active participation in learning" (Diamond, 2007, p. 287; Smith et al., 2001). Diamond's study (2012) on instructional practices in Chicago has demonstrated that students received instruction that was predominantly teacher-centered and didactic.

The education sector is characterized by school-level variations in educational resources, and scholars using an institutional stratification perspective argue that educational inequality results from the differential educational resources found in schools serving different populations of students (Roscigno, 2000). Schools serving Black students have often been disproportionately targeted by high stakes accountability sanctions (Diamond & Spillane, 2004) and may respond in ways that exacerbate rather than challenge educational inequality. For example, Diamond and Spillane (2004) show that officials in Chicago probation schools, which are predominantly African American and low-income, reallocate instructional resources in ways that limit the learning opportunities of low-performing students.

Schools serving low-income students and students of color have lower human capital among their teaching staffs. Studies show that disproportionately, less qualified teachers instruct students of color (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Johnson, 2009, p. 614). Another study in Illinois regarding the distribution of quality teachers found that low-income and minority students are taught by the least qualified teachers; the increases in percentage of low income and minority students correlated with decreases in teacher quality (Presley, White, & Gong 2005). Consequently when those less-qualified and didactic-centered teachers turned to their colleagues for advice about how to become more interactive teachers, the information in their networks may have been limited (Diamond, 2012).

### **Teacher Quality**

Access to well-qualified teachers is one of the important elements of an equitable system. Indicators of equal access as part of school report cards could include the proportions of educators who are fully certified for the courses they teach, have more than three years of experience, or have demonstrated higher levels of accomplishment through National Board Certification (Cook-Harvey et al., 2016). ESSA maintains a federal focus on closing the equity gap with regard to students' access to expert, experienced teachers (Kini & Podolsky, 2016). Under this law, state plans must address disproportionate rates of ineffective or inexperienced teachers in schools that serve low-income students and students of color. This allows one to examine causes of inequity and develop plans.

The state will hold a responsibility to outline how they will evaluate access to effective teachers, address inequities, and publicly report progress (Wayne, Tanenbaum, Brown, & Boyle, 2017). Productive teaching and learning conditions are especially important in solving the inequitable distribution of teachers (Podolsky, Kini, Bishop, &

Darling-Hammond, 2016). Through ESSA, Ronfelt, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2013) believe states can close equity gaps by increasing access to high-quality teacher preparation programs, ensuring that all new teachers have strong support and high-quality mentoring, and improving teaching conditions by supporting principals' ability to create productive teaching environments.

Another strategy for teacher quality is for teachers to develop their own personal vision (Whitaker, Whitaker, & Lumpa, 2000). Teaching is a calling for some; to adhere to the responsibility of the profession, it takes personal vision and individual commitment to working with children. For the teachers who see their work as a calling, the fulfillment of their work and not the financial gain or career advancement is what brings satisfaction (Wrzesniewski, 2012).

### **Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Teaching students using familiar themes, cultural icons, celebrations, and artifacts of one's heritage is one aspect of culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2000), the leading expert on the topic of culturally responsive teaching (CRT), defines this method as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of references, and performance style of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (p. 29). Gay (2000) lists the following characteristics of CRT:

1. It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum.
2. It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.
3. It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected to different learning styles.
4. It teaches students to know and praise their own and each other's' cultural heritages.
5. It incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools.

These characteristics of culturally responsive teaching are just the beginning of developing the intellectual strengths of students. Villegas (1992) maintains that CRT is a process of integrating cultural content that enhances achievement for all [students]. According to Vavrus (2008), "culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is an educational reform that strives to increase the engagement and motivation of students of color who historically have been both unsuccessful academically and socially alienated from their public schools." Aceves and Orosco (2014) maintain that teachers who utilize CRT practices value students' cultural and linguistic resources and view this knowledge as capital to build upon rather than as a barrier to learning. Culturally responsive teaching is a fundamental component of school equity and quality learning. Kozleski (2010) states that in culturally responsive teaching, "it is important that teachers learn about the lives and experiences of other groups in order to understand how different historical experiences

have shaped attitudes and perspectives of various groups” (2010, p. 7).

### **Why Does School Equity Matter?**

Students’ perceptions of their school’s equity can have great impact on a variety of positive outcomes. Improving equity in education and reducing school failure should be a high priority for all school districts and OECD countries. Equity matters in schools.

Gorski (2016) takes a novel approach to school equity. He employs the term equity literacy to describe his work with teachers and exposing them to the knowledge and skills necessary to become, as he describes it, “a threat to the existence of inequity in their spheres of influence” (Gorski, 2016; see also Gorski & Landsman, 2013; Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). With his unique framing of school equity and quality as equity literacy, he promotes knowledge and skills training for teachers around equity rather than culture. In an Intercultural Development Research Association interview, Gorski gives an additional definition of equity literacy by expressing the following:

The equity literacy approach is a comprehensive framework for preparing teachers and students to see the world through an equity lens. Speaking specifically about teachers, the idea is that creating an equitable classroom environment for all of my students requires a set of knowledge and skills that often are not taught in teacher education programs or even in diversity in-service sessions. This means recognizing biases and inequities, including those that are very subtle, and knowing how to respond to and redress biases and inequities in our classrooms and schools (Posner, 2015, p. 1).

The OECD makes it very clear that equity matters. In their report titled, *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*, the OECD (2012, p. 10) reports that “equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals [should] reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusion). This report repeats the theme that improving equity in education and preventing school failure is cost-beneficial. Equity matters because it improves schools and assists students in achieving academic success.

Heick (2018) lists 29 factors that he labels characteristics of a good school. Most of these factors are equity-based and provide quality education for children and school improvement. The 29 factors are:

**Table 1.** Heick Characteristics of a Good School

| # | Characteristic  |
|---|---|
| 1 | A good school can adapt quickly to human needs and technology change.   |
| 2 | A good school produces students that not only read and write but choose to.   |
| 3 | A good school sees itself.  |
| 4 | A good school has diverse and compelling measures of success—measures that families and communities understand and value. |
| 5 | A good school is full of students that don’t just understand “much,” but rather know what’s worth understanding.          |
| 6 | A good school knows it can’t do it all, so seeks to do what’s necessary exceptionally well.                               |

| #  | Characteristic  |
|----|---|
| 7  | A good school improves other schools and cultural organizations it's connected with.  |
| 8  | A good school is always on and never closed. (It is not a factory.)   |
| 9  | A good school makes certain that every single student and family feels welcome and understood on equal terms.   |
| 10 | A good school is full of students that not only ask great questions but do so with great frequency and ferocity.  |
| 11 | A good school changes students; students change great schools.  |
| 12 | A good school understands the difference between broken thinking and broken implementation.   |
| 13 | A good school speaks the language of its students.  |
| 14 | A good school doesn't make empty promises, create noble-but-misleading mission statements, or mislead parents and community-members with edu-jargon. It is authentic and transparent.         |
| 15 | A good school values its teachers and administrators and parents as agents of student success.  |
| 16 | A good school favors personalized learning over differentiated learning.  |
| 17 | A good school teaches thought, not content.   |
| 18 | A good school makes technology, curriculum, policies, and its other "pieces" invisible. (Ever go to a ballet and see focus on individual movements?)  |
| 19 | A good school is disruptive of bad cultural practices. These include intolerance based on race, income, faith, and sexual preference, aliteracy, and apathy toward the environment.           |
| 20 | A good school produces students that know themselves in their own context, one that they know and choose. This includes culture, community, language, and profession.                         |
| 21 | A good school produces students that have personal and specific hope for the future that they can articulate and believe in and share with others.  |
| 22 | A good school produces students that can empathize, critique, protect, love, inspire, make, design, restore, and understand almost anything—and then do so as a matter of habit.              |
| 23 | A good school will erode the societal tendency towards greed, consumerism, and hoarding of resources we all need.   |
| 24 | A good school is more concerned with cultural practices than pedagogical practices—students and families than other schools or the educational status quo.                                    |
| 25 | A good school helps student separate trivial knowledge from vocational knowledge from academic knowledge from applied knowledge from knowledge-as-wisdom.                                     |
| 26 | A good school will experience disruption in its own patterns and practices and values because its students are creative, empowered, and connected, and cause unpredictable change themselves. |

| #  | Characteristic   |
|----|--|
| 27 | A good school will produce students that can think critically—about issues of human interest, curiosity, artistry, craft, legacy, husbandry, agriculture, and more—and then take action. |
| 28 | A good school will help students see themselves in terms of their historical framing, familial legacy, social context, and global connectivity.  |
| 29 | A good school will improve the community it is embedded within and serves.   |

*Note.* Most of these factors support equity based and quality education. Developed by Heick (2018).

## CONCLUSION

Equitable schools are models of deeper learning that incorporate a continuum of educational competencies for both the student and the school. Equal access is only the first step; equal treatment, appreciation of one’s own cultural and the cultures of others, equitable compensation and resources, and shared values that accept the presence of diverse racial, cultural, economic and social groups are just as important.

Equity and quality in schools are based on a foundation that embraces the perspective that all children can learn. This perspective recognizes, respects, appreciates, and celebrates the rich human differences that make up our diverse societies. At the school level, equity plays a vital role in broadening the base and scope of learning and teaching. The balance of learning rests in the practices of inclusion, respect, and self-appreciation.

According to Breveman & Gruskin (2003) equity means social justice. Equity encompasses a process where the principle of fairness is practiced. It has been said that “equity—what is fair and just—may not, in the process of educating students, reflect strict equality—what is applied, allocated, or distributed equally” according to the Glossary of Educational Reform (Equity, 2016). It is likely that the term equity will be conflated with other similar terms, according to Morton and Fasching-Varner (2015). These authors maintain that equity is characterized by fairness and justice. They believe that the term equity implies what is in the best interest of others; however, the term might become entangled with terms such as equality, equal rights, diversity, and fairness.

Schools are more than a place for students to gain a standardize education. Schools must be an incubator that grow students into productive, empathic and responsible adults. The impact that schools have on our communities affect the way our society evolves. Without sound equity practices, schools are failing students and preventing them from at least gaining the basic minimum level of knowledge, skill and proficiency. At the same time, communities are penalized by not having the most talented individuals trained for leadership and professional engagement. Equity and quality education are a bulwark for protecting democracy and refueling society with professional and talented individuals that can assume responsibility for leadership and professional roles in society.

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# **Addressing Skills, Knowledge and Self-Efficacy in the Online Development of School Leaders**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Self-efficacy in school leaders is critical: Without a strong sense of purpose and focus, school leaders will fail at performing the difficult task that it takes to ensure student success and school performance. Competence without confidence may lead to school leaders who are hesitant, full of self-doubt, and inconsistent with their decisions. For school leaders, self-efficacy is critical to the success of the 21st Century school leader and the potential for effective facilitation of the development of such by online educational leadership programs. This study and review will explore the early steps associated with knowledge, skill and efficacy development in the leader, the perceptions of such by current educational leadership candidates, and the potential implications and next steps for further research and discussion.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The impact of self-efficacy in school leaders is one that holds the potential for significant variances in leadership effectiveness. Competence without confidence may lead to school leaders who are hesitant, full of self-doubt, and inconsistent with their decisions. At the opposite end of the continuum, school leaders who possess high efficacy without the competency to back it up (no doubt, we have all met these leaders) may find themselves scratching their heads in bewilderment as they confidently lead failing schools, disgruntled teachers, and frustrated students.

At its core, this study seeks to explore the degree to which leader self-efficacy is critical to the success of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century school leader and the potential for effective facilitation of the development of such by online educational leadership programs. This study and review will explore the early steps associated with knowledge, skill and efficacy development in the leader, the perceptions of such by current educational leadership candidates, and the potential implications and next steps for further research and discussion.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

### **Self-Efficacy Defined**

Recognized as the foremost scholar in regard to self-efficacy, Albert Bandura (1994) studied and wrote extensively on this very topic and the impact of self-efficacy on self and others. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura, includes “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events

that affect their lives” (1994, p. 1). These beliefs can determine and alter one’s feelings, motivation, thinking and behavior. By nature of default, all educators must have some sense, even if minimal, of self-efficacy. To stand in front of a classroom of students, or to conduct a parent conference, to present a professional sharing, or to lead a faculty meeting – all are tasks that require a certain level of self-belief. In their longitudinal studies on leadership development, Avolio and Hannah (2008) identified efficacy as a key contributing factor to developmental readiness. The thinking processes, emotional restraint and control, motivation to act, and ability to exercise potential influence over others are all actions and decisions inherent in these everyday educator events.

### **School Leadership Preparation: The Trifecta of Knowledge, Skills and Efficacy**

Leading a school requires many actions at various times – and often many actions at the same time. Cultivating the right balance of knowledge and skills necessary to carry out these actions simultaneously and successfully would be prominent among the goals of any educational leadership preparation program. Careful consideration to these goals, especially in light of program design for online educational leadership programs, is one in which a person must not only take into account the unique characteristics of online learners, but also the developmental progression inherent in leader preparation (Kerr et al., 2006).

The knowledge and skills base of the future school leader is one that is built around the assumption of a potential role as a leader of a learning environment (The Wallace Foundation, 2013), but what exactly does the fulfillment of this role require, and how best may a candidate be prepared to accept and execute this role successfully? In 2015, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration published the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, which acts as the guiding template for the knowledge and skills development of future and current school leaders. These standards were first housed under ISLLC and were originally developed in the mid-1990s. The more current standards build upon that early foundation, but also hold stark contrast due to a heavy emphasis on the learner and on student learning.

In addition, many leadership performance trends now feature expectations involving empowerment, engagement, and capacity-building of others. Enacting shared mission, cultivating caring communities, developing professional capacities, fostering professional communities, and engaging families – to cite a few actions – require knowledge and skills beyond the scope of an individual leader. There is an additional dynamic, one that is embedded in the leader’s self-belief system, that holds the potential to stifle or strengthen professional knowledge or skills.

While touching aspects of everyone’s lives, self-efficacy in the leader can produce the foundation for the learned skills and knowledge to be showcased, and, in some cases, to be self-regulated and self-corrected (Pajares, 2009). While scant research exists on the self-efficacy of developing school leaders, it may be reasonably assumed that the efficacious school leader may have advantages in carrying out the critical tasks inherent in school administration. This conclusion may lead designers of educational leadership programs to examine how to go about cultivating not only competent leaders, but leaders with high self-efficacy as well.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **The KSE Leadership Survey**

In January of 2017, the graduate program in educational leadership for a southeastern university was examined in order to determine not only the perceived proficiency in leadership knowledge and skills at the beginning of a graduate program, but also the perceived level of leader self-efficacy. While post-program survey data had been traditionally collected from exiting candidates, and this, along with individual course feedback, was generally used to determine candidate growth and perceptions, the interdependence and progression in terms of knowledge, skills and efficacy combined was a topic to be explored more intently. To this purpose, the KSE (Knowledge, Skills, Efficacy) Leadership Survey was developed and administered for the first two incoming cohorts of the 2017 calendar year and established as a foundation for further research and data collection regarding these topics.

This educational leadership program specifically correlates with the North Carolina School Executive Performance Standards; therefore, the KSE Leadership Survey tool used to measure the perceived knowledge, skills and efficacy of these future leaders was designed specifically to also align to these standards. Specific questions focused not only on the development of skills and knowledge in various leadership areas – but also on the beginning leaders’ self-efficacy in relation to the execution of high levels of performance in these areas. The North Carolina School Executive Performance Standards (NCDPI, 2010) include standards that describe the elements and descriptors indicative of effective principal performance in each of the following eight leadership areas: 1) Strategic Leadership; 2) Instructional Leadership; 3) Cultural Leadership; 4) Human Resource Leadership; 5) Managerial Leadership; 6) External Development Leadership; 7) Micro-political Leadership; and 8) Academic Achievement Leadership.

The KSE Leadership Survey provided a brief performance-based description of each of these standards, then required each participant to rate their own perceived knowledge, skills, and efficacy in each standard as compared to the level needed for a school administrator to meet this performance standard with success. The survey consisted of 24 questions – three questions associated with each of the eight standards (knowledge, skills, efficacy) – and participants rated their perceptions on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the minimal level of knowledge, skills or efficacy and 10 being the maximum level possible for a school administrator in any of the areas.

### **Current Survey Distribution and Planned Future Distribution**

While the first two administrations of the KSE Leadership Survey, the data from which this study is based, were administered in early 2017 and measured beginning-of-program perceptions exclusively, plans have already been established for future administrations and purposes. Distribution is scheduled to occur four times during the candidates’ progression through the educational leadership program: 1) at the beginning of the program; 2) at the beginning of the internship; 3) at the conclusion of the program; and 4) one year beyond completion of the program. Candidates who are in the appropriate program milestone will be sent an information email along with a survey link. All surveys were and will remain anonymous and have been and will continue to be identified only through cohort groupings.

For the purpose of this particular study, the KSE Leadership Survey was distributed to new, beginning-of-program candidates entering the educational leadership program in either spring or summer of 2017. Participation was voluntary, and candidates were advised in advance of future planned distributions as well as assured of anonymity. Candidates received a group email (by cohort) with a link by which to access the survey, along with a group (cohort) access code for tracking purposes. In the following data analysis section, the responses from these first two “Survey 1” cohorts are shared, with trends and implications discussed. Acting as the first step of multiple survey steps for these first two 2017 cohorts as well as multiple survey steps for future program cohorts, this early data provides a foundational baseline (mean ratings and response counts) for preliminary conclusions and recommendations.

### DATA ANALYSIS

The following data resulted from Survey 1 responses from incoming educational leadership program candidates during January – June of 2017. Candidates were asked to complete the survey during their first two weeks of the 22-month Master of Arts in Educational Leadership program, thus capturing a “beginning-of-program” perception base. Cohort participation rates are provided in Table 1.

Survey participants were asked to rate their own perceptions, at this beginning-of-program baseline point, in terms of the eight North Carolina School Executive Standards – and to differentiate these perceptions in terms of perceived knowledge, skills and efficacy in each standard. Table 2 presents an analysis of these responses, by standard and by cohort, as well as in terms of culminating data for Survey 1 responses. Included in Table 2 are mean scores of responses (on a scale of 1 to 10) as well as response counts for the 1-5 range and the 6-10 range for each question.

**Table 1.** KSE Leadership Survey: Survey 1 Participation Rate [Jan-June 2017]

| Cohort [Survey 1] | Cohort Students | Number of Participants | Participation Rate |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Spring-2017       | 18              | 10                     | 55%                |
| Summer - 2017     | 23              | 15                     | 65%                |

**Table 2.** KSE Leadership Survey – Survey 1 Response Analysis [Jan. – June, 2017]

|  | Spr.<br>2017<br>Mean | Spr. 2017<br><=5/>=6 | Sum<br>2017<br>Mean | Sum 2017<br><=5/>=6 | BOP<br>Mean | BOP<br><=5/>=6 |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------|----------------|
| <b>Standard 1: Strategic Leadership</b>            |                      |                      |                     |                     |             |                |
| Knowledge  | 4.60                 | 7/3                  | 3.93                | 12/3                | 4.20        | 19/6           |
| Skills   | 4.60                 | 6/4                  | 4.07                | 10/4                | 4.29        | 16/8           |
| Efficacy   | 4.90                 | 6/4                  | 4.50                | 9/5                 | 4.65        | 15/9           |
| <b>Standard 2: Instructional Leadership</b>        |                      |                      |                     |                     |             |                |
| Knowledge  | 5.20                 | 5/5                  | 4.85                | 8/6                 | 5.00        | 13/11          |
| Skills   | 5.10                 | 6/4                  | 5.00                | 8/6                 | 5.04        | 14/10          |
| Efficacy   | 5.10                 | 4/6                  | 4.93                | 6/8                 | 5.00        | 10/14          |
| <b>Standard 3: Cultural Leadership</b>             |                      |                      |                     |                     |             |                |
| Knowledge  | 5.50                 | 4/6                  | 4.57                | 9/5                 | 4.96        | 13/11          |
| Skills   | 5.00                 | 6/4                  | 4.78                | 9/5                 | 4.88        | 15/9           |
| Efficacy   | 5.40                 | 5/5                  | 5.00                | 8/6                 | 5.16        | 13/11          |
| <b>Standard 4: Human Resources Leadership</b>      |                      |                      |                     |                     |             |                |
| Knowledge  | 4.40                 | 7/3                  | 4.71                | 8/6                 | 4.58        | 15/9           |
| Skills   | 4.30                 | 8/2                  | 4.85                | 7/7                 | 4.63        | 15/9           |
| Efficacy   | 4.00                 | 8/2                  | 4.85                | 7/7                 | 4.50        | 15/9           |
| <b>Standard 5: Managerial Leadership</b>           |                      |                      |                     |                     |             |                |
| Knowledge  | 3.70                 | 8/2                  | 3.85                | 10/4                | 3.79        | 18/6           |
| Skills   | 3.90                 | 7/3                  | 4.57                | 8/6                 | 4.29        | 15/9           |
| Efficacy   | 3.90                 | 7/3                  | 4.71                | 8/6                 | 4.38        | 15/9           |
| <b>Standard 6: External Development Leadership</b> |                      |                      |                     |                     |             |                |
| Knowledge  | 4.70                 | 7/3                  | 4.00                | 11/3                | 4.29        | 18/6           |
| Skills   | 4.50                 | 7/3                  | 3.92                | 12/2                | 4.16        | 19/5           |
| Efficacy   | 4.40                 | 7/3                  | 4.28                | 9/5                 | 4.33        | 16/8           |
| <b>Standard 7: Micropolitical Leadership</b>       |                      |                      |                     |                     |             |                |
| Knowledge  | 4.50                 | 7/3                  | 4.14                | 12/2                | 4.29        | 19/5           |
| Skills   | 4.20                 | 8/2                  | 4.14                | 11/3                | 4.17        | 19/5           |
| Efficacy   | 4.30                 | 8/2                  | 4.00                | 12/2                | 4.13        | 20/4           |
| <b>Standard 8: Academic Achievement Leadership</b> |                      |                      |                     |                     |             |                |
| Knowledge  | 5.50                 | 5/5                  | 5.07                | 7/7                 | 5.25        | 12/12          |
| Skills   | 5.50                 | 5/5                  | 5.14                | 7/7                 | 5.29        | 12/12          |
| Efficacy   | 5.40                 | 6/4                  | 5.36                | 6/8                 | 5.38        | 12/12          |

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

The data presented through these first two iterations of Survey 1 are compelling

both in terms of levels of perceived accomplishment for beginning-of-program candidates as well as in terms of consistent contrasts between perceived knowledge, skills and efficacy in particular standards. Interesting findings and conclusions from analysis of all Survey 1 participant data (BOP) includes the following:

**Contrasting Knowledge, Skills and Efficacy.** The data indicates that students perceive their current knowledge, skills and efficacy in each area to be of similar strength – with only standards being significantly higher or lower and not necessarily indicators. It is also interesting to note that in the areas of Strategic Leadership, Cultural Leadership, Managerial Leadership, External Development Leadership, and Academic Achievement Leadership, candidates rated efficacy with higher mean scores than knowledge or skills.

**Perceived Areas of Strength.** Students in the beginning of an Educational Leadership program perceive their greatest possession of knowledge, skills and efficacy to be in the standards associated with Instructional Leadership (K=5.00; S=5.04; E=5.00) and Academic Achievement Leadership (K=5.25; S=5.29; E=5.38). At first glance this may appear to be an expected perception, based on the knowledge that these candidates are likely active classroom teachers or counselors themselves and thus engaged in instruction and the pursuit of academic achievement on a daily basis. However, the survey questions did not inquire as to the perceived levels of knowledge, skill and efficacy needed to carry out a teaching or counseling role with success. The actual survey questions asked the participant to consider the knowledge, skills or efficacy currently perceived as compared to what would be needed as a school administrator. A sample question from the survey (Question #6 – Instructional Leadership – Efficacy) is provided below in Figure 1 as illustration of this directive.

**Figure 1.** Sample Question and Directive of KSE Survey

\*Questions 4-6 pertain to Standard 2: Instructional Leadership (see expectations for Instructional Leadership in grey below)

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**SELF-EFFICACY:**

My current level of self-efficacy (belief and confidence) as compared to the self-efficacy needed to meet this expectation in an exemplary manner:

As a school administrator, you will be expected to lead discussions about standards for curriculum, instruction and assessment based on research and best practices in order to establish and achieve high expectations for students, including the monitoring of the alignment of these in your school. You will be expected to create processes and schedules which protect teachers from disruption of instructional or preparation time.

1            2            3            4            5            6            7            8  
                           

**Academic Achievement Leadership.** The highest mean responses of the survey occurred in Standard 8: Academic Achievement Leadership. In the state of North Carolina, this is the one standard that is not related to the ratings of an evaluator. The rating in this

standard is, instead, determined exclusively by school standardized testing results. It is noteworthy that incoming candidates in this educational leadership program rated this standard as the highest in perceived knowledge (m=5.25), skills (m=5.29), and efficacy (m=5.38) – with all three indicators rated with a mean above 5. This data translates into beginning-of-program students who perceive that they have above the response range midpoint in terms of the levels needed in knowledge, skills and efficacy to be successful in this standard as a school administrator. Also of interest is that the mean rating for efficacy in this standard was the highest recorded mean rating of the entire data set. Assumptions as to why candidates would perceive higher levels of strength in this area may be linked to success as a classroom teacher or strong comfort levels in terms of know-how – both of which are related to, but not entirely indicative of, the knowledge, skills and efficacy needed for the school administrator to be successful in leading a school towards Academic Achievement. The challenge related to this data is that many teachers across the state of North Carolina, the Southeast region, and the nation as a whole, teach in schools and in classrooms which, unfortunately, do not record high levels of student academic achievement. Yet, these future leaders, as incoming cohorts in an educational leadership program, perceive this very area to be the one in which they hold the strongest current levels of preparedness and confidence.

**Instructional Leadership.** The second-highest mean responses of the survey occurred in Standard 2: Instructional Leadership. Each of these three ratings was at or above the midway point range, with knowledge rated with a mean score of 5.00, skills rated with a mean score of 5.04, and efficacy rated with a mean score of 5.00. With many of the same points and questions related to the Standard 8 ratings discussed above, it is clear that these incoming candidates perceive that, compared to other standards, Instructional Leadership is a strength. Again, instructional leadership at the classroom level is quite different than that of a true instructional school leader, yet the candidates represented in this survey considered themselves at least halfway accomplished in terms of all the knowledge, skills and efficacy needed to be successful in instructionally leading a school as a school principal or administrator.

**Area with the Most Opportunity for Growth.** In terms of the lowest scored standards or indicators, the candidates rated Managerial Leadership (Knowledge) with a mean score of 3.79. Managerial leadership includes the ability to manage the fiscal and procedural actions of a school, actions that are often beyond the normal comfort level or daily roles of classroom teachers or counselors. One interesting note related to Managerial Leadership would be the mean score for efficacy in this area: 4.38. This would appear to suggest that while candidates may not perceive that they possess managerial knowledge, they are inclined to be more efficacious that they are currently ready to be successful as a managerial leader.

**Instructional Leadership and High Individual Confidence.** While previous conclusions relied on the mean ratings from the survey, this particular point is based on the below/above counts taken from the individual responses. These are noted in Table 2 as  $\leq 5$  and  $\geq 6$ . These columns note how many students actually chose a response that was 5 or lower and how many chose a response that was 6 or higher. The interesting thing about this data is that in every standard and indicator for BOP, there were more candidates who chose a response of 5 or lower (midway to the knowledge, skills or efficacy needed to be successful as a school administrator or lower) than there were who chose a response of 6

or higher (above the midway point in relation to what is needed to be a successful school administrator) – every standard and indicator, that is, *except* for one. In the area of Instructional Leadership – Efficacy, the majority of candidates (14) chose 6 or higher as their individual rating, in contrast to 10 candidates who chose 5 or lower. This is the only point in the survey in which this phenomenon occurs, and it may indicate an inflated confidence on the part of candidates in terms of instruction and the role that school administrators play in strong instructional leadership.

## IMPACT AND APPLICATIONS

In light of these early findings, consideration as to capitalizing on these opportunities, in both implicit and explicit ways, may provide those who design and implement programs of educational leadership development the most fruitful window by which to encourage successful student experiences (Kirk, 2015) as well as build successful future school leaders. Current opportunities may include:

1. *Mastery experiences*: While several strategies may be used to build self-efficacy, mastery experiences provide the most significant source for efficacious growth (Kirk, 2015). A deliberate program design that includes opportunities for mastery experiences provides the candidate with concrete examples of success.... not just any success, but their own success (Avolio & Hannah, 2008). The design for the experience of mastery is one that should be considered when building program activities as well as the scope of internship activities.
2. *Vicarious experiences*: Opportunities to observe peers succeeding with tasks can strengthen a student's belief in their own abilities (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Kirk, 2015; Pajares, 2009). Based on this knowledge, optimizing opportunities for collaboration within the educational leadership online environment and internship learning environment is key. Instructors who encourage active discussion and then direct students, through positive feedback, to read their peer's discussion posts are providing vicarious experiences for all (Vilkas & McCabe, 2014; Ya Ni, 2013).
3. *Verbal persuasions*: An aspiring leader's self-efficacy may also be impacted by the verbal persuasions of others – the feedback or encouragement or even criticism that is received, internalized, and used to shape beliefs. In an online learning environment, social persuasion may tend to be an even greater challenge, as conversations occur over email and online and students and professors engage in learning while never meeting in person. Qualitative feedback that is viewed by students as constructive and credible can work to build efficacy even as students are growing in knowledge and skills (Cheawjindakarn et al., 2012; Kirk, 2015).
4. *Physiological reaction*: Stress can impact efficacy-building; thus, student stress is a topic of relevance in the discussion of efficacy growth in future leaders. In terms of online leadership programs, in which some students may struggle with feelings of disconnectedness, it can be difficult if not impossible for professors to pick-up on the usual signs of stress that can more readily be detected in the face-to-face

- classroom environment (Barr & Miller, 2013). As recommended by Vilkas and McCabe (2014), the key for any program is to be proactive. This is done by a focused effort on the part of all instructors and the director to keep directions, expectations, and assessments clear, free of surprises, and efficiently communicated.
5. *Pedagogical choices:* Programmatic pedagogical choices also offer a deliberate opportunity to foster the efficacy growth of the student and emerging leader (Barr & Miller, 2013; Jaschik, 2009). In earlier research, Fencil and Scheel (2005), considered student perceptions and responses in order to identify pedagogical approaches that led to higher self-efficacy and efficacy development, including setting individual goals for individual students and providing inquiry-based lab activities. In expanding slightly on the former point, Jeffrey McCafferty shed light on the importance of the individualized approach to online learning (2014) through his advice to use “technology to enable faculty members to better meet the unique needs of individual learners” (p. 21). This differentiation may extend beyond the course content and into the hands-on, experiential learning itself, which ideally takes place in the laboratory (the school) under the guidance of a master (a mentor administrator).
  6. *Internship parameters:* Many leadership development programs rely on the availability of internship experiences as a pathway for application and practice. The internship phase of learning may also prove helpful in guiding and building needed efficacy while redirecting or reframing misplaced or inappropriate confidence. Opportunities specifically focused on areas of instructional leadership may be warranted based on this early data.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Faced with the daunting and, at times, seemingly insurmountable challenges facing 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders, the self-efficacious, highly skilled and knowledgeable leaders will, no doubt, be the most highly sought-after candidates to lead our nation’s schools. With increasing numbers of schools in turnaround status, increasing numbers of districts labeled as failing, and persistently alarming rates of low achievement for minority and impoverished students – these are the leaders who are needed, and these are the future leaders for whom our educational leadership programs must be designed. As shared by Avolio and Hannah (2008), “leader developers will be well served by promoting that each developing leader understands that an able leader is largely made versus born and that he or she is the author of his or her own leadership journey” (p. 343).

The application of the KSE leadership survey will continue with future cohorts of incoming candidates, but will also continue in re-application for the two cohorts featured in this study – at various milestones of their program progression and career introduction. This milestone tracking will allow a real-time gauging of changes or lack of progress or alignment in cohort growth in knowledge, skills and efficacy.

With a growing database and, perhaps, future significant findings, educational

leadership programs may implement programmatic and internship improvements to intentionally address the balance of leadership efficacy with competency. Therefore, tomorrow's school leaders may truly become "authors of leadership journeys" that lead to school administration success.

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# **Racial Differences in Anger and Depression as Mediators in the Relationship Between Suspension and Juvenile Delinquency: A Test of General Strain Theory**

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## **ABSTRACT**

While scholars have studied racial bias in the application of out-of-school suspension and its influence on arrest and incarceration for decades, the mechanism that produces juvenile delinquency remains unclear. Guided by general strain theory, this study considers racial group differences in the evaluation of suspension as discriminatory, and how it might enhance the likelihood of negative emotions influencing delinquent behavior. Utilizing national longitudinal survey data, the author conducted generalized structural equation modeling to test the direct and indirect effects of suspension to anger, depression, and non-serious and serious delinquency among Black and White middle and high school students. This analysis—the first of its kind—revealed that suspended Black students were more likely to experience anger, depression, and general delinquency than White students. Unexpectedly, findings show that anger explained involvement in serious delinquency for suspended White students. The findings suggest a need for school administrators to adopt interventions and alternatives to suspension.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Racial disparities in school discipline are a consequence of various economic, political, and social policies that have legalized unequal treatment of Black students in American schools (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo, & Pollock, 2014). Negative controlling images of students of color, especially Black males, as “potentially dangerous” have led to an overreliance of zero tolerance policies to remove disruptive students from the school environment (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008, p. 856). Zero tolerance school policies are predetermined and nondiscretionary rule violations that require automatic suspension and/or expulsion (APA Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). These policies provide the opportunity for teachers and administrators, regardless of their race or ethnicity, to apply excessive punishment for minor infractions such as improper dress attire, disruptive behavior, disrespect to staff, and insubordination that is widely viewed as biased and discriminatory (Garcia, 2016; Rudd, 2014). Fear and loss of control in the classroom by teachers, as opposed to an actual threat of dangerousness, increases the likelihood that Black students will experience excessive discipline (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Thus, the labeling of Black males as “dangerous” or “troublemakers” and Black girls as “unladylike,” is consequential for them when they do “act out” (Morris, 2005). As a result, Black students are suspended from school 3.5 times the rate of all other students (Office for Civil Rights, 2016; Losen et al., 2015).

Special attention should be paid to the manner in which zero tolerance policies negatively impact the mental health of adolescents. The APA Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) reported that these policies may “create, enhance, or accelerate negative mental health outcomes for youth by increases in student alienation, anxiety, rejection, and breaking of healthy adult bonds” (p. 856). In 2003, the American Academy of Pediatrics ([AAP] 2003) cited racial bias in the application of school discipline as a major source of stress for Black students that can have profound adverse effects, such as negative emotional health. This is especially concerning given that suspension increases the likelihood of adolescents engaging in criminal activity, arrest, and incarceration (Balfanz, Spiridakis, Neild, & Lesters, 2003; Fabelo et al., 2011; Shollenberger, 2013; Wolf & Kupchick, 2016).

## **PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

This study is guided by general strain theory (GST), which argues that an important link between harsh school discipline and delinquency is the experience of negative emotions (Agnew, 2001). The central aim of this study is to understand the direct and indirect effects of suspension, anger, and depression on non-serious and serious delinquency among a national sample of Black and White middle and high school students. This study also considers the controlling factors of prior non-serious and serious delinquency, gender, school attachment, college aspirations, peer substance use, social support, and self-esteem.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature examining one’s emotional response to suspension indicates that many middle and high school students perceive suspension to be applied in a discriminatory manner. In a majority Black sample, Brown (2007) reported that students attending an alternative program were found guilty of and suspended for infractions without sufficient evidence, and believed the punishment was unreasonable. Kupchik (2009) found that staff at predominantly Black and Hispanic schools were constantly watching students for indicators of gang membership, acts of insubordination, disrespect of authority, or threatening behaviors. On the other hand, staff at a predominantly White school were concerned with fighting, drugs or alcohol, and a potential “Columbine-like threat” (p. 299). The author also observed a White male student become visibly angry in response to suspension. In the same way, Weissman (2015) found that a majority Black sample of students expressed feeling angry, upset, mad, frustrated, and disappointed about being suspended from school, particularly, because the punishment given was excessive relative to the circumstances of the rule violation. In some cases, respondents reported feeling that they had not even violated a rule.

There seems to be a consensus from the participants in these studies indicating that they want to attend school. Unfortunately, when they have been accused of breaking a rule, they were either not given a chance to tell their side of the story, or simply not trusted. Consequently, suspension from school left these students experiencing a host of negative emotions that have seemingly gone unchecked. Understanding the influence of suspension on negative emotions, such as anger and depression, will provide critical information for evaluating the impact of suspension on delinquency.

On the basis of the suspension-delinquency data currently available, there is too little research into how suspension influences juvenile delinquent outcomes to draw any firm conclusions about the manner in which suspension influences delinquency, arrest, or incarceration. Stated differently, studies have not analyzed any intervening or mediating variables that might represent the causal mechanism by which suspension achieves its effects. Mowen and Brent (2016) reported that the effect of suspension on juvenile arrests were so strong that race was no longer a significant predictor of arrest in a national sample of adolescents. Monahan, Rhew, Hawkins, and Brown (2014) reported that regardless of race/ethnicity and gender, suspension increases the likelihood of arrest. Fabelo et al. (2011) found that suspension increased the odds of juvenile arrests and detention for Texas middle and high school students. Balfanz et al. (2003) discovered that 80% of first-time incarcerated Black male ninth graders had been suspended in the eighth grade. Shollenberger (2013) found suspension is associated with arrests in adulthood for all males at a similar rate but varies for females. Finally, Wolf and Kupchik (2016) provided strong support for the claim that suspension significantly increased the odds of adult criminal offending, arrest, and incarceration in adulthood for suspended adolescents in general.

The existing research on the suspension-delinquency relationship corroborates the notion that youth who experience suspension are much more likely to experience arrest and incarceration than youth who do not experience suspension. However, the wide time frame from suspension to arrest or incarceration in adulthood creates a large gap in knowledge, thus making it difficult for researchers to provide any course of action for policy making. This study fills that gap by investigating delinquent activity within one year of suspension. This is an attempt to address the issue of possible intervening variables that might explain how suspension influences delinquent activity, which would make one vulnerable to arrest or incarceration.

This research seeks to answer the following question: Does suspension influence subsequent non-serious and serious delinquency through anger and depression, even after controlling for prior non-serious and serious delinquency, gender, school attachment, college aspirations, peer substance use, social support, and self-esteem? More specifically, drawing on GST and school discipline literature that centers on racial bias in the administration of suspensions as a source of strain, this research aims to test the racial group differences in negative emotional and delinquent outcomes of suspended middle and high school students.

*Hypothesis 1:* Anger will be a more important mediating factor in the relationship between suspension and non-serious delinquency for Black students than for White students.

*Hypothesis 2:* Depression will be a more important mediating factor in the relationship between suspension and non-serious delinquency among Black students than for White students.

*Hypothesis 3:* Anger will be a more important mediating factor in the relationship between suspension and serious delinquency for Black students than for White students.

*Hypothesis 4:* Depression will be a more important mediating factor in the relationship between suspension and serious delinquency among Black students than for White students.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

General strain theory argues that strains or stressful events elevate the likelihood of negative emotions such as anger, frustration, and depression (Agnew, 1992, 2001). Some individuals may turn to crime as a way of reducing strain or negative emotions. Additionally, strain is most likely to lead to crime when it is: a) viewed as unjust, b) viewed as high in magnitude, c) is associated with low social control, and d) creates some pressure or incentive to participate in delinquent coping (Agnew, 1992, 2001). Central to this research is the argument that “discipline that is very strict, erratic, or excessive given the infraction” increases the likelihood of criminal involvement among youth (Agnew 2001, p. 344). Particularly, Black students, in comparison to White students (Ruck & Wortley, 2002; Brown, 2007; Weissman, 2015), are more likely to see suspension as harsh and excessive, a negative school experience, and racially discriminatory (Agnew, 2001).

## **METHODS**

### **Data Collection**

To test these hypotheses, I analyzed public-use data from waves 1 and 2 of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (Add Health) (Harris, 2013). This is a nationally representative survey conducted by the University of North Carolina Population Center. The study derived from a cluster sample of 80 high schools (selected from a sampling frame of 26,666) and their feeder schools that were recruited from the community and stratified by region, urbanity, school type, ethnic mix, and size (Harris, 2013). During the 1994-1995 school year, students in seventh through twelfth grade were randomly chosen from the class rosters of the selected schools and were interviewed in their homes, along with their parents. The second wave of in-home interviews was collected in 1996 from adolescents and parents, excluding respondents who were in the twelfth grade at wave 1. The weighted sample size for this analysis is 3,289, including an oversample of Black adolescents with a parent who has a college degree. Because the Add Health research team used a cluster sample technique, I applied the appropriate cluster variable and longitudinal weight variable for combining waves 1 and 2. This enabled me to obtain unbiased estimates of population parameters and standard errors from the analysis. The next step involved grouping all respondents who reported that they were in the seventh through the eleventh grade in wave 1 into three race/ethnic subpopulations for middle and high school students. Twelfth graders were not included in this analysis because Add Health researchers did not re-interview twelfth graders during wave 2 (Harris, 2013). The final sample consists of 3,289 adolescents who were divided into two subpopulations: Black (n= 979) and White (n= 2,310).

### **Sample Characteristics**

Over 60% of both Black and White subpopulations indicated that they are in high school (grades nine through eleven), and over 70% of each subpopulation indicated that they do not receive public assistance, such as welfare. Twenty percent of Black parents indicated their highest level of education as a high school diploma, while 14% graduated from college, and another 10% received professional training beyond college. White parents reported similar rates of higher education. A large share of parents reported that

they were married: Black (43.82%) and White (72.77%). Socioeconomic status variables are not included in the analysis because of a large number of missing values.

### **Description of Variables**

**Dependent Variables.** Both non-serious and serious delinquency are index variables composed of 10 count items from wave 2, assessing how often the respondent reported participation in different forms of minor or non-serious and serious property and violent acts during the past twelve months.

**Independent Variables.** All independent variables were measured in wave 1. The main variable in the current study is suspension and was coded as 0 for not suspended and 1 for suspended. Anger and depression are both mediating variables. This study utilizes a proxy measure of anger derived from parent interviews and is coded as 0 for does not have bad temper and 1 for has bad temper. Depression is a thirteen-item, three-level categorical variable measuring low, medium, and high depression.

**Control Variables.** Several control variables that have been examined in prior research for their impact on juvenile delinquency were also used in the analyses: school attachment, college aspirations, deviant peer influence (Hirschi, 1969), peer substance use (Fergusson, Horwood, & Swain-Campbell, 2002; Monahan et al., 2013), social support (Agnew, 1992; Jang & Johnson, 2005; Kaufman, 2009), self-esteem (Peck, 2013), prior non-serious and serious delinquency, and gender.

## **RESULTS**

### **Statistical Analyses**

The primary interest of this study was to investigate potential pathways from suspension ( $X$ ) to delinquency ( $Y$ ) through anger ( $M$ ) and depression ( $M$ ). Generalized structural equation modeling (GSEM) was chosen as the appropriate statistical technique to use because it is a multivariate technique that uses a conceptual model, path diagram, and series of linked regression equations to capture complex relationships among observed and unobserved variables (Gunzler, Chen, Wu, & Zhang, 2013). GSEM is best suited for this study because it allows for binary and categorical mediators and count dependent variables.

A single-level mediation model is used for each hypothesis. To test hypotheses 1 and 3, a logit model was used to test the direct effect of suspension on anger because anger is a binary variable, and negative binomial models were used to test the direct effect of suspension and anger on non-serious delinquency because the dependent variables are count variables. When analyzing hypotheses 2 and 4, multinomial logit regression models were used instead of logit models because depression is a three-level categorical variable. In this case, two multinomial regression models were produced demonstrating the direct effect of medium depression (level 2) on non-serious delinquency, and the direct effect of high depression (level 3) on non-serious delinquency. Low (level 1) depression is the reference group.

### **Descriptive Results**

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all of the variables employed in this study. Of the entire group of 3,289 middle and high school students, 30% were Black and

70% were White. When examining engagement in delinquent behavior, White students reported slightly higher participation in non-serious delinquency (M=1.35, SD=1.88) than Black students (M=1.27, SD= 2.56). However, White students reported slightly lower participation in serious delinquency (M= 0.71, SD= 1.69) than Black students (M= 0.99, SD= 2.99). Consistent with national data on racial disparities in middle and high suspensions (Losen et al., 2015), 43.82% of Black adolescents (M= 0.42, SD= .65) in grades 7 through 11 reported being suspended, which is more than twice the rate of White students (M= 0.19, SD= 0.37) at 19.90%. Black students reported more anger (M= 0.32, SD= 0.60) than White students (M= 0.28, SD= 0.43). Likewise, Black students reported higher depression (M= 1.93, SD= 1.07) than White students (M= 1.77, SD= 0.75).

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for All Variables

| Variable (Cronbach's $\alpha$ )     | Black (N=979) |      |      | White (N=2,310) |      |      |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|------|------|-----------------|------|------|
|                                     | Range         | Mean | SD   | Range           | Mean | SD   |
| Non-serious Delinquency (.74)       | 0-14          | 1.27 | 2.56 | 0-15            | 1.35 | 1.88 |
| Serious Delinquency (.73)           | 0-21          | 0.99 | 2.99 | 0-26            | 0.71 | 1.69 |
| Suspension                          | 0-1           | 0.42 | 0.65 | 0-1             | 0.19 | 0.37 |
| Anger                               | 0-1           | 0.32 | 0.6  | 0-1             | 0.28 | 0.43 |
| Depression (.83)                    | 1-3           | 1.93 | 1.07 | 1-3             | 1.77 | 0.75 |
| School Attachment (.73)             | 1-3           | 1.56 | 0.87 | 1-3             | 1.83 | 0.7  |
| College Aspirations (.81)           | 1-3           | 1.68 | 0.59 | 1-3             | 1.69 | 0.43 |
| Self-esteem (.84)                   | 1-3           | 2.00 | 1.19 | 1-3             | 1.79 | 0.85 |
| Social Support (.83)                | 1-3           | 1.82 | 1.02 | 1-3             | 1.92 | 0.74 |
| Peer Substance Use (.80)            | 0-3           | 1.79 | 0.97 | 0-3             | 1.92 | 0.76 |
| Prior Non-serious Delinquency (.74) | 0-16          | 1.79 | 0.97 | 0-18            | 1.92 | 0.76 |
| Prior Serious Delinquency (.72)     | 0-22          | 1.51 | 3.5  | 0-26            | 0.98 | 2.06 |

### GSEM Results

Four generalized structural equation models were used to examine the effects of anger and depression on the relationship between suspension and non-serious and serious delinquency, after controlling for prior non-serious and serious delinquency, gender, school attachment, college aspirations, peer substance use, social support, and self-esteem. Mediation analyses were performed separately for each subpopulation of adolescents (Black and White) to allow for detecting racial differences in this relationship. It is expected that these associations will be greater for Black students than for White students.

### Non-serious Delinquency

The first hypothesis focuses on the role of anger in mediating the relationship between suspension and non-serious delinquency. In Table 2, the results indicate that the odds of engaging in non-serious delinquency increased by 35% for Black students who were suspended from school. White students who reported anger were 2.4 times more

likely to have been suspended. Similarly, Black and White students who reported anger 2.2 times and 2.4 times more likely to report suspension, respectively. Lastly, anger is associated with a 15% increase in non-serious delinquency among White students. Table 3 presents the results for the second hypothesis, which examined the role of depression in mediating the relationship between suspension and non-serious delinquency. Findings show that high depression increased by 89% for Black students who reported suspension.

**Table 2.** Impact of Suspension on Non-serious Delinquency through Anger

| Variable                                     | Black (N=619) |      |                | White (N=1,835) |      |                |
|--|---------------|------|----------------|-----------------|------|----------------|
|  | $\beta$       | SE   | Exp( $\beta$ ) | $\beta$         | SE   | Exp( $\beta$ ) |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension         | 0.3           | 0.14 | 1.35*          | -0.08           | 0.09 | 0.91           |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Anger              | -0.06         | 0.14 | 0.93           | 0.13            | 0.07 | 1.15*          |
| Anger x Suspension                           | 0.79          | 0.24 | 2.22***        | 0.87            | 0.15 | 2.4***†        |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension x Anger | -0.05         | 0.11 | 0.94           | 0.12            | 0.06 | 1.13           |
| Total Effect                                 | -0.12         | 0.25 | 0.88           | 0.26            | 0.14 | 1.3            |

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

† indicates a significant difference when comparing Blacks and Whites ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 3.** Impact of Suspension on Non-serious Delinquency through Depression

| Outcome Variable   | Black (N=717) |      |                | White (N=1,960) |      |                |
|--|---------------|------|----------------|-----------------|------|----------------|
|  | $\beta$       | SE   | Exp( $\beta$ ) | $\beta$         | SE   | Exp( $\beta$ ) |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension                     | 0.27          | 0.15 | 1.31           | -0.08           | 0.08 | 0.91           |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Medium Depression              | 0.19          | 0.17 | 1.2            | 0.14            | 0.08 | 1.15           |
| Non-serious Delinquency x High Depression                | 0.21          | 0.18 | 1.23           | 0.09            | 0.09 | 1.1            |
| Medium Depression x Suspension                           | -0.07         | 0.26 | 0.92           | -0.16           | 0.18 | 0.84           |
| High Depression x Suspension                             | 0.64          | 0.28 | 1.89*          | 0.34            | 0.19 | 1.41           |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension x Medium Depression | -0.01         | 0.05 | 0.98           | -0.24           | 0.03 | 0.97           |

|  | Black (N=717) |      |      | White (N=1,960) |      |      |
|--|---------------|------|------|-----------------|------|------|
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension x High Depression | 0.13          | 0.14 | 1.14 | 0.03            | 0.03 | 1.03 |
| Total Medium Effect                                    | 0.17          | 0.16 | 1.19 | 0.11            | 0.07 | 1.12 |
| Total High Effect                                      | 0.34          | 0.32 | 1.41 | 0.13            | 0.13 | 1.1  |

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

### Serious Delinquency

The third hypothesis focused on the role of anger in mediating the relationship between suspension and serious delinquency. The results in Table 4 indicate that suspended Black students have a 61% greater odds of participating in serious delinquency, and suspended White students have a 39% greater odds of engaging in serious delinquency. When examining the direct effects of anger on suspension, White students who reported anger were 2.3 times more likely to have been suspended, whereas Black students were 2 times more likely to have been suspended. However, the odds of engaging in serious delinquency increased by 24% only for White students who reported anger. Importantly, there is a significant indirect effect of anger in the relationship between suspension and serious delinquency for White students.

Lastly, the impact of suspension on serious delinquency through depression is presented in Table 5. Findings show that high depression increased by 82% for Black students who reported suspension. Suspended White students have 48% higher odds of engaging in serious delinquency. In addition, high depression significantly increased the odds of engaging in serious delinquency among White students by 35%.

**Table 4.** Impact of Suspension on Serious Delinquency through Anger

| Variable                                     | Black (N= 619) |      |                | White (N=1,835) |      |                |
|--|----------------|------|----------------|-----------------|------|----------------|
|  | $\beta$        | SE   | Exp( $\beta$ ) | $\beta$         | SE   | Exp( $\beta$ ) |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension         | 0.48           | 0.20 | 1.61**         | 0.33            | 0.12 | 1.39**         |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Anger              | 0.13           | 0.19 | 1.14           | 0.21            | 0.10 | 1.24*          |
| Anger x Suspension                           | 0.73           | 0.24 | 2.08**         | 0.85            | 0.15 | 2.34***†       |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension x Anger | 0.09           | 0.14 | 1.10           | 0.18            | 0.09 | 1.20*          |
| Total effect                                 | 0.22           | 0.33 | 1.25           | 0.40            | 0.20 | 1.49*          |

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

† indicates a significant difference when comparing Blacks and Whites ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 5.** Impact of Suspension on Serious Delinquency through Depression

| Outcome Variable   | Black (N=717) |      |                | White (N=1,960) |      |                |
|--|---------------|------|----------------|-----------------|------|----------------|
|  | $\beta$       | SE   | Exp( $\beta$ ) | $\beta$         | SE   | Exp( $\beta$ ) |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension                     | 0.27          | 0.15 | 1.31           | -0.08           | 0.08 | 0.91           |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Medium Depression              | 0.19          | 0.17 | 1.2            | 0.14            | 0.08 | 1.15           |
| Non-serious Delinquency x High Depression                | 0.21          | 0.18 | 1.23           | 0.09            | 0.09 | 1.1            |
| Medium Depression x Suspension                           | -0.07         | 0.26 | 0.92           | -0.16           | 0.18 | 0.84           |
| High Depression x Suspension                             | 0.64          | 0.28 | 1.89*          | 0.34            | 0.19 | 1.41           |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension x Medium Depression | -0.01         | 0.05 | 0.98           | -0.24           | 0.03 | 0.97           |
| Non-serious Delinquency x Suspension x High Depression   | 0.13          | 0.14 | 1.14           | 0.03            | 0.03 | 1.03           |
| Total Medium Effect                                      | 0.17          | 0.16 | 1.19           | 0.11            | 0.07 | 1.12           |
| Total High Effect  | 0.34          | 0.32 | 1.41           | 0.13            | 0.13 | 1.1            |

Note: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to examine racial group differences in negative emotional and delinquent outcomes of suspended middle and high school students. Consistent with the GST framework (Agnew, 1992, 2001), this study found anger to be an important mediating factor in the relationship between suspension and serious delinquency among White students. This is an unexpected finding since White students are less likely to believe that students from their racial group will face discriminatory treatment compared to students from other racial groups (Ruck & Wortley, 2002). This finding suggests that their anger may be related to white privilege because racial status is related to student punitiveness (Welch & Payne, 2010), with White students being less likely to be subjected to severe school control than Black students (Nichols, 2004; Rocque, 2010).

There were critical racial group differences found among suspended Black and White students. Namely, suspension was associated with anger and high depression among Black students, but it did not influence their involvement in delinquency. At the same time, suspension was related to non-serious and serious delinquency among Black students, but it was not mediated by anger or depression. This is an unexpected finding since it has been documented that suspended Black students have reported feeling a variety of negative

emotions, including anger and depression (Kupchik, 2009; Weissman, 2015), and have also reported experiencing first-time arrests and incarceration as a juvenile and an adult after suspension (Balfanz et al., 2003; Fabelo et al., 2011; Monahan et al., 2013; Mowan & Brent, 2016; Shollenberger, 2013; Wolf & Kupchik, 2016). Although suspension is a highly stressful event for most Black students because of the racial bias (AAP, 2003) and lack of procedural justice (Weissman, 2015) that they often experience, delinquency may not be a coping mechanism for relieving that source of stress.

Perhaps, suspended Black students are subsequently arrested and incarcerated due to spillover effects of suspension. For instance, Black students who have been suspended from school have reported high rates of dropping out of school, school disengagement, low grades, as well simultaneous arrests at school because of the criminalization of school misconduct and the incorporation of law enforcement, also known as school resource officers (Heitzeg, 2009; Rudd, 2014).

The overuse of suspension sends the message that the emotional and behavioral well-being of youth is a necessary evil if zero tolerance policies are to be efficient in deterring others from violating the rules (Skiba, 2000), even if they are not applied fairly. These policies are akin to other racialized and fear-driven policies, such as mandatory minimum sentences that have contributed to incarcerating Black youth and adults in mass proportion (Heitzeg, 2009). Therefore, efforts must be made to dismantle zero tolerance policies and eliminate suspension for subjectively assessed conduct. The findings in this study provide important insight into the need for school administrators to adopt school interventions and alternatives to suspension such as restorative justice programs that focus on mediation, conflict resolution and agreement, rather than punishment. Such programs promote school climates that create an institutional environment that positively influences student learning and well-being (Owen et al., 2015).

## **LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

One limitation of this study is that it assumes that suspension is a stressful event, and is therefore disliked by members in each group. Subsequent research should examine the reason for suspension, number of times suspended, and the student's evaluation of the suspension. Researchers might also consider school, neighborhood, individual, and familial factors that might serve as both mediators and moderators in the suspension-delinquency relationship. For instance, mediating factors will help explain the relationship between suspension and delinquency, while moderating variables affect the strength of the relationship between suspension and delinquency (Hayes, 2013). Understanding the influence of mediating and moderating variables may provide critical information for evaluating, designing, and promoting alternatives to suspension.

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# **Diversity Beneath the Skin: Using DNA Tracing to Explore Cultural Identity and Awareness**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The article describes an inductive exploratory initiative in which DNA tracing was incorporated into cultural diversity courses and how the participants responded to the results. Supported by an \$8,500 resource grant from AncestryDNA, a sample of some thirty participants enrolled in cultural diversity courses, embarked on an exploratory journey and challenged presumptions about their ethnic identities. Within a cultural diversity course framework, the participants consulted the literature and various theories regarding cultural identities. They also took an AncestryDNA cultural tracing test in order to discover more about their own individual ancestral heritage. The collection of individual cultural ethnic data yielded a striking collective discovery regarding the plethora of ethnicities that existed beneath six skins: “Black” “Brown” “White” “Yellow” “Tan” and “Red, ” as well as, surfaced new cultural identities and countries with which the participants could subsequently associate and re-accurturate. The article also discusses the implication of DNA tracing on “White” identity theory and “Black” identity theory, stereotypes and presumptions of skin pigmentation, as well as implications for school culture, extended cultural family associations and character formation.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

There can be little question that social media has paved the way for new connections with people in the United States and other parts of the world, thereby exposing them to other cultures. From a “smart” portable handheld device, peoples, governments, and economies are being impacted by cross-cultural interactions on a daily basis. This “social shrink” of the world also provides a reflective context for educators to consider what they know about multiculturalism in the United States and abroad. Additionally, they have an opportunity to explore what they know about their own cultural identities and the degree, if any, to which their own cultural identities do or should play a role as culturally responsive educational professionals in places of employment and elsewhere. Cross-cultural exposure and interaction, furthermore, has opened the door to discussions regarding the commonalities and distinctions between cultural identities and racial identities, namely, those distinctions that genetically determined, such as skin pigmentation, and others that are socially acculturated, regardless of race.

People in general, educators included, have been socialized to accept cultural identities as ethnic categories rooted in perceptions and attitudes associated with skin pigmentations; racial categories such as “Black” “Brown” “White” “Yellow” “Tan” and “Red.” Skin pigmentations have been associated with racial categories, such as “Black or

African-American,” “Hispanic,” “White,” “Asian,” Middle Eastern,” and “Native American.” These racial categories, whether on forms or elsewhere, readily lack inclusiveness.

Census officials for the 2020 census propose the use of these major racial categories, but also plan to supplement them with representative examples of cultural ethnicities. So, for instance, the category of “White” would feature examples such as German, Irish, English, Italian, Polish, etc. Black/African-American would list examples such as African-American, Haitian, Jamaican, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somalian, etc. For Hispanic, examples such as Mexican, Mexican-American, Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, Columbian, etc. would be listed. Such examples would likewise be provided for Native American, Middle Eastern, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Asian categories (Cohn, 2015).

Despite these attempts to bridge the gap between ethnic and racial identities, people generally describe themselves by the major racial categories associated with skin pigmentation, “Black” “Brown” “White” “Yellow” “Tan” and “Red,” when in fact there is much more diversity beneath the skin. The person who checks off “Black” may in fact be an “Oreo,” like the cookie—racially black on the outside, but culturally white on the inside.

Skin pigmentation notwithstanding, how does a person really know his/her ethno-cultural origin? First- or second-generation immigrants are the most likely to be able to trace the racial-cultural heritage by virtue of having newly arrived or by having arrived within a memorable number of years. For most other individuals, cultural identities have been inferred from the blood line of parents and grandparents, commonly accompanied by oral histories that may or may not be accurate or complete, thus adding various degrees of uncertainty.

As a side note, the participants in the exploratory completed a pre-project survey. In one of the questions, they were asked, on a scale from 1-5 (with 1 being “not confident at all” and 5 being “very confident”), how confident were they in identifying their cultural heritage. Over 85% of the participants said that they were either “confident” or “very confident” with their identification (which was also captured on video tape) – a confidence based almost exclusively on bloodline deduction and family oral histories. Of the 85%, there was about 5% who had done some extensive family tree research, and who were “very confident” was based on that research.

In 2013, professional golfer Tiger Woods articulated a confidence in his racial-cultural identity. He decided to describe his cultural self as “Cablinasian,” a composite of Caucasian, Black, Indian and Asian (Kelly, 2017). Based upon his skin pigmentation, however, it is easy to classify him as an African-American, when in fact there is quite a bit of diversity beneath his skin. One way to get to the diversity beneath the skin is to use DNA evidence.

The use DNA tracing as a scientific basis for rooting one’s cultural identity has been popularized by Henry Louis “Skip” Gates Jr, Professor at Harvard University and host of the television special “Finding Your Roots.” In like fashion, I pursued and received an \$8,500-dollar resource grant from AncestryDNA to explore, among other variables, the possibility of finding ethno-cultural diversity beneath the skins of in-service teachers who were in a pre-service principal preparation program. The exploratory study also allowed for discussion about pre- and post- perception of cultural “selves,” as well as enabled the development of an approach for incorporating DNA tracing in cultural diversity courses.

The AncestryDNA project was such a meaningful experience for the participants that I thought it was worthy of an article. The goal of this article, then, is three-fold: 1) discuss the design of the AncestryDNA project in a manner that allows for reduplication and extension, 2) discuss the DNA results of the participants as a whole, and 3) discuss the implication of the project for conversations around perception of race and culture among educational professions and others.

### **Exploratory Questions**

- 1) How might a cultural diversity course be organized around AncestryDNA tracing?
- 2) What range of ethnic diversity, if any, might AncestryDNA tracing uncover?
- 3) In light of the findings, what might be some implications for discussions around perception of race in the education profession and society at large?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

DNA has been used for a number of purposes. The medical and health fields have used it to isolate genes and establish correlations between causes and diseases, both physical and mental, thereby putting health care professionals in a position to provide innovative treatments. It has also been used to make generational health predictions and offer considerations for prevention (Steakley, 2012).

DNA has been used to connect criminals to crimes, as well as to exonerate the unjustly accused. In the legal field, Barry Scheck, member of the O.J. Simpson “dream team” and founder of the Innocence Project, has saved numerous unduly convicted individuals from death row through the use of DNA (Morrison, 2014). DNA has been used as a source of forensic evidence, and in social and human services it is readily utilized to establish or exclude paternity (Houck, 2015).

DNA, within an anthropological and social science context, has also been used to connect people of many cultures around the world to their ancestral legacy. A number of companies such as Family Tree DNA/Ancestry, AfricanDNA.com, Genelex/Gene-Tree, Gentest.ch, BritiansDNA, and Sorenson Genomics, just to mention a few, have specialized in human genetics and have used haplogroup analyses to help individuals explore their cultural legacy (Sommer, 2010). Over a million people have employed DNA testing to learn more about themselves and their families through using AncestryDNA alone (Swayne, 2015). For some it has been a life-changing experience (Arogundada, 2016).

While there is quite of bit of literature that speaks to the use of DNA tracing in the fields of medicine and criminal justice, there is a dearth of literature in the field of education, and understandably so. Even when working with well-educated adults in higher education, who are simply asked to spit in a small plastic tube, IRB (Institutional Review Board) inspection has to be passed. School-age children are not allowed to make themselves readily accessible for such AncestryDNA research due to politics and potential legal liabilities. Without access to such research subjects, it is virtually impossible, at least in the United States, to conduct and disseminate findings in the educational literature. This article, hopefully, will change that trend and galvanize researchers to contribute to the literature in this area.

## METHODOLOGY

This cultural exploratory study was inductive and evolutionary. There was no theoretical base to begin with, no independent or dependent variables to consider. I simply took samples of participants from three cultural diversity courses and constructed an exploratory inquiry around the AncestryDNA support grant. The exploratory project did, however, incorporate quantitative methods via a pre-project survey. The survey was designed simply to acquire context information such as race, gender, ethnics, confidence in cultural self-identification, level of anxiety about receiving the findings, and other inquiries to be used in another article. The exploratory also used qualitative methods, such as video-capture, picture share narratives presentations, and selected autobiographies. The data collected was not intended to take on a scientific research design, but was assembled and used as data informants to the process. What follows, then, is a description of the process and how the major components of the exploratory unfolded.

### Subjects

Thirty-three participants were selected from three cultural diversity courses. The exploratory included 14 men and 19 women. From a pre-project questionnaire, 67% self-identified themselves as African-American. 24% self-identified as European-American, 6% self-identified as African, and 3% self-identified as Middle-Eastern.

### Sample Collection

Proper legal documents were signed and sent to AncestryDNA and a date for the “Spitting Party” was determined. DNA samples arrived activated and coded by the primary investigator (the author) so that the results could be collected, stored, and saved for further analysis and future articles. The principal investigator also structured the data collection so that the results would be disseminated at the same time as a shared and celebrated experience. DNA samples were taken at a “Spitting Party,” followed by festive music and an “eating session.” The samples were mailed off the next day.

### The Interim

Between the collection of the samples and the dissemination of the results, a number of things occurred:

The principle investigator wrote a “Theme Song” to go along with the “Journey”. The participants went to the recording studio at North Carolina Central University and created a track of the song. The participants also went to the University television studio and recorded a video to the music track, thereby creating an AncestryDNA (amateur, but well edited) music video. We had a blast. The students participated in various lecture-discussions pertaining to the elements of cultures and perceptions of cultural difference. The themes were the same as those pertaining to their final assignment.

The participants created individual pre-result videos, including what they knew about their cultural heritage and what they expected the finding to be, as well as any anxieties they might have. They conducted autobiographical family histories using AncestryDNA-sponsored databases. AncestryDNA provided incredible resources and technical support for enacting the project. The participants also engaged in the “Picture Share”, at which they displayed pictures and talked about their family heritage.

## **Dissemination of AncestryDNA Results**

The DNA results were put in large manila envelopes with the names of each of the participants on them, but kept in the possession of the principal investigator until the dissemination event. A date was determined for the dissemination of the results and the participants were allowed to invite friends, family, and special guest to the dissemination feast. A little program was prepared that included the launch of the “Cultural Legacy Forum” and the debut of the music video. The students only had a “green screen” experience at the television and recording studio, so this was the first time they saw the final project. The “hams” loved seeing themselves on the screen.

A clinical psychologist, who himself was bi-racial, provided expert analysis with a personal touch about the range of emotion that may accompany new cultural identities. He also offered suggestions on how to process this new cultural awareness and identity. The project included an “Opt-out: Always an Option” provision, so that any participant at any time could select an alternative activity. The clinical psychologist was also available before and after the dissemination of the results. This idea was triggered by pre-result videos that featured anxieties around questions such as “what if I am not black?” and “what if I am not all white?”

The room was filled with family, friends, children, cultural music, and a diversity arrangement of cultural food. Individuals were dressed in cultural garb. The last part of the program included the disclosure of individual results. Each envelope was passed out and on the count of three the participants opened them to see their results. The room went silent for about 3 seconds and then erupted in celebratory surprise (all on video).

## **Post-dissemination**

The participants shared their results with one another and ate as they enjoyed their findings. In an adjacent room, participants videotaped their finding and how they felt about the results. Subsequence classes were filled with discussions regarding reactions the participants got from family members who could not attend and the reactions they received from individuals on Facebook and other forms of social media.

## **Final Assignments**

The participants completed two final assignments. The first was the “Continental/Country Connection.” Using the regions or countries disclosed in their DNA result, the participants were asked to make a Continental/Country Connection through a short cultural study. The study was to include the following: a) country name, b) brief history, c) geographical location/physical topography/weather, d) physical/natural resources, e) demographics, f) education and educational systems, g) religion(s)/world views, h) government/social political realities, i) economic and socio-economic classes, j) family structure and gender distinctions, k) language(s), l) dress, arts: music, dance, drama, m) cuisine and diet, n) traditions/customs, and o) other.

The second assignment was the “Service Learning Initiative.” The participants were asked to create a service learning project that they would carry out in a country disclosed in the AncestryDNA results. It was the hope of the principle investigator to secure a large grant in order to sponsor a few students to return to the primary country disclosed and conduct a service learning project (all would have been videotaped). The large grant funding could not be secured in time; however, the principal investigation did complete the

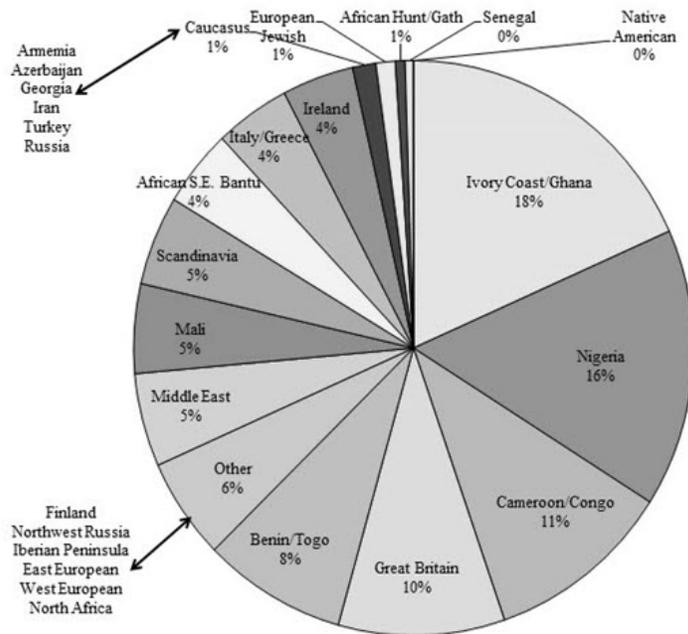
cycle by returning to Togo, West Africa (his ancestral origin) to teach over eight hundred children in two schools.

### THE ANCESTRYDNA RESULTS/FINDINGS

The results of the study affirm the initial “exploratory” hypothesis that beneath the racial classifications of Black” “Brown” “White” “Yellow” “Tan” and “Red” there is a range of ethno-cultures to be found, both within and among races. Beneath “White” skin, a predominance of Anglo, Irish, Italian, and Scandinavian ethnicities was identified. There were other European ethnicities identified under “other” which included Polish, Russians, and Czechs. There were no “Brown” ethnicities, and none expected in that there were no self-identified Hispanics that participated in the exploratory. Under “Black” the diversity spread across the continent of Africa.

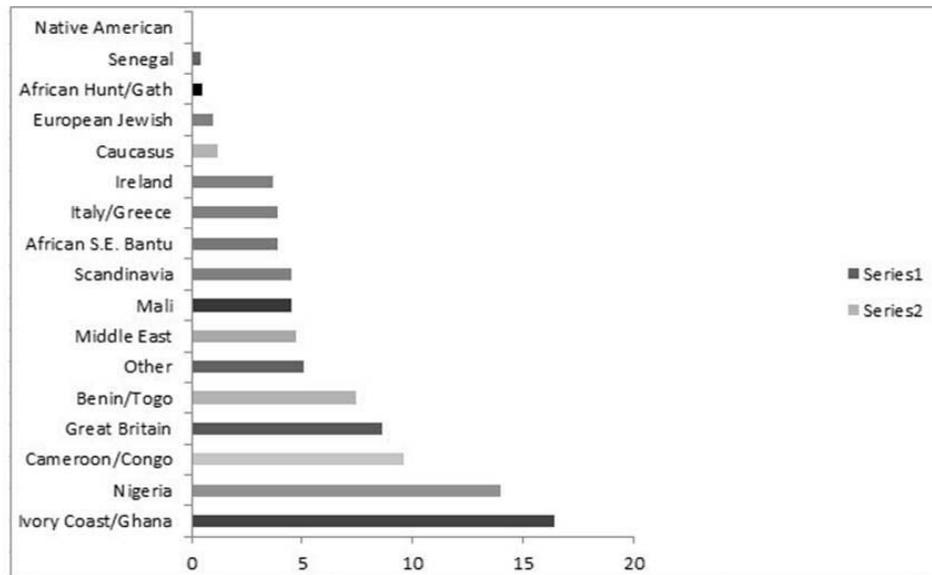
Also, as expected, there was only a small representation of “Tan” from the Middle East. One of the most surprising findings pertained to Native Americans. In the pre-project survey, a number of participants were “confident” and very “confident” that they were of Native American descent. As a group, however, this was not the case. The diagrams below support the “exploratory” hypothesis regarding the range of diversity beneath the skin. Unfortunately, there were no Native Americans, Hispanics, or Southeast Asian participants. Their absence in the exploratory, however, was representative of their presence in the School of Education at the time of the study.

### Diversity beneath the Skin



CLP-Chart A-01

## Diversity beneath the Skin



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### IMPLICATIONS FOR DISCUSSION AROUND PERCEPTIONS OF RACE AND CULTURE

What became clear from the exploratory was the reality that there was a rich ethno-cultural heritage beneath the skin pigmentations of “Black”, “Brown”, “White”, “Yellow”, and “Tan” individuals. These cultural heritages, however, remain hidden until cultural interchanges occur, which is usually after men and women of color are largely judged as “outsiders” by the color of their skin, unless the first glance is pre-empted by sub-culture indicators such as attire or language. Cross-cultural exchanges are required to get beyond perceptions and attitudes associated with race. The participants themselves, for the first time, went beyond first-glance race presumptions and engaged each other in totally different conversations. The simultaneous dissemination of participant results produced immediate conversations around ethnicities beneath the skin, rather than conversations around race.

Some European-American participants were surprised as well, but most of them experienced a confirmation of family narratives. British, Scandinavia, Italian/Greek, Irish, Polish, and Jewish were the predominate ethno-cultures of the White participants. It was my hope that the European-American participants, whose ethnic group dominates the education profession both as teachers and administrators, would experience a sensitization, rooted in a reconnection and empathy with the historical narrative of their own ancestry—one replete with racial discrimination during historical periods when white skin did not always equal “white privilege.” An exploratory such as this one could serve to nurture values for the ethno-cultural identities beneath “white” skin, as well as values for skins of

color in a way that may prove to be culturally redemptive, particularly in the school environment when the cultural deconstruction and reconstruction is expressed in equitable action.

The Whites who participated in the exploratory began to see themselves as more than white—as whites connected to a sub-cultural ethnicity. Almost all of the whites, particularly those who did additional research, committed themselves to visit the country of their primary ethno-cultural origin. The exploratory nature of the project, therefore, is likely to have implications for “white identity theory,” particularly as influenced by DNA tracing. “Whites” can choose, based on scientific data, to refer to themselves as “European-Americans” as a part of white identity re-construction.

The findings of the project may also have implication for “black identity theory,” by challenging and substituting notions of a “plantation self- a Toby.” By the term, I am referring to a construction of self rooted in the 200 years of the Negro past (Herskovits, 1941) rather than a more pan-African continental “self- a Kunta Kente” (Haley, 1976). Are you Kunta or Toby? The former represents a pride with one’s ancestral self. That latter is replete with shame built atop the slave-master dichotomy. The “Clark studies” speak to that internalized negativism.

The use of DNA tracing may have a deconstructive impact on black identity theory. The psycho-social paradigms and pathologies of the negative “self” in the Clark Studies, (Clark, 1947) may have to yield to the scientific base evidence of an identity rooted in DNA tracing. African-Americans no longer have to identify, consciously or unconsciously, with the “black doll” – the bad doll. DNA cultural tracing offers the person of color an option to scientifically call oneself a “Cablinasian” or something else. African-American students can be less concerned with “acting white (Ogbu, 1986). They can have a scientific base to “act Nigerian or Malian”, whatever that means. The exploratory nature of the project, therefore, has implications for “black identity theory.” The DNA results of one African-American participant identified her to be 98% African, which made her more African, perhaps, than African-American.

Throughout the civil right movement and again in the 1980s, there were particular conversations around whether dark people of color should refer to themselves as “Black” or “African-American.” The AncestryDNA exploratory provided the participants a context to conclude, “I am British because there is a Brittany” or “I am Irish because there is an Ireland”. Some participants of the darker hue articulated that they are conclusively African-American and connected to Africa, just as Jews are connected to Israel or Germans are to Germany. For them, they do not originate from the country of “black.” The results of the exploratory thus have implications for identity theorizing. Indeed, the term “African-American Identity Theory” may prove to be the forthcoming and more politically correct language.

The findings of the exploratory also have implication for family cultural identity reconstruction. The participants of African descent were surprised by the apparent “family-told” mythologies that did not match the DNA evidence. An overwhelming number of African-American participants were told that they were of Native American descent; some could even name a tribe. For even the most “confident”, however, the DNA evidence very clearly showed no traces of being Native American.

Foster and adopted children without family roots may be able to find them in an extended cultural family through DNA discoveries. Ancestral communities in the United

States and abroad could very well provide an extended family culture venue for biologically displaced individuals, particularly for those who cannot rely on deduction of bloodline or oral family histories. Foster and adopted children who may never know their parents, grandparents, or great-grand parents can use DNA tracing, get some sense of their cultural heritage by connecting to their culture and place of likely origin.

## CONCLUSION/SYNTHESIS

In conclusion, I would like to opine another implication of the AncestryDNA exploratory that should be affirmed in schools and elsewhere. The exploratory has implications for what I would refer to as “character beneath the skin.” It seems to me that while advocating for multi-cultural relevance and appreciation, the notion of “character beneath the skin” must be a part of any cultural analysis, lest we blindly admonish cultural pathologies in the name of being culturally equitable. The affirmation and celebration of culture is important inside and outside the school community. It is difficult to respect anyone from any culture whose character is deemed deplorable.

I am fully aware of the fact that there are behavioral expressions and norms that are valued as “character” in one culture but deplorable to another. These cultural clashes, conflicts, and incongruences, however, must not be used as excuses for avoiding continual cultural deliberative exchanges. Let’s work out our cultural differences, rather than run from them, and avoid perpetuating pedagogies of oppression (Freire, 1990) because they provide an easy escape from cultural confrontations. Cultural riches are assets that should be celebrated. Overcoming the challenges that mitigate our enjoyment of them should be a fight worth undertaking. Perhaps, more importantly, expecting some trans-cultural notion of “character” is reasonable. It is my hope that we, the international community to which we all belong, will not be judged by the color of our skins, or the diversity beneath our skins, but the content of some construct of character.

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# **Social Justice Simplified: How to Teach a Contested Concept**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Social or distributive justice refers to just distributions of income and wealth. Because social justice is an essentially contested concept, it has no true or core meaning, only several conflicting interpretations. This pluralism creates a problem for teachers who must explain to students how the various interpretations differ and underlie policy disputes. We propose that the plurality of interpretations can be understood as differences between a basic set of norms: equality, merit, contribution, effort, and choice. These norms are associated with familiar political ideologies. We illustrate each of these norms in a series of cartoons and suggest that moral opinions about the best norm result in irresolvable conflicts between the norms. We apply our theoretical analysis to these ideological conflicts in the policy areas of income, education, and discrimination in employment.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the term emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “social justice,” also known as distributive justice, refers to just distributions of income and wealth. Philosophers have been on a quest for the single best interpretation of the term. They have not been successful. In Gallie’s (1964) opinion, the reason is that social justice is an essentially contested concept: There is no true or core meaning, only several conflicting interpretations (pp. 157-191). This pluralism creates a problem for teachers who must explain to students how the various interpretations differ and underlie policy disputes.

We believe that our kind of analysis improves teachers’ understanding of the perennial disputes about income inequality. Using it puts teachers in a better position to help students understand how disputes about the justice of economic distributions and policy derive from commitments to different norms of social justice. We will use the term “norm” in this article. Feinberg (1973) uses the term “principle,” as do others (Miller, 1999). Terms such as “criterion” and “standard” are possible, but, in our opinion, “norm” more clearly conveys the moral connotation of social justice.

Based on the work of Feinberg (1973), we propose that the plurality of interpretations can be understood as differences between a basic set of norms: equality, merit, contribution, effort, and choice. Choice is our addition to Feinberg’s set of principles. Merit, contribution, and effort are desert norms. Karl Marx is famous for the formula, from each according to \_\_\_\_\_, to each according to \_\_\_\_\_. Filling in the second blank with one of the norms is one way to differentiate political philosophies, theories and ideologies. For example, to each according to “need” yields the communist norm.

We illustrate each of the norms in a series of cartoons.<sup>1</sup> Moral opinion about the

best norm accounts for irresolvable conflicts between equality and the desert norms of merit, contribution, and effort. All of these norms conflict with choice. To demonstrate the usefulness of our analysis to teachers and students, we describe these ideological conflicts in the policy areas of income, education, and discrimination in employment.

Our approach to teaching social justice is a proposal, which we have not actually implemented. We hope to try it with students in the near future. Then, we will ask students to fill in the balloons in the cartoons and describe what they see and understand. We have filled in the balloons with what the characters might say and offered commentary, which we intend to share with students at appropriate points in the discussion.

## HISTORICAL ORIGINS

The idea of justice as a fitting reward for desert is found in the three major Western religions. As expressed in the Christian version, “Whatever a man sows that shall he also reap” (Galations 6:7). At judgment day, each one of us will be rewarded or punished according to our good or bad works. The first philosophical definition is found in Book I of Plato’s *Republic*: “justice consists in rendering to each his due.” According to Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, rewards and punishments should be distributed in proportion to merit (Pojman, 2006, p. 17). In early understandings, desert is a matter of individual responsibility and distributive justice mainly applies to the distribution of benefits and burdens by political authorities (Feinberg, 1973, p. 107).

Aristotle’s organization of the subject matter of justice and the classical concept of justice as desert remained unchanged until the nineteenth century. In *Utilitarianism*, published in 1861, Mill (1979) was the first to link social and distributive justice but only implied that society itself is ultimately responsible for the distribution of goods. Karl Marx did not say anything about social justice, and he identified justice only as part of bourgeois ideology which he argued would disappear with the end of capitalism. He is famous for the communist slogan, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his need,” which appeared in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* published in 1875. In the same letter, he also provided the reasoning behind a lesser known socialist slogan, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his contribution” (Marx, 1972). These slogans should be understood as descriptive, not normative, propositions. They introduced contribution, which will later be understood as a basis of desert, and need into discussions of the meaning of social justice.

In his 1931 encyclical, *Quadragesimo anno*, Pope Pius XI shifted the focus from individual to social responsibility and from political to economic distribution. He also introduced equality as the norm of social justice (Burke, 2011, p. 72). Pius’s concept of social justice was widely disseminated as official Catholic social teaching. This is one reason for the association of social justice with the left. Another reason is the dominance of the views of philosopher John Rawls in intellectual circles in the twentieth century. Rawls (1999) argued that income and wealth should be distributed equally unless economic inequalities are “to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged,” which is his well-known Difference Principle (p. 266). He also accepted the attribution of injustice to impersonal states of affairs and offered a critique of desert as an acceptable principle of social justice that persuaded many philosophers. Equality became the assumed norm of social justice for progressives and welfare liberals.

Nozick (1974), who was critical of Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* of three years earlier, introduced choice as an alternative norm of social justice. Choice became the assumed norm of social justice for classical liberals and libertarians. Since the nineteenth century, philosophers have argued for the liberal and libertarian norms of equality and choice, but desert norms continue to be part of the popular imagination.

## IDEOLOGICAL FORMULATIONS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

Historically, as we have seen, social justice became associated with liberalism in which equality is the ideal, but, in principle, any norm can be the ideal of social justice. Depending on the norm, social justice can be a libertarian, liberal, conservative, socialist, or communist concept. Using Marx's formula, the norms and political ideologies are related in the following way:

**Libertarian:** from each as they choose, to each as they are chosen

**Liberal:** from each as they choose, to each an equal share

**Conservative:** from each according to ability, to each according to desert (merit, contribution, effort)

**Socialist:** from each according to ability, to each according to contribution

**Communist:** from each according to ability, to each according to need

The libertarian formulation is taken from Nozick (1974); the socialist and communist formulations are from Marx (1972). The liberal and conservative formulations are the authors'. Contrary to popular opinion, Marx was not opposed to the classical notion of justice. In fact, he thought that in the absence of economic abundance, a socialist society would be regulated by contribution, which is a desert norm. Libertarians and liberals share the first part of the formula, from each as they choose, because they belong to the same family. Their common ancestor is classical liberalism, represented by such historical figures as John Locke and Adam Smith. Libertarianism is the twentieth century child of classical liberalism. What is today called "liberalism" is a reformed version of classical liberalism and sometimes known as modern or welfare liberalism (Ball & Dagger, 2011). Liberals have usually not insisted upon absolute equality, that is, exactly the same share of economic goods for everyone, but they believe that wide disparities in income and wealth can lead to economic instability and stagnation (Stiglitz, 2013). For liberals, equal shares is an ideal toward which we should strive. Liberals also support distribution according to basic needs.

## SOCIAL JUSTICE AS AN ESSENTIALLY CONTESTED CONCEPT

Which of the norms of social justice is correct? The majority of philosophers favor equality as the norm and assume that society, not individuals, is responsible for distributive outcomes. Some philosophers, however, have recently begun to reconsider the merits of desert (Olsaretti, 2003). Aside from philosophers, there is significant popular support for the desert norms and individual responsibility. Based on cross-cultural research, moral psychologist Jonathan Haidt offers an explanation for the popularity of desert norms: Our evolved moral intuition is that justice is a matter of proportionality and individual

responsibility. “People should reap what they sow. People who work hard should get to keep the fruits of their labor. People who are lazy and irresponsible should suffer the consequences” (Haidt, 2012, p. 169).

W. B. Gallie says that concepts like social justice are “essentially contested.” This means that “there is no one use of any of them which can be set up as its generally accepted and therefore correct or standard use” (Gallie, 1964, p. 157). It is not as if there are no arguments for each of the interpretations or that the endless disputes between adherents are not genuine. Rather, the disputes are “not resolvable by argument of any kind” (Gallie, 1964, p. 158).

Gallie (1964) claims that social justice seems to be involved in only a single rivalry between an “individualist” and a “collectivist” conception (p. 181). This rivalry developed historically. Almost everyone in the West before the nineteenth century supported the individualist conception with its desert norms and assumption of individual responsibility. Since the nineteenth century, the collectivist conception of equality norms and social responsibility has been dominant. The individualist conception focuses on individual transactions, but the collectivist conception focuses on results, de facto states of affairs, or overall pattern of distribution in society.

Theoretically, these conceptions do not necessarily conflict, but in practice they routinely do. Economic actors may distribute benefits according to any norm they choose. If most of them distribute benefits equally then the overall result in society will be a relatively equal distribution. Individualist and collectivist conceptions do not conflict. In practice, most economic actors distribute benefits according to one or a combination of the desert norms, intentionally or not, in order to ensure the motivation of workers and succeed in business. The overall result is some degree of social inequality. Individualist and collectivist conceptions do conflict. Liberals who condemn the unequal distribution of income and wealth in society imply that producers act immorally by distributing individual benefits according to desert or choice. This implication seems to be obscured by the assumption that individual decisions about distribution are not morally relevant and society as a whole, not individuals, is responsible for the result. If society is responsible, it is also a collective responsibility to correct the mal-distribution through governmental redistribution.

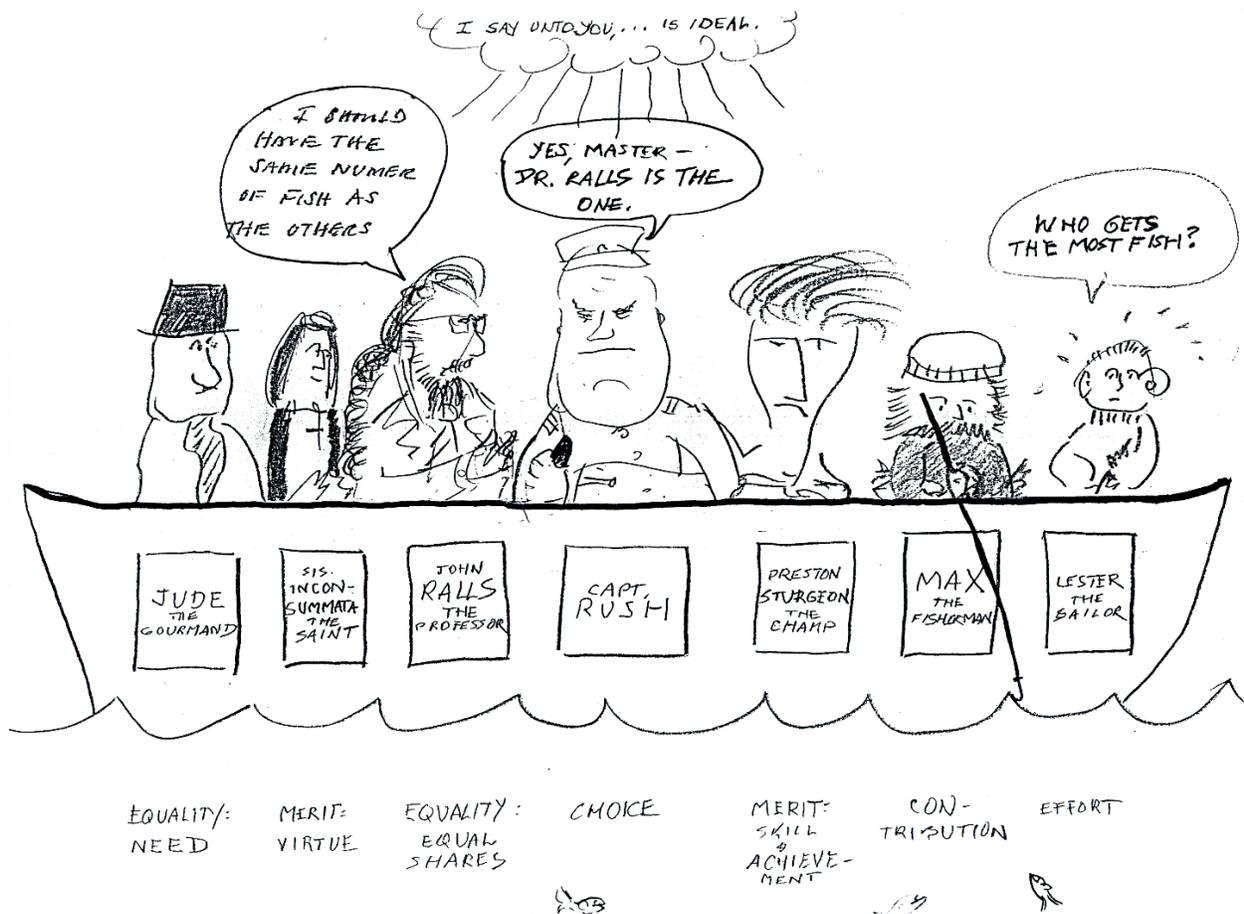
## **TEACHING THE NORMS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE**

In this section, we outline an approach to the admittedly difficult task of helping students and non-expects in the field to understand the norms and how they are, ultimately, contested in an insoluble, essential way. Our approach is based on a number of pedagogical assumptions:

1. We use mental imagery in thought.
2. We learn about familiar concrete objects such as cars, telephones, and computers by storing poly-sensory images of them.
3. Words are shorthand for other kinds of images.
4. We come to understand abstract ideas such as social justice by grounding them in concrete scenarios.

The following cartoons, involving caricatures of the norms of social justice, represent concrete scenarios that might help teachers and students understand the abstract meanings of social justice.<sup>2</sup> We imagine a situation where the problem of distribution is paramount: shipwreck survivors in a lifeboat with a limited supply of food. Personifying the norms as individuals combined with visual representation seems a promising approach to stimulating practical understanding of admittedly rather abstract and complicated concepts. Following Feinberg, we divide desert and equality into their component parts or facets (or, as Feinberg would put it, “bases”), leaving us with seven identifiable core beliefs: equality as equal shares, equality based on need, merit as virtue, merit as skill and achievement, contribution, effort and choice (Feinberg, 1973). In our cartoons, each norm is illustrated by a caricature: equality as equal shares is Professor John Ralls’s idea; equality based on need is a plea from Jude the Gourmand; merit as virtue is embodied, if that is the right word, in Sister Inconsummata the Saint; merit as skill and achievement is the claim that the Olympic Champion Eel Wranger Preston Sturgeon makes; Max the Fisherman argues for contribution; and Lester the Sailor pleads for effort. In reality, of course, everyone is moved by all the norms, just in different proportions.

Of course, there are other distribution issues brought up by such a situation, such as who gets on the lifeboat, whether or not there are enough life preservers, and what happens if the lifeboat springs a leak or is attacked by sharks. But such pressing emergencies do not allow for much reflection and are usually addressed by the application of a single norm, equal shares in the case of who gets to be on the lifeboat, who gets a life preserver, who fixes the leak and who gets to fend off the sharks. Such emergency situations are reflected in famous maxims: “Women and children first” would today be considered a gross violation of the equal shares norm, but it is imposed by scarcity, not principle. Only up to the Titanic era could this particular maxim be construed as an expression of moral norms, such as merit as virtue (women’s purity) or equality based on need (women as the weaker sex). It is the same with “Every man for himself”: This is simply an admission of complete normlessness where none of the norms work because of *force majeure*. “The captain is the last to leave the ship” or even “goes down with his ship,” on the other hand, does seem to express moral rather than pragmatic considerations: Merit as skill and achievement combined with contribution are probably uppermost in this tradition, which, when looked at from a purely utilitarian point of view, does not necessarily make any sense. To facilitate understanding the distinctions between the characters’ various norms, and their reactions to each other’s norms, our lifeboat situation represents a pressing but not dire situation (food supply).



**Figure 1.** Equality as equal shares. Captain Rush represents all economic distributors. **John Ralls** the Professor illustrates economic distribution according to the norm of equality as equal shares.

In Figure 1, fish are visibly scarce in this part of the ocean, although the seas are calm. Note that we let Captain Rush on board and continue with his leadership role, because we need an embodiment of a resource distributor. But we make him unappealing, as if he unconsciously knows he violated a long-standing tradition of seamanship or, even worse, was responsible for the sinking. Any resemblance to a well-known right-ring talk show host is completely intentional. Captain Rush grudgingly listens to the appeals of each of the survivors, but thinks that each norm somehow comes from . . . what? We put in the sky a godlike voice to suggest the way most people think they receive their norms; but we also placed them in the water, to satisfy those who prefer an evolutionary tack, which begins in the sea.

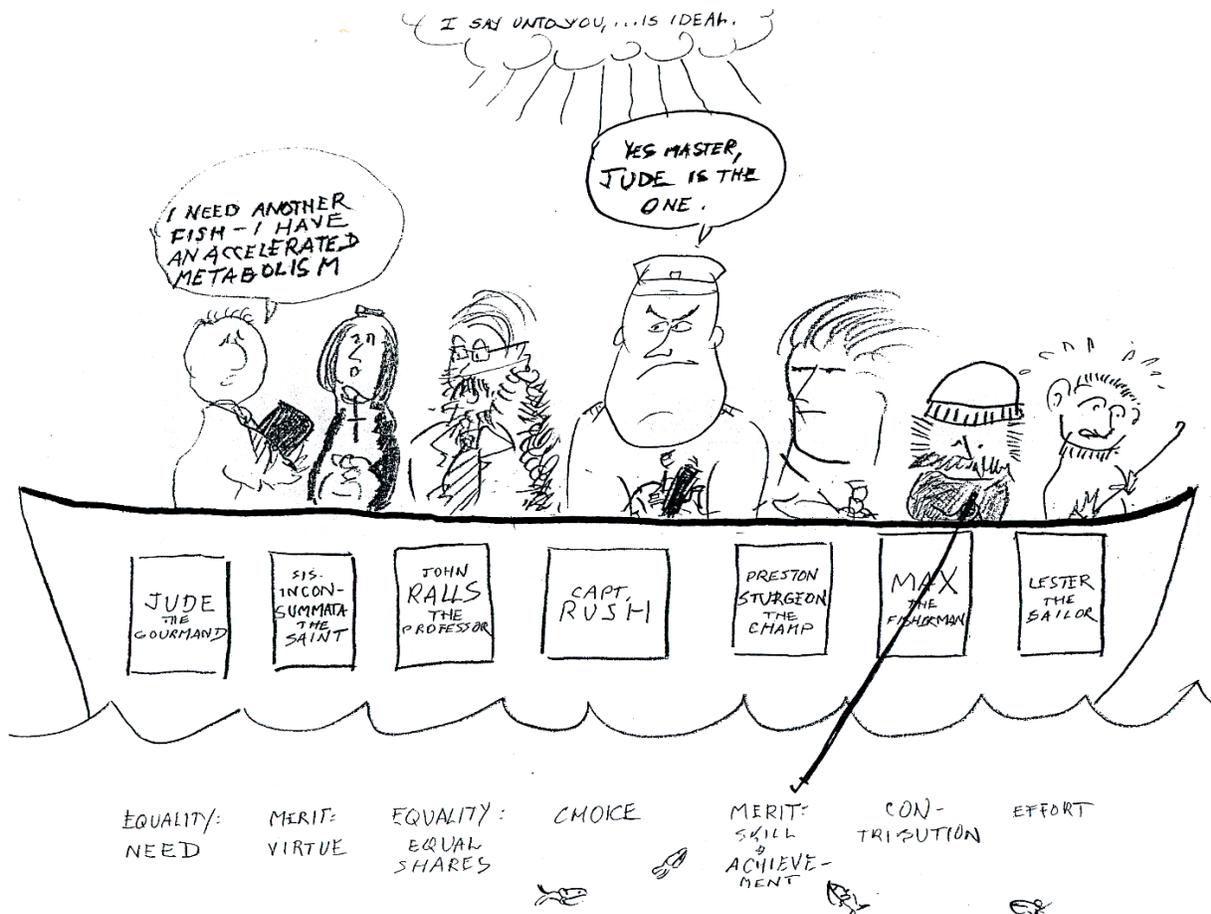
Feinberg (1973) says that distributive justice refers to both acts of distributing, which requires distributors, and de facto states of affairs—the product of some process of distributing (pp. 107-108). There is no central distributor in the economy. Captain Rush represents all the economic distributors, who produce an overall pattern in the economy, which is a state of affairs that is not the intention of any individual or group. The pattern of distribution that results from all the distributive choices in the economy can be evaluated

by a norm determined independently of the actual choices. Unlike the other norms, if the norm is choice, the pattern is just without an independent evaluation because it is the result of all the distributive *choices* in the economy.

The first of two equality norms is equal shares of the economic pie. To embody this norm, we have chosen the combination of a left-wing political activist and Ivy-League professor, John Rawls, in a character named **John Ralls**. Ralls is pronounced “Rolls”, suggesting both his physical situation – rolling with the waves – and his academic training – rolling with the opinions of the others by considering, as he was trained to do, the pros and cons of their statements from a purely objective point of view.

In Professor **Ralls’s** view, individuals are not required to have any particular trait, moral or otherwise, or do anything. The assumption is that they should receive equal shares because they are all equally human. This assumption seems to be intuitively correct in many contexts: We should all have equal protection of the laws, the same number of votes in democratic elections, and equal rights as citizens.

Sister Inconsummata seems pleased by the idea of equal shares, as we would expect from a saint; Jude the Gourmand is obviously disappointed and seems to be losing weight; Preston Sturgeon the Champion is clearly unhappy; while Max and Lester are oblivious, too busy trying to solve the distribution problem directly by catching some fish to reflect on moral issues. They will have their say later on in the sequence.

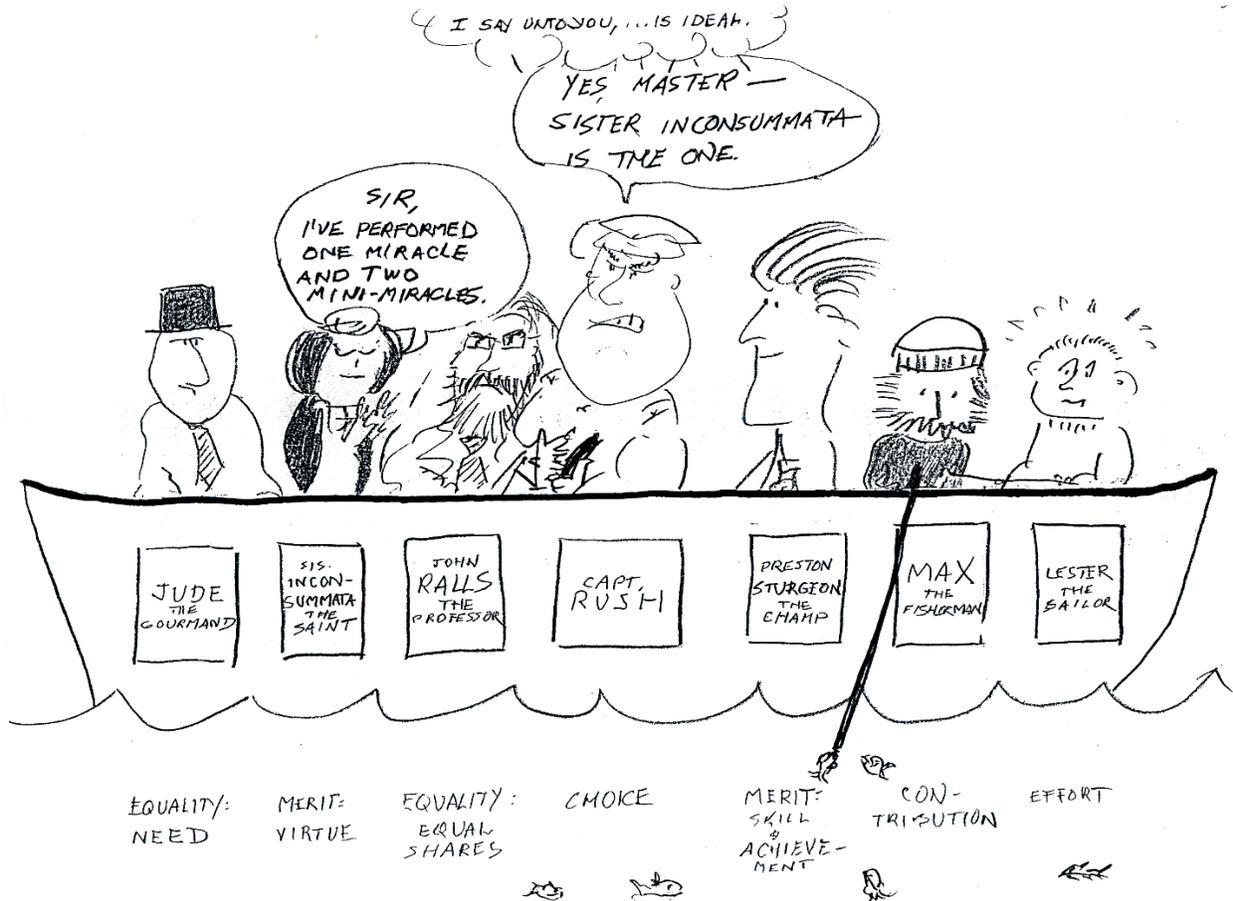


**Figure 2.** Equality as need. Captain Rush, the representative of economic distributors, is inspired to distribute resources according to the norm of equality as need, illustrated by **Jude** the Gourmand.

In Figure 2, Jude, who is a gourmand (as opposed to a gourmet), embodies equality as need. He is a character who loves to eat just about anything, which is due to a pathological condition: a metabolic abnormality beyond his control. The apparent sympathy of Sister Inconsummata and the obvious surprise of Professor Ralls indicates how others with other norms – virtue and equal shares – might plausibly react to the argument from need. Need is a profound equality norm. It represents burdens or deficiencies that differ among individuals. Individuals become equals when their needs are met. Our illustration shows how unobvious this principle is to many people: While the Sister seems sympathetic to **Jude's** supposed need (having been trained to respond similarly to any need), Professor Ralls seems alarmed, perhaps because need complicates the ideal of simple equality, or perhaps because he realizes that it would be very difficult under the circumstances to medically verify **Jude's** metabolism. The Olympic Champion, being a model of health and good looks, is typically dismissive of any physical abnormality. But what would it matter if **Jude** were lying, or misinformed? What if he were a gourmet rather than a gourmand? Would the norm of equality based on need be in any sense compromised? If the issue were lifesavers, and he were obese, it would be

obvious that he would deserve more than one. But here the case of need is not so easy to decide.

Meeting everyone's needs seems like an impossible task. This is the reason that philosophers argue that it is more plausible to meet basic needs for such goods as food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. This is the practice, for the most part, in social democracies: Governments use existing standards to define the needs they will meet (Miller, 1991, p. 262).



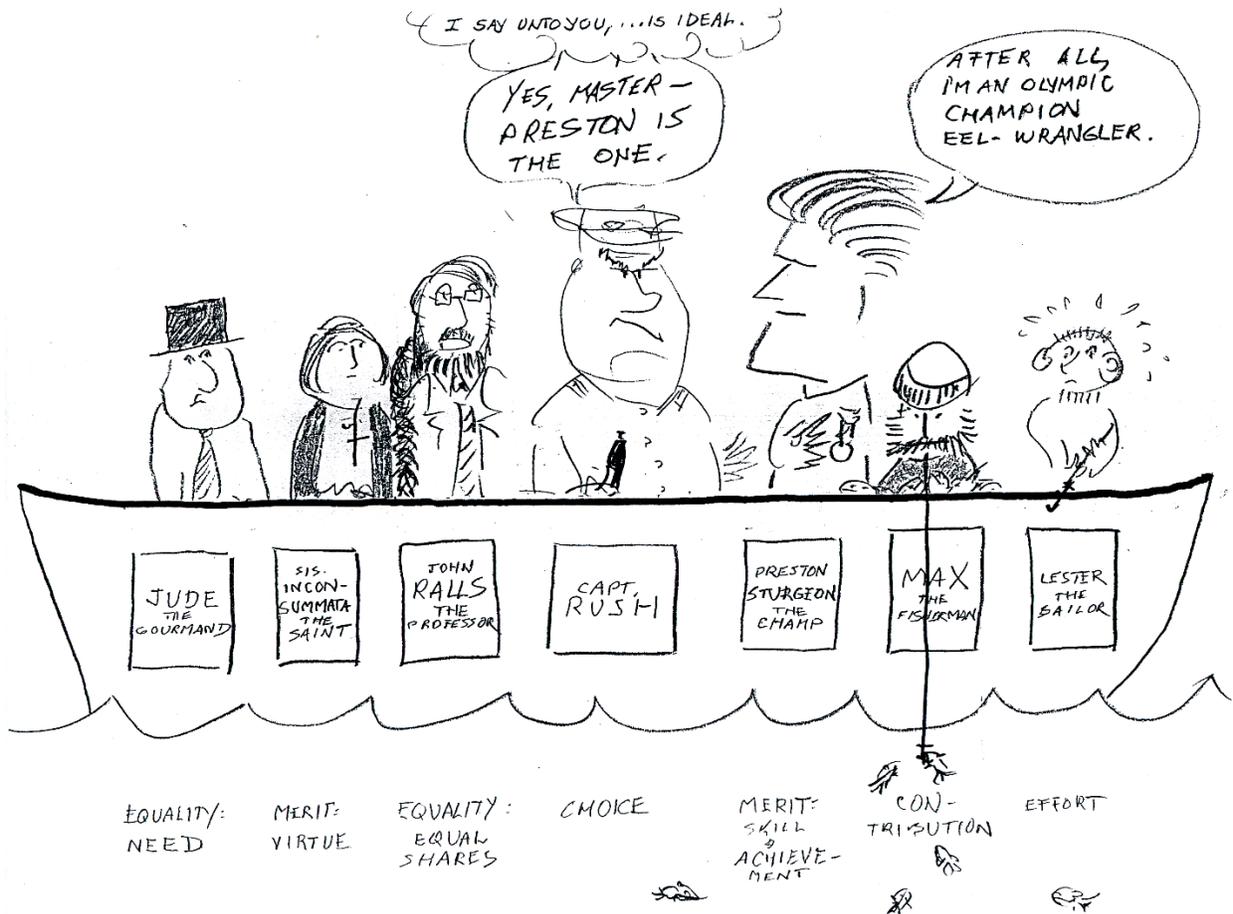
**Figure 3.** Merit as virtue. In this figure, Captain Rush is urged to distribute resources according to the norm of merit as virtue. The norm is illustrated by **Sister Inconsummata** the Saint.

Divinely designated saintliness is probably the most obvious example of virtue, although the term can also refer to the classical virtues of faith, hope, love, courage, or wisdom. It might also include more contemporary virtues such as generosity and conscientiousness. For pedagogical purposes, we have gone for the obvious in Figure 3: **Sister Inconsummata** with her churchly honorific. Her name reflects her appearance and attitude, both of which are not wholly of this world.

Basing economic distributions on virtue probably does not hold much appeal in the twenty-first century. There are also the practical problems of deciding upon the "correct" virtues and measuring them in order to make the distributions. Such qualms are expressed

in various ways by our cast and crew: Professor Ralls is starting to get angry, partly because he is being overshadowed by an ideology he would consider a mere shadow: theology. Captain Rush is none too happy either, but it is not clear due to his apparent direct conduit to God. Perhaps in addition to being a coward and a cigar-smoker, he is a womanizer who is repelled by the Sister's desiccated appearance. But after all, she is unconsummated. On the other hand, Preston the Champ seems pleased – recognizing a related form of merit, and perhaps secretly envious of a life devoted not to competition but to self-abnegation.

One perhaps fanciful interpretation: Perhaps **Sister Inconsummata** the Saint is promising another “mini-miracle,” this time on the model of Jesus feeding the multitudes. This possibility would probably carry the day in the pre-modern era, but today most professionals at least discount the possibility of miracles.

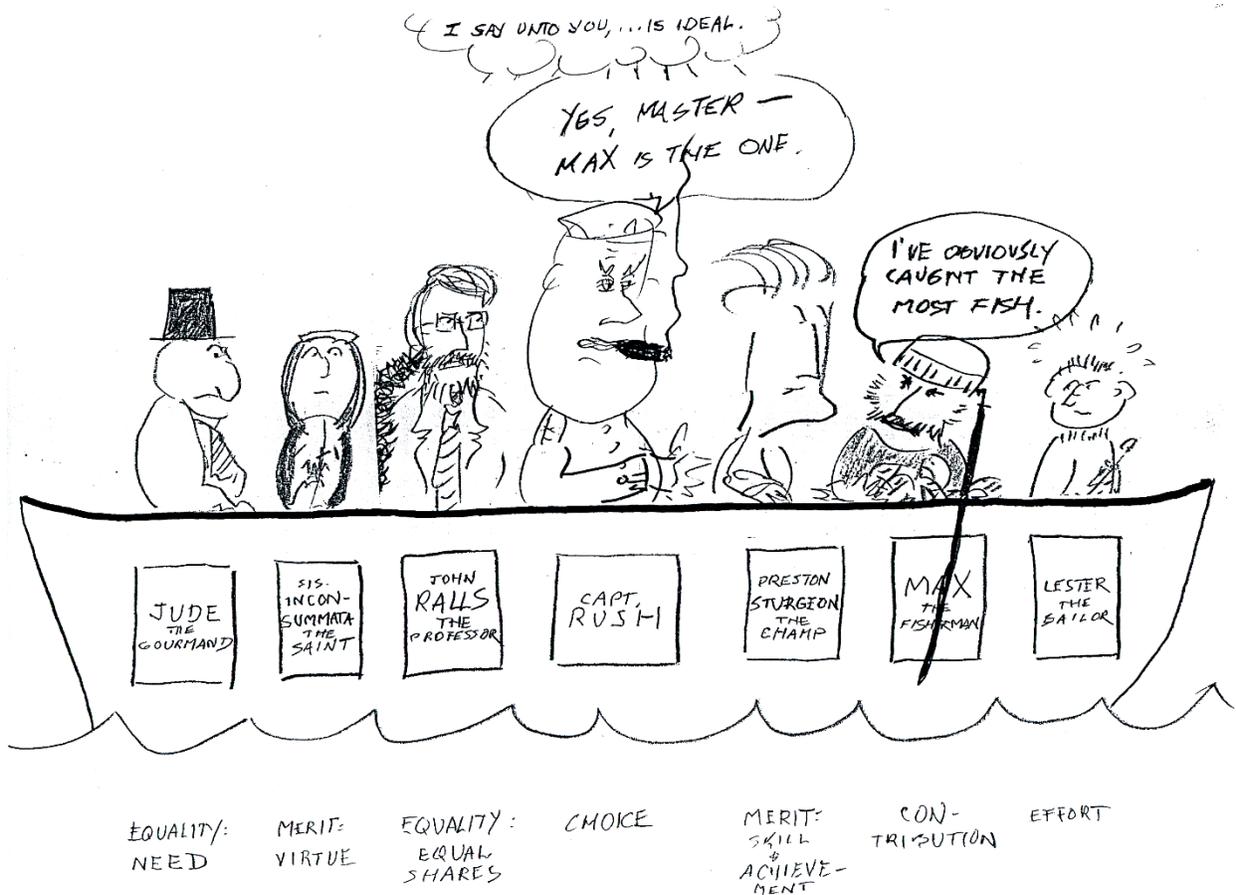


**Figure 4.** Merit as skill and achievement. This time, Captain Rush is commanded to distribute economic resources according to the norm of merit as skill and achievement. The norm is illustrated by **Preston Sturgeon** the Champ.

In Figure 4, our choice for the embodiment of this variety of merit is a handsome, confident Olympic eel wrangler, **Preston Sturgeon**. His position is more plausible as a principle for distribution than virtue alone, because of the element of skill. In fact, every time we present a resume for employment, we are asking a potential employer to give us a

job based at least in part on the skill we have developed in the past to do the current job. Merit as achievement is a familiar basis of desert. In this case, the focus is not on a person's character traits or skills but on what the person has done. People gain merit through sports contests, such as competing for a medal in the Olympics, or achievement in some other area of human activity, such as winning a Nobel Prize in science or Pulitzer Prize in journalism. We all recognize many kinds of academic achievement, such as getting a good grade on an exam or a degree.

Of course, not all the people on the boat are happy with this norm. Jude seems indifferent (low blood sugar?) and Sister Inconsummata seems blasé, but Professor Ralls seems especially perturbed. Is this personal, a case of one accomplished individual envying the superior accomplishments of another? Or does he simply think sports are superficial compared to scholarship? Max as usual is not impressed, perhaps because he understands the difference between catching fish and wrangling eels. Besides, he is very busy doing what he does best.

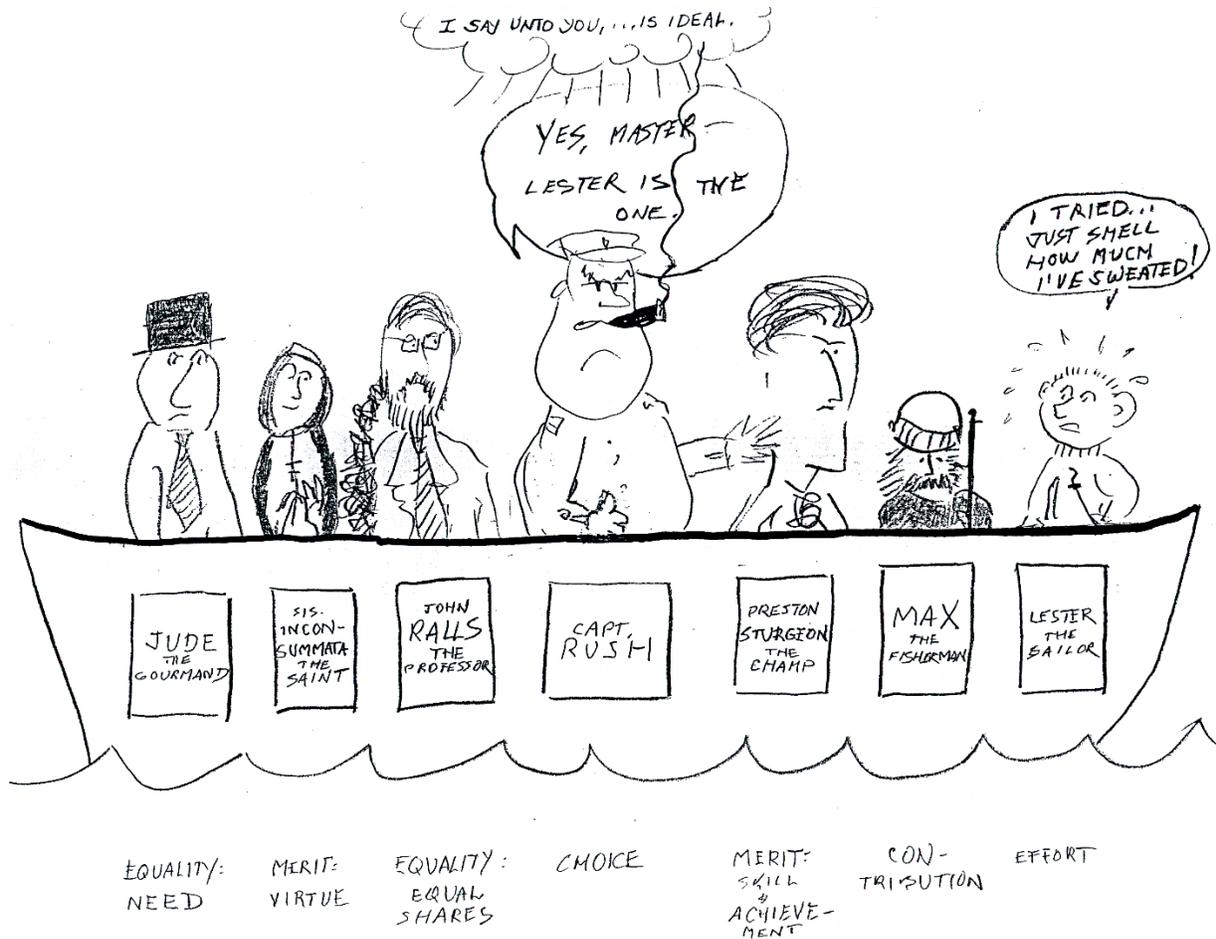


**Figure 5.** Contribution. Captain Rush receives an instruction to distribute economic resources according to the norm of contribution. **Max** the Fisherman illustrates this norm.

One basis of desert that is especially relevant to the workplace is contribution. To illustrate contribution in our imagined situation, we use **Max** the Fisherman in Figure 5, who, although he is not especially saintly, meritorious or attractive on any other grounds,

nevertheless seems to be getting the fish. Significantly, he refers to his norm as “obvious,” which could be due to several causes: his unsophisticated command of moral issues, his selfish personality, or his instinctive embrace of mainstream American values. Whatever it may be, he is clearly making an attempt to hoard his fish. Perhaps as a reaction to Professor Ralls’s request for equal shares. What does a professor, or a gourmand, or a saint, or even a captain or ordinary sailor know about fishing? And who has **Max’s** kind of luck? The fish seem to love him. We know that individuals are keenly aware of what they have contributed to a product or service, even if the contribution is not tangible. For example, a person might believe that sales would not be very high without his or her idea for marketing a product. We are also aware of the part we played in producing a tangible product or service: I added a significant part on the assembly line, I developed the annual budget for the company, I sold more shoes than anyone else in the store, I wrote a report, or I developed the curriculum for a college program.

Again, note the reactions of the others: While the Captain seems fairly satisfied (perhaps his training is kicking in here), the Sister seems to be having a brief moment of realism, the Professor is considering the merits as he always does, and the Champion is disturbed by his perception of the unfairness of the comparison between his past record and **Max’s** present accomplishment.

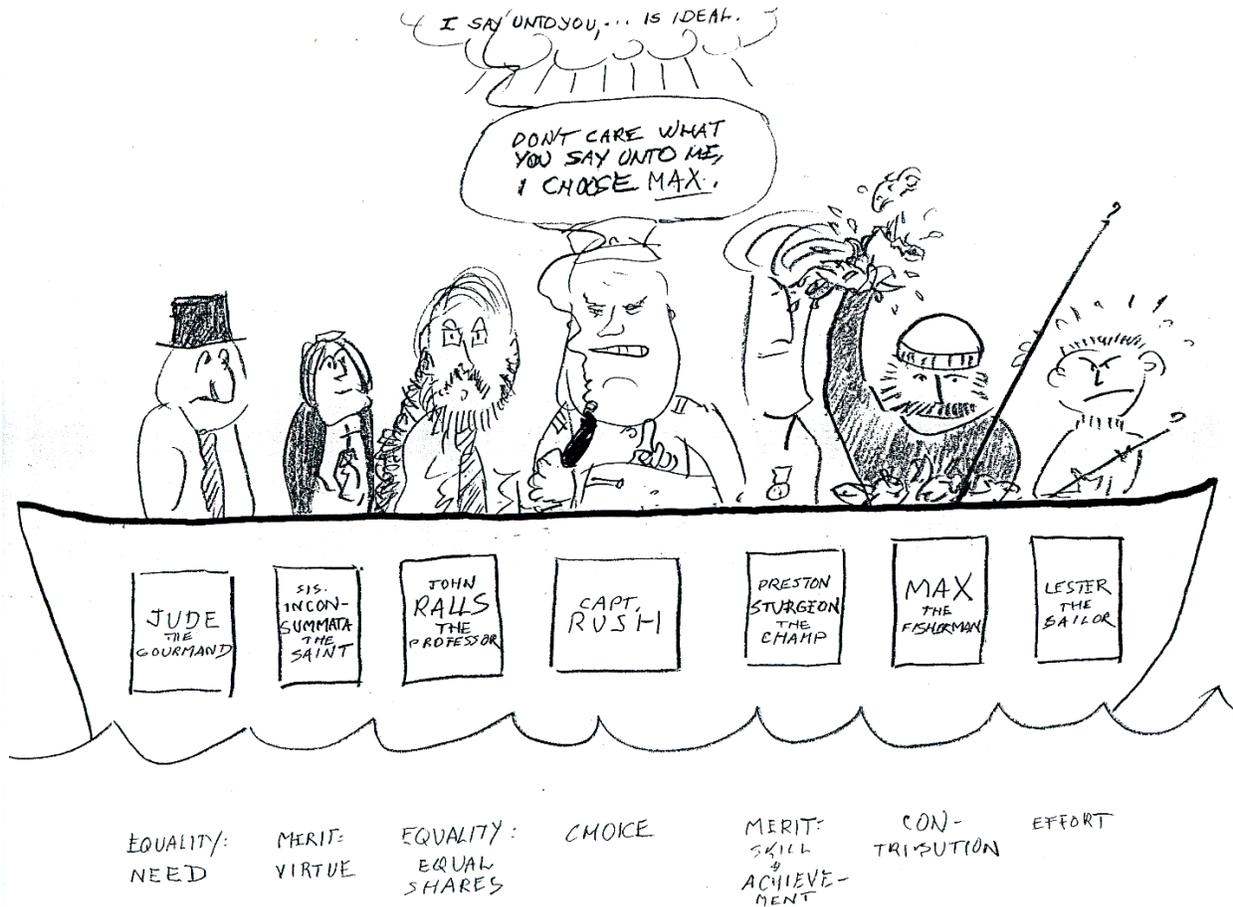


**Figure 6.** Effort. Captain Rush is commanded to distribute economic resources according to the norm of effort, which is illustrated by **Lester** the Sailor.

Effort is the other basis relevant to the workplace. In Figure 6, for effort without obvious contribution we have chosen a common sailor, **Lester**, who is plainly inferior to Max in catching fish and yet is genuinely devoted to doing his personal best. In fact, his concern for the distribution problem has been evident from the beginning: He was the one who posed the problem, and he has been “sweating it” from the beginning. In this case, effort refers to the time and energy devoted to work. At least one criterion of increases in salary or promotion should be how hard one works, and we are resentful, despite contributions, if someone who tries to do as little as possible receives more money or a promotion. Effort, however, is not exclusive to the workplace. Teachers are repeatedly confronted by students who say they should receive a better grade because they tried very hard. When it comes to allowances, parents are likely to hear the same plea from children. There are many places in our daily lives where effort and contribution are invoked in the distribution of some good, benefit, or reward.

Jude, the Sister and the Professor seem to be in a reflective mood, considering the value of his particular kind of merit. Even Champion Sturgeon does not seem especially upset. Effort is one of the merit norms that is *prima facie* conclusive to a great many people,

as anyone who has had to deal with students' tearful requests for an "A" for effort knows.



**Figure 7. Choice.** In this figure, Captain **Rush** disregards inspiration, instruction, or command from the outside and makes his own decision, which will likely be to distribute economic resources according to the norm of merit as skill and achievement or contribution.

As illustrated in Figure 7, choice is the final norm for consideration. Here we have imagined Captain **Rush** breaking away from all the other traditional norms, including their apparent origin from on high, to proclaim his own power of choice. In this libertarian perspective, owners, managers, and any economic actors who are in a position to make decisions about the distribution of economic resources and benefits are free to decide based on any criteria they choose. This means that an employer might decide to hire only the sexiest applicants. As a practical matter, employers probably would not use sexiness as the sole criterion because they would go broke if employees were sexy but unable to do the job. The employer most likely will try to base hiring decisions on merit as skill and achievement or contribution.

We note that while Jude the Gourmand is simply depressed, the Sister seems pleased, perhaps because of her training to tolerate the irrational. Professor Ralls seems surprised and a bit discombobulated, perhaps because of his training not to tolerate the

irrational. Captain **Rush's** choice might be motivated by his individualism, but the most interesting detail is the interaction between Preston Sturgeon and Max the Fisherman. Max is slapping his fish in Preston's face, but Preston doesn't seem offended. Perhaps this is because Max didn't do it on purpose, but if he did do it on purpose, we can assume that it can be put down to a combination of victorious enthusiasm and well-earned envy.

## IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS IN SOME POLICY AREAS

In the rivalry between the individualist and collectivist conceptions of social justice, we can discern the basic pattern of ideological conflict between liberals and conservatives in arguments about just distributions. Liberals tend to assume the equality norms while conservatives gravitate toward desert. The libertarians' preference for choice conflicts with both the liberal and conservative norms, but when it comes down to formulating policy they tend to skew toward conservative norms on the assumption that those are the norms that are usually necessary to foster a thriving economy. Thus, for many economic issues, it makes sense to group libertarians and conservatives together at the right end of the political spectrum.

The basic pattern of ideological conflict is visible in irresolvable disputes in a number of policy areas. The most fundamental area is income. Assuming an equality norm, liberals argue that everyone should have a good-paying job. Such a job will make it possible to at least meet basic needs and probably some wishes and desires too. Good-paying jobs mean a higher level of consumer spending, which increases effective demand in the economy. In contrast, conservatives, who assume a desert norm, argue that jobs should be awarded on the basis of educational achievement and ability or contribution to the product or service. Guaranteeing everyone a good-paying job will only decrease motivation to work hard. Disregarding merit, contribution, and effort will also result in ineffective job performance. Businesses will be less successful and economic growth will slow down.

We see the same conflict between the norms of equality and desert in the area of education. Liberals believe that everyone should have a college degree, which will flatten the social pyramid. Higher education is fundamental to upper mobility. Increasing everyone's knowledge and ability, that is, social capital, will increase everyone's income and contribute to economic growth. On the other hand, conservatives believe that the level of education should be based on merit—ability and other traits like conscientiousness—needed to achieve a degree and upward social mobility. Conservatives do not think it is possible to equalize social capital because there are natural differences in individual ability. A college education will be wasted on many who will not be able to develop the knowledge and skill necessary to acquire the kind of good-paying jobs that liberals want for everyone. Simply having a college degree will not guarantee a high-paying job in a knowledge-based, high-tech economy.

Discrimination in employment is another volatile area of conflict between liberals and conservatives. In a well-publicized case, *Ricci v. DeStafano*, which has been called a "reverse discrimination" case, liberals and conservatives clash again over the norms of equality and desert. This is a 2003 case in which a group of white firefighters charged that the city of New Haven, Connecticut discriminated against them by discarding the results of a test for promotion. The white firefighters passed the test at a 50% greater rate than blacks. None of the blacks would have been promoted if the city accepted the test results.

The city of New Haven argued that promotion on the basis of the test results would have a disparate impact on the minority firefighters. The city also argued that the test results were not scientifically valid.

In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled against the city, holding that “Fear of litigation alone cannot justify an employer’s reliance on race to the detriment of individuals who passed the examination and qualified for promotions.” The court’s reasoning aside, a conflict between the norms of equality and desert underlies differences of opinion about how the case should be decided. Liberals believe in the promotion of an equal number of blacks and whites. At least, the promotions should be proportionate to the percentage of whites and blacks in the New Haven community. Conservatives, on the other hand, would promote firefighters, white or black, on the basis of merit, that is, the score achieved on the test.

## CONCLUSION

Teaching social justice is challenging because interpretations of the concept are essentially contested. There is no true or core meaning. A basic pattern of conflict between liberals and conservatives underlies a host of policy disputes. We have strong moral opinions about the norms of social justice, which is evident in the heated exchanges between liberals, conservatives, and libertarians. Policy disputes seem to be interminable and irresolvable, and the prospects for consensus are grim.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a review of the literature on the use of cartoons in teaching, see Hammett and Mather (2011).

<sup>2</sup> See McCloud (1993) for illustrations of how words and images are combined to produce meaning.

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# **The Lived Experience of African American Teacher Utilizing Co-Cultural Adaptation at Predominantly White Rural Schools in Central Appalachia**

Dr. Tony E. Sweatt

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## **ABSTRACT**

The shortage of African American teachers can be traced back to the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision in 1954. While recruitment initiatives have been somewhat productive, studies nonetheless reveal a “revolving door” whereby scores of teachers abandon their jobs before retirement. Attrition is the primary factor impacting retention, according to the National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future. Retaining African American teachers is an essential part of narrowing this chasm.

As an effort to understand the causes of attrition and perseverance among African-American teachers, this study offers several qualitative interviews as part of an inductive, multiple-case study. The findings indicate that White superintendents are consciously or unconsciously supportive of the veils of oppression. Meanwhile, the principals and White faculty in these districts remain purposefully negligent of the needs and issues that African American teachers confront as co-cultural group members at predominantly White school districts.

Primary and secondary schools across the nation are becoming increasingly heterogeneous, yet the teacher population remains homogenous. In fairness, this is not a new issue: At the turn of the century, Whites represented a significant aggregate of the teacher population: 73% in the inner city; 81% in suburban schools; 91% in small towns; and 98% in rural areas. The magnitude of this issue is significant since approximately 33% of schools in the U.S. are located in rural areas, which already struggle with recruiting and retaining teachers, much less African-American ones. In fact, Bireda and Chait (2011) found that over 40% of public schools lack a single African American teacher on staff.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Policymakers and educators alike have spent the last two decades devising initiatives aimed at addressing the shortage of African American teachers in secondary schools. Since the early 1990s, 36 states have adopted policies designed to recruit more African American teachers (Villegas & Davis, 2008). To substantiate these efforts, Villegas and Irvine (2010) identified three major arguments for diversifying the teaching force: (1) African American teachers serve as role models for all students; (2) the potential of African American teachers to improve the academic outcomes and school experiences of students of color; and (3) the workforce rationale.

In light of this reality, the present study aims to provide rural school administrators, policymakers, and researchers with valuable information regarding African American

teacher retention efforts. Specifically, this article offers an inductive, theory-building, and descriptive multi-case study of a predominantly White rural school district in Central Appalachia, with a particular focus on those strategies that the schools/districts use to support co-cultural adaptation. The researcher utilized in-depth interview questions to acquire information regarding co-cultural adjustment, adaptation strategies, and communicative behaviors used at these particular schools to better understand how certain factors affect African-American teacher persistence. Many studies have neglected to examine those communication attributes that appear to be essential for African American teachers' persistence. Additionally, this study focused on how traditionally marginalized individuals utilize specific communication strategies in the dominant societal structure to adapt and persevere. The results reveal African American educators' perceptions about their work environment.

In pursuit of this effort, this study will address the following two research questions:

1. What are African American teachers' perceptions regarding adaptation at predominantly White rural schools in Central Appalachia?
2. What are African American teachers' perceptions of district support systems in regards to adaptation at predominantly White rural schools in Central Appalachia?

To answer these questions, the researcher applied an inductive, theory-building, descriptive, multiple-case study. According to Berg (1998), case study methods involve systematically collecting adequate data about a particular person, social setting, event, or group to permit the investigator to understand how it maneuvers or functions. The researcher determined that this approach was preferable to the survey method, which diminishes subjects or special experiences and responses to numerical data. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), this type of study concentrates on the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationships between the researcher and what is being investigated, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry, which are more useful for understanding a nuanced phenomenon like co-cultural perseverance.

## **METHODS**

As said above, this study is a qualitative inquiry intended to explore a phenomenon or experience. Qualitative researchers generally posit that reality is socially constructed and there exists a close connection between the researcher and what is investigated (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Unlike quantitative research, the qualitative methodology can focus on circumstances or people to acquire a complete understanding and interpretation of the experiences of individuals in "their natural settings" (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). In said settings, the researcher manufactures a complex, holistic picture by analyzing informants' words and details (Creswell, 1998).

The author chose case methodology because of its ability to capture richer, more detailed information than a quantitative inquiry, and thereby illustrate how a phenomenon operates or functions (Berg, 1998). A multiple case study was adopted in order to explore differences within and between cases (Yin, 2003)—in other words, to discern the commonalities and differences in African American teachers' perspectives. Additionally,

the author pursued a phenomenological approach, which Creswell (1998) defined as the “lived experiences” of several individuals regarding a particular concept or phenomenon. Hatch (2002) found that a phenomenological study gives credibility to individual human experiences, presenting them as significant events that should be open to analysis. Furthermore, according to Groenewald (2004), phenomenology can limit a qualitative researcher’s biases.

As the study of human experience (Sokolowski, 2000), phenomenology views society as a place determined by the perceptions of those who live in it. In this vein, this analysis examines the lived experiences of African Americans teachers’ own observations regarding co-cultural adaptation. In this way, the study hopes to uncover the factors that allow African Americans to persist in a predominantly White rural public school district. This information may help to identify those policies and practices that help or hinder African American persistence, as well as improve our overall understanding of the process of co-cultural adaptation in predominantly White rural public schools in Central Appalachia.

### **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Data were collected via in-depth, individual, one-to-two hour recorded interviews with each teacher. Data collections were focused on gathering interviews with the teachers, allowing them to describe their perceptions regarding co-cultural adaptation, development of relationships, support systems used to adapt and persist, strategies used by the school and district to promote African American teacher adjustment, and perceptions of the co-cultural environment. Each interview was transcribed and subsequently sent to the teachers to check for accuracy. Protecting the identity of the teachers was a primary concern. Thus, interview transcripts have been stored in a locked file in the author’s office for three years, after which time everything will be destroyed.

### **ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE**

The following steps represent Colaizzi’s process for phenomenological data analysis (cited in Sanders, 2003):

1. Each transcription was read and re-read to acquire an overall sense about the entire content.
2. Significant accounts were extracted from each transcript and documented in a separate manuscript, noting their pages and lines numbers.
3. These important statements resulted in meaning.
4. The formulated meanings were arranged into categories and themes.
5. The results of the study were integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study.
6. A description of the fundamental structure of the phenomenon was provided.
7. Finally, validation of the findings was sought from the research participants to compare the researcher’s detailed results with their experiences.

The analysis resulted in a carefully formulated meaning creation regarding teachers' perceptions about co-cultural adaptation; the development of relationships with superintendents, principals, and other faculty; the support systems used to adapt and persist; the strategies used by the school and district to promote African American teacher adjustment, and their overall perception of the co-cultural environment.

## DATA COLLECTION

This investigation explored the experiences of African American teachers who previously taught in predominantly White rural schools in Central Appalachia. Adopting a multiple-case study, the author utilized extensive interviews to detect how historically marginalized individuals adapt to and persist in a profession dominated by White, middle-class, female teachers.

The participants included three retired teachers and three teachers who chose to pursue another career. The researcher initially emailed 14 Southeast principals of schools in the Eastern Kentucky Coal-Fields (EKCFs) that employed African American teachers, but none responded with a referral. However, utilizing a snowball/convenience sample, the author contacted seven former teachers by phone or email to gauge their interest in the study. All were interested and met the study's criteria (available upon request) for taking part in the study; however, one retired teacher failed to follow through on a scheduled interview and was removed.

The data collection occurred from December 2016 until January 2017. Five individual interviews were conducted on the researcher's main campus; one took place in the participant's home. The researcher transcribed all interviews within a month. The investigator chose not to reveal the participants' names or schools since there are few African American teachers in the EKCFs and thus they could be easily identified. These teachers had similar background experiences that led them to teach in the selected school district. For instance, one teacher began teaching at her school because there was a critical need for a qualified science teacher. Another teacher began teaching because of the shortage of eligible math teachers.

Table 1 provides a high-level overview of the participants' background, as well as establishes the pseudonyms that will be used throughout this article.

**Table 1.** Participant Demographic Details

| Pseudonym     | Age Range | Years Teaching | Teaching Level         |
|---------------|-----------|----------------|------------------------|
| Ms. Christian | 80-90     | 4              | Elementary             |
| Mrs. Pope     | 60-70     | 43             | Elementary             |
| Mrs. Robinson | 60-70     | 32.5           | Elementary             |
| Dr. Letterman | 50-60     | 3              | Secondary              |
| Ms. Wynette   | 50-60     | 18             | Secondary              |
| Mr. Rice      | 50-60     | 32             | Elementary / Secondary |

## **FINDINGS**

The researcher's initial goal for this dissertation was to shed light on the dearth of African American teachers in predominantly White rural school district in Central Appalachia, and to ascertain their strategies for acclimating in said districts. Likewise, the study sought to identify policies and practices used by these districts that support African American teachers' perseverance. Also, the researcher examined the role that professional relationships play in African American teacher persistence—in particular, those positive communication behaviors that lead to improved retention and reduced attrition. Given all this, the topic called for a thorough, in-depth, qualitative investigation.

The researcher asked teachers to describe their relationships with administrators and colleagues, as well the role played by the school and surrounding district in creating a school climate that was welcoming to non-dominant group members. The participants in this study offered various perspectives about their experiences: Half of them identified instances of isolation, alienation, or marginalization at the school level, while the other half reported that they were accustomed to the culture and thus did not identify their experiences as unusual. An analysis of their responses led to nine principal themes: adaptation; employment factors; support systems; communication factors; self-motivation; role and strategies of the school and district; recommendations for the school and district; advice for African American teachers in rural areas, and African American teachers' overall perceptions of their schools. These themes and their components are summarized below:

### **Adaptation**

1. Professional relationships and administrator support help African American teachers adapt to their predominantly White rural school district.
2. African American teachers adapt to a co-cultural school district better if they are enculturated in the Central Appalachian culture.
3. African American teachers who were influenced by a family member or role model who were educators adapt better in a predominantly White rural school.
4. African American teachers adapt better to a co-cultural school environment when they have an equity pedagogy and abide by a mission to help all children learn.
5. African American teachers who display autonomy adapt better in a predominantly White rural school district.

### **Employment Factors**

1. The African American teachers' cultural capital greatly influences their decision to work at a predominantly White rural school.
2. Being intrinsically motivated influences African Americans decision to teach at a predominantly White rural school district.
3. Having a network in place which directly or indirectly connects African American teachers to the superintendent or a prominent member in their community.
4. Being extended a contractual benevolence position.
5. Being hired to create a false appearance of inclusive practices and a diverse school environment.

### **Support Systems**

1. African American teachers seek support from family members or other role models to persevere at their predominantly White rural school district.
2. African American teachers report their support system as “good” when they earn the respect of the superintendent/principal.
3. African American teachers’ retention rate increases when they develop a professional relationship with their superintendent, principal(s), and colleagues.
4. African American teachers perceive that the relationships they form with their superintendent, principal(s), and colleagues aid in their retention, especially when they develop mutual appreciation, respect, and sincerity.
5. African American teachers employed at predominantly White rural school districts are encouraged to persevere when they perceive that they are valued and accepted.
6. Retired African American teachers perceived that their principal assisted them in their careers.
7. African American teachers rarely encounter other African American teachers in their school.
8. African American teachers seldom reported having a mentor in their predominantly White rural school district.
9. African American teachers did not recognize a structured support system in their predominantly White rural school district.

### **Communication Factors**

1. Trying to remove cultural differences, African American teachers rely on the assimilationist perspective.
2. Trying to achieve a mutually beneficial collaboration with the dominant culture, African American teachers employ the accommodationist perspective.
3. Distancing themselves from the dominant culture, African American teachers depend on the separationist perspective.
4. Taking into account the needs of oneself and others, African American teachers often utilize assertive communicative practices.
5. Being non-confrontational and putting the needs of others before their own, African American teachers apply the nonassertive communicative practices.
6. When African American teachers are self-promoting and assuming control over the choices of others, they exploit aggressive communicative practices.

### **Self-motivation**

1. African American teachers employed at a predominantly White rural school derive intrinsic rewards from their work that encourage them to adapt and persevere.
2. African American teachers employed at a predominantly White rural school have a positive perception of the profession.
3. African American teachers knew from an early age that they wanted to be a teacher.

### **Roles and Strategies of the School and District**

1. African American teachers did not report any specific strategies that their school districts used to assist them in adapting or persevering.
2. African American teachers who pursued other careers stated that race-based support from the school/district was non-existent.
3. African American teachers who worked until retirement reported that strategies utilized by the school/district to assist African American teachers in adapting and persevering needs improvement.

### **Recommendations for the School and District**

1. African American teachers suggested that school districts could offer more engagement during Black History Month, as well as Black History classes.
2. African American teachers recommended more books in the library about successful African Americans.
3. African American teachers mentioned wanting more recognition and better incentives.
4. African American teachers suggested that their school district reaches out to African American communities for mentors (e.g., pastors, professionals).
5. African American teachers endorsed having a cultural diversity committee.

### **Advice for Future African American Teachers in Rural Areas**

1. African American teachers have to be aware that faculty (and students) come from a variety of backgrounds that may or may not accept African Americans.
2. African American teachers are a role model to all children, but especially African American ones.
3. African American teachers have to persist and do it graciously.
4. African American teachers cannot display anger or aggression.
5. African American teachers have to suppress many feelings and thoughts.

### **African American Teachers' Overall Perceptions**

1. Most African American teachers revealed that they had a pretty good job and got along with everyone.
2. One African American retired teacher reported that she enjoyed their 40-plus years or would not have stayed otherwise.
3. Another African American teacher stated that they enjoyed their experience. For example, Mrs. Robinson stated: "No regrets got to do what I enjoyed doing and gain respect for doing it. I think my mission was a good one and I lived by it."
4. Two African American teachers reported that they were not valued, but tolerated.
5. One African American teachers described that his experience was "one of being a round peg in a square hole, so to speak. My last year if they did not fire me, I would have quit."

These results also level an important implication at administrators in predominantly White rural school districts. Initially, the author contacted 14 administrators in Central Appalachia whose schools employ African American teachers, so as to garner referrals that might illuminate how to recruit and retain African American teachers—but none of them responded. Thus, it remains unclear just how much importance such administrators assign to having a diverse teacher population. However, the respondents did make clear that White superintendents are consciously or unconsciously supportive of the veils of oppression. Meanwhile, the principals and White faculty in these districts remain purposefully negligent of the needs and issues that African American teachers confront as co-cultural group members at predominantly White school districts. Thus, there is a sense that White superintendents, principals, and teachers in predominantly White rural school districts actions are contradicting democracy, acculturation, collaborative activism, inclusivity, and an empowering school culture/social structure. This is despite the plethora of research suggesting that a diverse teaching workforce positively impacts all students.

### **LIMITATIONS**

First, the study was limited by the pool of available participants, restricted as it was to African American teachers in two predominantly White, rural school districts in Central Appalachia. While the participants had a broad range of teaching experience, their admissions cannot, in any case, be generalized to other teachers.

Second, the study would have benefited from newer teacher-participants. The participants for this study were quite old, with an average age of 63; their perspectives are valuable, but they do not necessarily reflect those of younger teachers. For example, how would younger teachers' training and maturity, relative to their older counterparts, influence their ability to adapt and persist at a predominantly White school district? Would their support systems, communication approach(es), or adaptation strategies be similar or different? These questions all need to be addressed in future research. Granted, there is a difficulty in recruiting current African American teachers in predominantly White rural school districts, as they tend to be anxious about qualitative studies due to their fear of being identified. Administrators could be a useful resource in this regard; however, for the present study, none of the ten principals who were contacted referred any current African American teachers. Researchers may need to explore alternative ways of recruiting a mix of teachers, such as through community partners or online venues.

Finally, the study data lacks a point of comparison with other teacher demographics. For instance, the researcher could have elicited the opinions of African American college professors in predominantly White community colleges in Central Appalachia and compared their experiences to those of the current study participants. It would be worthwhile to know whether there are structural advantages to one environment that might carry over to the other.

### **SUMMARY**

According to co-cultural theory, societies feature dominant group members who possess privilege over non-dominant group members. At predominantly White rural schools in Central Appalachia, the privileged group mainly includes White, middle-class,

female teachers. Dominant group members create and propagate communication systems that reflect and support their privileged status, which simultaneously marginalize non-dominant group members. Consequently, the latter individuals strategically adopt certain communication behaviors to successfully navigate the oppressive dominant culture (Orbe & Spellers, 2005).

Communication approaches can be assigned to three categories: nonassertive, assertive, or aggressive. Five of the six participants in this study routinely used more than one such approach. At some point in their career, three of the six utilized a non-assertive approach. A different set of three exhibited an assertive approach during periods of their careers. Only one displayed an aggressive approach to communicating.

Concerning the strategies utilized by district to aid retention, all participants had a somewhat negative opinion. Four of the six reported that their districts made no efforts to promote retention, whereas two indicated that their districts could improve their efforts.

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# Why Bother Teaching Public Policy Analysis?

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## ABSTRACT

In the textbooks, public policy analysis is a rational process in which policies are formulated to address social problems perceived by the public to be unacceptable. Effectiveness is one of the major criteria of policy evaluation. Consensus on effectiveness is difficult to achieve because underdetermined causes are the occasion for conflicting beliefs about the causes and solutions of problems, which Kahan (2016) calls “fact polarization.” Fact polarization can be explained by political ideologies, which are expressions of cultural worldviews. These worldviews are based on incompatible beliefs about how society should be organized. Using gun violence as an example, this article shows how beliefs about the causes of gun violence, associated values, and policy solutions vary among liberals, libertarians and economic conservatives, and social conservatives. If policy is ideologically determined, the textbook presentation of policy analysis as a rational process that will help policymakers make better decisions may be wishful thinking.

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## INTRODUCTION

Policy is one of those terms that is frequently heard but infrequently defined. Individuals, groups, businesses, and governments have policies, but in the academic world of policy analysis, policies are solutions. As Kraft and Furlong (2015) explain in their textbook, “The term *policy* refers in general to a purposive course of action that an individual or group consistently follows in dealing with a problem” (p. 4). Problems and solutions can be private or public. If I have a problem with an inordinate level of finger-nail biting, I, along with any interested friends and family members, are responsible for formulating a solution, that is policy, to deal with the problem. But the policy is private.

On the other hand, citizens may perceive that some condition in society is unacceptable and cannot be addressed by an individual, group, or several groups working together. This kind of unacceptable condition in society is a public problem. “Public problems refer to conditions the public widely perceives to be unacceptable and that therefore require intervention” (Kraft & Furlong, 2015, p. 3). When politicians step in to address public problems, their solutions are called *public policy*. “Public policy is what public officials within government, and by extension the citizens they represent, choose to do or not to do about public problems” (Kraft & Furlong, 2015, p. 3). Some examples of such public problems are global warming or climate change, poverty, Internet pornography, and higher education affordability. Many believe that these problems can only be solved by large-scale collective action through government.

How should politicians decide on the best policy? The textbook answer is that they should engage in rational decision-making. Kraft and Furlong (2015) state the standard

case:

According to models of rational decision making, one defines a problem, indicates the goals and objectives to be sought, considers a range of alternative solutions, evaluates each of the alternatives to clarify their consequences, and then recommends or chooses the alternative with the greatest potential for solving the problem. (p. 117)

This process is called *policy analysis*, which can be conducted in more than one way, but “the most common approach to policy analysis is to picture it as a series of analytical steps or stages, which are the elements in rational problem solving” (Kraft & Furlong, 2015, p. 117). These are the steps: 1) define and analyze the problem, 2) construct policy alternatives, 3) develop evaluative criteria, 4) assess the alternatives, and 5) draw conclusions (Kraft & Furlong, 2015, p. 118).

## **STEPS IN POLICY ANALYSIS**

### **Step One**

The first step is to define and analyze the problem. After the Oregon college mass shooting, President Obama asked the media “to show America the number of gun deaths as compared to the number of terrorism related deaths since the 9/11 attacks” (Shaw, 2015, para. 1). The media quickly responded with a graph showing 316,545 deaths by firearms compared with 313 deaths by terrorism on American soil (Shaw, 2015, para. 2). For many, the high number of gun deaths qualifies as a public problem that requires a public solution. A major question in this step is, what causes the problem of gun deaths? In the United States, two causes have figured most prominently in the debate about gun policy. The first is the market in guns. A relatively free market has produced a high number of guns per resident. Guns are too easily available to individuals with malicious purposes. An opposing opinion is that gun regulations are responsible for the problem because they have disarmed the public and rendered citizens defenseless.

### **Steps Two and Three**

The question in the second step is, what are the policy alternatives? Assuming the market in guns is the cause, the logical solution or policy is gun control: The market in guns should be regulated. Assuming the opposing view that gun regulations cause the high number of gun deaths, the solution or policy is to repeal gun regulations and pass concealed carry laws. How should the policy analyst decide between these opposing policies? The answer in step three is to apply evaluative criteria. Kraft and Furlong (2015) recommend a widely accepted list of criteria: effectiveness, efficiency, equity, liberty/freedom, political feasibility, social acceptability, administrative feasibility, and technical feasibility (p. 175).

### **Criterion of Effectiveness**

Effectiveness is a criterion that has a couple of questions associated with it that are difficult to answer, at least definitively. In rational problem solving, if the correct cause is addressed, the appropriate policy should be effective. But can the correct cause be determined? For a scientist, the answer is yes, in principle, but the facts are never well enough established, especially in the social sciences, that all doubt is eliminated. Some

things cannot be measured; some things scientists do not yet know how to measure. They escape the scientific method. In the light of unsettled scientific evidence, each causal viewpoint continues to have “life.” But can the public agree on the best available evidence? The answer seems to be no. Why? The reason may be that underdetermined causes make fact polarization feasible. According to Kahan (2016), polarization over questions of fact is one of the signature features of contemporary democratic political life. Citizens divided over the relative weight of “liberty” and “equality” are less sharply divided today over the justice of progressive taxation than over the evidence that human CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are driving up global temperatures (p. 1).

Kahan’s analysis may be surprising because the usual understanding is that conflicting values basically divide people. Kahan appeals to two cognitive processes to explain fact polarization. Motivated reasoning is the basic process. “Motivated reasoning refers to the tendency of individuals to unconsciously conform their assessment of information to some goal *collateral* to determining its *truth*” (Kahan, 2016, p. 2). Kahan (2016) mentions a variety of well-researched collateral goals: the maintenance of a positive self-conception, the rationalization of self-serving behavior, the desire to avoid the anticipated stress or anxiety of unwelcome news, the desire to perceive coherence rather than complexity in pieces of evidence relevant to an important decision (p. 2). Motivated reasoning is responsible for the second process, confirmation bias, which “involves the tendency to selectively credit or discredit evidence based on its consistency with one’s existing beliefs” (Kahan, 2016, p. 2).

Kahan believes that politics is unique in that the collateral goal for everyone is identity protection. People are attracted to a group with whom they share values. Their beliefs are shaped by the desire to maintain a connection to and status within this group, which defines their identity, even though they may not literally belong to it. Many facts are neutral regarding membership in a group. Kahan (2013) suggests these examples: Pasteurization removes infectious agents from milk, fluoridation of water fights tooth decay, and privatization of the air-traffic control system is inimical to air safety (p. 419). Other facts have social meanings that signal membership. For example, two opposing opinions about the causes of gun violence have been defined in this article: a relatively free market in guns and gun control laws. These policy-relevant facts that are imbued with social meanings are determined by identity-defining affinity groups. In Kahan’s (2016) words.

Where positions on some risk or other policy relevant fact has [*sic*] come to assume a widely recognized social meaning as a marker of membership within identity-defining affinity groups, members of those groups can be expected to conform their assessments of all manner of information—from persuasive advocacy to reports of expert opinion; from empirical data to their own brute sense impressions—to the position associated with their respective groups. (p. 1)

Affinity groups understand policy-relevant facts through cultural cognition, which “refers to the tendency of individuals to conform their perceptions of risk and other policy-consequential facts to their cultural worldviews. Cultural worldviews consist of systematic clusters of values relating to how society should be organized” (Kahan, 2011, p. 23).

Many policy analysts are highly educated social scientists. Would they be less inclined to conform their perceptions of policy-consequential facts to their cultural worldviews? Kahan, Peters, Cantrell Dawson, and Slovic (2017) conducted a study to

answer the question. They measured subjects' numeracy, which "encompasses not just mathematical ability, but also a disposition to engage quantitative information in a reflective and systematic way and to use it to support valid inferences" (p. 60).

The results suggest that political polarization is magnified among high-numeracy individuals. The authors report that more numerate individuals are benefitted by forming identity-congruent beliefs just as much as less numerate individuals are, and harmed [by loss of membership in an affinity group] just as much from forming identity-noncongruent beliefs. But more numerate individuals have a cognitive *ability* that lower-numeracy ones do not. ICT [identity-protective cognition thesis] predicts that more numerate individuals will use their ability opportunistically in a manner geared to promoting their interests in forming and persisting in identity-protective beliefs. The results in the experiment suggest that high-numeracy partisans did exactly that (Kahan, Peters, Cantrell Dawson, & Slovic, 2017, p. 75).

Policy analysts and ordinary citizens do not differ in their use of cultural cognition, but policy analysts have the cognitive ability to provide superior justifications of their policy preferences. Ordinary citizens must consult experts, who are certified by their affinity groups, to learn how best to defend the "correct" policies. Citizens only want to read, hear, or watch positive discussions of these policies. They thereby insulate themselves from alternative perspectives that might provoke feelings of aversion. The media participate in political polarization, which has been escalating in recent years (Hopkins & Sides, 2015).

### **Cultural Worldviews and Political Ideologies**

Kahan is not clear about the meaning of *clusters of values*, but he may have in mind values related to two intersecting polarities—between an individualistic versus solidaristic or communitarian social order and a hierarchical versus egalitarian society—that he believes are foundational (Kahan & Braman, 2006, p. 151). Associated values may be identified at the proximate level. These values are not independently selected, but depend on the definition of a problem and its causes to form a coherent whole. Ultimately, however, beliefs about the problem, causes, and values are determined by cultural worldviews. Political ideologies can be understood as expressions of cultural worldviews.

The relationship between beliefs about the problem, causes and values can be illustrated by typical ideological beliefs about the causes of gun deaths. For liberals, the cause is a free, unregulated market in guns; for libertarians and economic conservatives, it is gun control laws; and for social conservatives, it is malevolent people. What are the associated values? Liberals value collective responsibility (group wisdom), libertarians and economic conservatives value individual freedom from interference, and social conservatives value personal responsibility (individual character). Causes and values only make sense in relationship with each other. For example, if the cause is a free, unregulated market in guns, the value of individual freedom from interference does not make sense.

What are the policy recommendations? Liberals recommend gun-control laws, a recommendation that follows logically from their preferred cause. Libertarians and economic conservatives favor the repeal of gun regulations and passage of concealed carry laws, recommendations that follow logically from their preferred cause. Social conservatives may also support repeal of gun regulations and passage of concealed carry

laws, but they will not have much confidence in these policies because they do not address the primary cause: a defect in character. Social-cultural renewal is required. Social conservatives might even argue that gun control laws will work just as well.

Kahan and Braman (2006) tested the hypothesis that “individuals’ cultural worldviews would determine . . . [the] empirical claims they accept.” Gun control was one of the policies studied. They assumed the liberal and libertarian/economic conservative opposition: “Gun-control proponents argue that greater restrictions will promote public safety by reducing gun violence and accidents, while gun-control opponents argue that such restrictions will diminish public safety on net by rendering innocent persons unable to defend themselves from violent criminals” (p. 156). The results supported their hypothesis about cultural worldviews and related values.

Persons of hierarchical and individualistic orientations . . . [believe] that gun control has perverse consequences, a belief congenial to the association of guns with hierarchical social roles (hunter, protector, father) and with hierarchical and individualistic virtues (courage, honor, chivalry, self-reliance, prowess). Relatively egalitarian and solidaristic individuals . . . [believe] that gun control enhances safety because of their association of guns with patriarchy and racism, and with distrust and indifference to the well-being of strangers. (p. 156)

Kahan and Braman (2006) conclude that cultural worldviews explain factual beliefs more powerfully than political ideologies (pp. 156-157). However, the typology of cultural worldviews and political ideologies are not essentially opposed. Political ideologies can be mapped onto the typology. The *clusters of values* that Kahan and Braman identify in the above quotation are fundamentally related to the values associated with political ideologies. Given the relationship between cultural worldviews and political ideologies—that political ideologies are subordinate expressions of cultural worldviews—one would expect cultural worldviews to explain factual beliefs more powerfully.

### **Other Criteria**

Aside from the criterion of effectiveness, Kraft and Furlong (2015) recommend two other criteria of policy evaluation: equity and liberty/freedom (p. 175). The meaning of these values varies with political ideologies. The definition of a problem, causal hypothesis, policy, and values are ideologically related. In the end, however, effectiveness is the most important criterion because it validates the definition, causal hypothesis, policy, and associated values. Kraft and Furlong (2015) also recommend criteria that are irrelevant to a decision about the most effective policy but relevant to implementation: efficiency, political feasibility, social acceptability, administrative feasibility, and technical feasibility (p. 175). When a decision about the most effective policy has been reached, whether arrived at rationally or through cultural cognition, implementation of the policy is not always feasible.

### **Steps Four and Five**

In step four of policy analysis, the instruction is to assess the alternatives: “Which [policy] alternatives are better than others?” (Kraft & Furlong, 2015, p. 118). It follows from the preceding discussion that the answer is ideologically determined. In the fifth and final step, the policy analyst is asked to draw conclusions: “Which policy option is the most desirable given the circumstances and evaluative criteria?” (Kraft & Furlong, 2015, p. 118).

Again, following the preceding discussion, the answer is ideologically determined. Kahan would say that ultimately the answers in both steps four and five conform to cultural worldviews.

## CONCLUSION

Are policy analysts engaged in wishful thinking? In the textbook, policy analysis is rational: “Policy analysts are trained in the rational assessment of public problems and their solutions, and they often use economic methods to find the most logical, efficient, and (they hope) effective ways to deal with public problems” (Kraft & Furlong, 2015, p. 134). In the textbook, policy analysis will help policy makers make better decisions: “Analysis and politics are not incompatible as long as it is understood that analysis by itself does not and should not determine public policy. Rather, its purpose is to inform the public and policymakers so that they can make better decisions” (Kraft & Furlong, 2015, p. 205).

The argument of this article is that public policy analysis is neither rational nor helpful to policymakers in making better decisions because it begins and ends in cultural worldviews. Why bother teaching it?

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